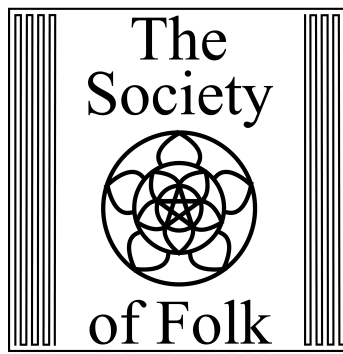


The Folk of Yore  
*Sacred Mission*  
*A Call to Action*  
*by Aubrey Manning*

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*Sacred Memories: A Journey of Destiny*

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*Book of Symbols*

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## *Foreword*

by Master Armaton

Special Envoy to Queen Veridia of the Society of Folk

Greetings, dear Soul.

Two human beings have touched me as no other has. One is long gone from this Earth. The other is Aubrey Manning, author of this book, for whom I hold the highest unqualified esteem.

Albeit from a distance, I have watched over Aubrey since her birth. She was inquisitive and sensitive as a youth, keenly observant, wise beyond her years. Even as a small child she was possessed of a concern and regard for family, friends, pets, plants, rocks, and strangers in a way that seemed nigh equally caring for all.

As impossible as it may seem in a world so dependent on lies for protection and control, I have never known her to express anything but Truth. As a small child, before learning to temper her candor in consideration of others, there were many amusing incidents in the presence of poorly disguised hairpieces, transparently insincere remarks, and the like.

Bear this in mind as you read her book. Allow the possibility that there is Truth in her words. Pose this question, "What if?" as you follow her story. Let it guide you to your own realizations as it surely can. There is a place within you that knows the Truth, a part of you capable of confronting the Reality behind facade. Examine her experiences from the depth of your own realization and you will find it deepen and expand.

Be keenly aware of your feelings as you encounter each event and concept. Does your comfort express acceptance, an uncanny familiarity with what she writes? Does your discomfort express disagreement or is it fear, perchance a resistance to change, stretching beyond perceived boundaries of understanding and perception?

Do not be misled by the style of her writing, sometimes lighthearted, never strident, that this is not a grave undertaking. Aubrey has handled this book as she has lived her life: calmly active and actively calm, expressing joy and humor in the most trying circumstances. Nonetheless, she describes a solemn drama playing itself out before your eyes. Do you see it? Mother Earth is suffering under the ignorance of Her rude guests, who flirt with killing their own environment. Will they outstay their welcome and push the planet too far? Will they enter into a feverish battle with Earth for survival or experience a Great Shift in consciousness?

Be mindful, as well, that accepted, recognized, or not, you, dear Reader, play a role in this drama. Your choice to abstain from involvement does not make it so. If you neglect to choose, the outcome will choose you. There is no avoiding responsibility. That you exist is your involvement. Shall your participation be conscious and deliberate or by default to a world of the past that created you?

What Aubrey writes is a clarion call, a last minute invitation. This is a time of immense transformation, prophesied for eons and written in warning to you some fourteen centuries ago by Auriel of Darluse Wood, that other Soul so dear to me.

Blessings,  
Armaton

## *Preface*

In hope there are possibilities. Without it this book would be impossible to write and pointless to read. That you hold *Sacred Mission* in your hands is a great source of hope.

My challenge is to get this book to you. Yours is what you will do with it. My task is to tell the story. Yours is to choose how it ends.

Aubrey Manning

*Chapter 1*  
*An Awakening*

*A Saturday in early August*

In the darkness I sense I am no longer alone. I hear a voice, but cannot make out the words. Just above and in front of me, a ball of light appears, becoming intensely brilliant, yet comfortable to my eyes. From within it I hear the voice more clearly, "Soon, Beloved, soon!" This phrase is repeated, each time higher and choppy in tone until it becomes an unintelligible, intermittent, pulsating whine. That's not right. What's happening?

With a sudden disoriented jolt I woke up to confront the sonic intrusion from my nightstand that demanded a response. In an instant I rallied every conscious resource available, picked up the receiver, and with great cheer and determination greeted my caller and the day.

"Good morning!"

A young voice of indeterminate gender gasped, "Good ... mor ... ning? Dr. ... Manning?"

"Yes?"

"This is Artie ... Compton from ... *Ju ... nior Scho ... lastic ... Magazine?*"

Artie seemed *very* nervous; the poor dear was hyperventilating. Short of recommending a paper bag, I encouraged him, "Artie, take your time. Just stop for a second and take a deep breath."

There was a plosive gasp on the other end of the line and the sucking sound of a long overdue, deep inhale. I waited. Nothing else happened.

"Artie?"

Straining his voice, he replied in a wheeze intended to conserve as much of that inhale as possible, "Yes ma'am?"

"Artie, dear, breathe out now."

Like a dam burst by the overwhelming swell of rising water, he exploded his breath into the receiver. With a silent chuckle I decided we'd work on phone etiquette some other time.

"Artie, let's just stop and take a few deep breaths together, OK? In *and* out."

"OK."

We breathed together as I led him closer to the calmness he must have had before anticipating this call.

"There, that's much better."

"Yes, ma'am."

"So why are you calling, Artie?"

"So, I'm from *Junior Scholastic Magazine*? And I won a contest? So I'm supposed to interview you?"

Expecting all his sentences would end in a question, I was hopeful for a declarative.

"I remember now. But weren't we scheduled for 9 AM?"

"It is 9 AM, Ma'am."

"Well, I've got five after ... Where are you?"

"Home, Ma'am."

"Yes, but where is that? Where do you live?"

"Union City."

"Up near San Francisco?"



“I don’t think so, Ma’am. I’m in New Jersey.”

“OK, that explains it, we’re three hours apart. Artie, I thought we set it for 9 AM my time.”

“They just told me nine o’clock on Saturday morning, Ma’am.”

“Alright then. Well ... I guess you just helped me get a jump on the day. Why don’t you hold on for a quick minute and I’ll be right back.”

“OK. I’ll look over my notes.”

“Good. Be right back.”

After a quick run to the bathroom and a bracing splash of water on my face, I was awake and ready for Artie Compton from *Junior Scholastic*. With any luck, this wouldn’t be nearly as confrontational as my interview on *60 Minutes*. Mike Wallace never hyperventilated. I smoothed out the bedcovers, propped up the pillows, and leaned back against the headboard. Very comfortable.

“Alright, Artie, I’m back. Shall we start?”

“Yes, Ma’am. Thank you. Can I turn on the tape? It’s just so I don’t have to take notes and remember everything.”

“Sure.”

He cleared his throat and spoke his memorized opening in a singsong voice, “This is Artie Compton and I’m in seventh grade at Sara M. Gilmore School in Union City, New Jersey and I’m talking to environmental scientist and author Dr. Aubrey Manning in San Diego, California. Good morning, Dr. Manning.”

“Good morning, Mr. Compton.”

In a rapid, sharp, whispered aside, “You should call me Artie!”

Stifling a tiny laugh, “Good morning, Artie. Thank you for calling to interview me.”

“You’re welcome. Well ... um ... I’m gonna start now, so ... well ... um ... I ... uh ... I see you on TV a lot and I saw you on the cover of *Us Magazine* ... and ... well, um ... there’s a picture of you on it from when your hair was still kind of short and it says,” reading stiffly, “‘Aubrey Manning’ and below that it says, ‘A babe with the goods?’ with a question mark and then it says, ‘Is she really as hot on the inside as she is on the outside?’ And ... um ... what I want to ask you is if you think you’d be on TV so much and if you’d be as successful as you are if you weren’t young and pretty?”

I bolted upright, swung my feet down flat on the floor, taken aback by this unanticipated siege. Why not start out pressing a hot button, Artie? Geez, if this kid weren’t so nervous, he’d be a killer. I helped *myself* take a deep breath.

“Well, Artie, first of all, thank you for the compliment.” I thought thirty-two would seem ancient to ... what? ... a twelve year old?

“You’re welcome.”

“Now, you’re really asking two questions here. The first one is: would the media be as interested in me; the second, would I have achieved the same degree of success.

“I think the media are interested in me because the work I do is important, it’s unique, and it touches on issues that affect everyone on the planet. Because I’m successful, they become a little more interested, and because they think I’m attractive, even more interested. Being pretty doesn’t create success.

“Maybe the most important point is that what you look like isn’t who you are and it doesn’t define what you can or cannot do ... or how successful you can be at doing it. We’re all so much more than that. We have a much deeper, more elemental power and essence.”

“You mean like a soul.”

“Yes, exactly!” I was impressed he picked up on that so quickly.

“But that’s ... that’s religion and you’re supposed to be a scientist.”

“Those are just labels, Artie. Truth isn’t contained in separate little boxes. It’s all out there, everywhere, waiting to be realized. When you identify yourself strictly with science or religion, then you limit yourself to those singular perspectives. God, the Infinite, Spirit, call It what you will, doesn’t require belief or scientific verification to exist and operate ... and realization isn’t available to one perspective and restricted from another.

“My point is, although I’m 5’11”, have black hair and all the rest, that’s *not* who I am or what I would limit myself to perceiving about myself.

“So why *am* I successful? The reasons are *beneath* the surface. The main one isn’t even because I worked long and hard—I did—but that’s not the main reason. I love what I do. It’s absolutely wondrous to me; it’s who I am. I couldn’t imagine doing anything else. Without it I wouldn’t want to be alive. When you find something that’s that right for you, no matter what it is, you can’t help but be successful.

“The next thing is, I learned to face my fears. I learned that fear doesn’t come to stop you; it comes to let you know what’s really important, what’s worth fighting for. It comes not so much to test you, but to prove you, your faith and your strength and your determination. I’ve learned not to dwell on fear and I never let it stop me.

“There are a lot of other reasons, but let’s just stick with those. Now, about why a pretty woman is successful. That’s an issue a lot of people get really hot over.” I winced at my unintentional double entendre.

“Yes, Ma’am, I know. That’s why I asked.”

I got the feeling Artie’s question was a lot deeper and more thoughtful than I was giving him credit for.

“What it all comes down to is, in just about any job, whatever advantage a pretty woman might have is more than outweighed by the disadvantage of being a woman ... when it comes to pay, promotions, just being accepted in a profession or a trade that’s been associated mostly with men.”

“Yes, Ma’am, my mom says we have to change the laws.”

“Maybe there’s even more to it, Artie. Maybe it’s how we think ... or, actually, how we don’t think. We have all these attitudes that are just reflexes: what you can or can’t do because you’re a woman or, for that matter, a man; what people think of you because of how you look or what you do, your race, or where you’re from. We depend on these old reflexes so much we don’t pay attention to what’s really going on.

“And we accept things the way they are because that’s the way they’ve always been. We don’t want to change because it’s too scary and we don’t want to think because it’s too hard. We’d rather stick our heads in the sand than face what’s in front of our noses. Thomas Edison had these signs, like warnings, all over his laboratory that said, ‘There is no expedient to which a man will not resort to avoid the real labor of thinking’”

“Mr. Dal Lago, he’s my English teacher, he has a sign that says, ‘Don’t confuse me with facts, my mind is made up.’”

Laughing, “Yes, that’s a good one!”

“That kind of stuff happens even in science, doesn’t it, Dr. Manning? I mean like with your work ‘cause I read about what Dr. von Hass says about you. He says you’re an ...” Artie slowly sounded out the word, “... i - con - o - clast. That means you’re somebody who ...” Papers rustle and he reads stiffly again. “... attacks and seeks to overthrow traditional or popular ideas or

institutions.”

Ah! Breck von Hass. Artie just segued to an even hotter button. *Junior Scholastic* never had a reputation for thriving on contention so I didn't think his motivation was to stir things up and boost circulation. He seemed to really care, he wanted to know, he was open, he wanted to get to the truth. He and Breck would *not* get along!

Dr. Gerzson Benedek “Breck” von Hass was chairman of the Directorate for the Administration of Geophysical Research (DAGR), a “discreet” government program whose stated purpose was coordinating geophysical research and development with an emphasis on meteorology. Rumor was that DAGR had a direct pipeline to the National Security Council. The rumors about why ran wide and wild.

Breck's antipathy for me began before I was born. He and my dad went to the same small engineering and science college, Stevens Tech, in Artie's home state of New Jersey. (It was supposed to be a hotshot school, but my irreverent father, from his freshman year, never tired of calling it Stevens Hoboken Institute of Technology. It always delighted him when people picked up on the acronym.) Anyway, early on, Dad made the mistake of asking Breck about his name because it didn't sound Hungarian, which he was supposed to be. And what about the “von?” Was he descended from royalty?

*Big* hot button for Breck. His grandfather had purchased the title so it wasn't exactly legitimate, and, as it turned out, neither was Breck. He was very sensitive about anything having to do with his father, his family, and his name. Dad didn't mean any harm. If he had known it was such a touchy subject he never would have brought it up. As for my own transgression, I didn't mean it either. Who could have dreamed things would go so far?

I wrote a grad school paper on the work of the late Kalman von Hass, Breck's father, a brilliant and internationally renowned mathematician. In the early 1950's, the elder Dr. von Hass had proposed that complicated dynamic systems, like the weather, could have small regions of high instability where they were particularly susceptible to small increments of change having massive system wide effects and that these effects could be predicted and controlled. The latter conclusion neglected to take chaos fully into account, that all points were unstable and therefore the system response could not be reliably predicted. At least not with the existing state of science and technology, then or even now.

All I did was write my perspective on what was already old news. Several of the points seemed clever, though not earthshaking, to me. I just hoped what I wrote was good enough to ace the course. Well, it turned out my paper contained issues no one had raised before. My professor raved so much to his colleagues about what a fresh perspective this was that it wound up getting published. The paper was debated for months and months, which, unfortunately, resurrected long forgotten criticism of Kalman von Hass worldwide.

Breck was livid, claiming I was the second generation to smite his father's honor. He insisted my father had put me up to it out of jealousy. Dad tried to explain there was no harm intended: it was just a term paper; it was never supposed to leave the campus. Breck wouldn't budge, but then he hadn't over the years my Dad tried repeatedly to patch up the original “offense.” Like the sign in Mr. Dal Lago's room said, Breck's mind was made up.

He swore my affront would be avenged. Furthermore, my ignorance and incompetence would be proven by the failure and obscurity to which I was destined. When my *Time Magazine* cover came out I heard Breck went into seclusion for two weeks. Since then he's frequently attempted to plant seeds of doubt and suspicion about my abilities. No publicist of mine was responsible for the *Us* cover nor for attracting *60 Minutes*' “interest.”

“Artie, you ask some pretty tricky questions.”

“I’m sorry, Ma’am. I don’t mean to. When I was getting ready I just wrote down what came into my head. Maybe I should’ve thought about it more.”

“Not at all. When things pop into your mind like that, that’s your instinct working, your intuition. You know, Artie, you’re asking some of the same questions Mike Wallace did on *60 Minutes*.”

Before I could continue Artie burst in. “I didn’t copy! I didn’t! I didn’t even see it ‘cause Disney had *Toy Story* on that night!”

Laughing, “It’s OK, Artie! It’s OK! That’s not where I was going. The point is you’re asking the same kind of tough questions but you do it with grace and sincerity. You make me feel like all you want to do is find out the truth and that’s very refreshing.”

“Well ... what else would I want to ask you for?”

The integrity of his innocence really touched me. “Artie, this is a very special moment. Whatever happens, make sure you hold on to this tape and listen to this part every once in a while. If a day ever comes that you think you should’ve had other reasons, pay attention to what I’m going to say now. Don’t ever believe you can take shortcuts through integrity and truth. In the long run, it never works out. If you wink at truth too much, you close your eyes to it ... and then you’re lost. If that day never comes, all the better and you can just be grateful with me now for the fine young man you are.”

“Uh ... thank you, Ma’am, but I ... um ... don’t think I get all what you just said.”

“I know, dear. One day you will. Please do what I’m asking though, OK? It’s important.”

“OK ... Uh ... So ... um ...”

“You want me to talk about what Dr. von Hass said ... about me being an iconoclast.”

“Uh huh. Yes, Ma’am. Is that OK?”

“Sure. Read me that definition again, would you, Artie?”

With great deliberateness, “I-con-o-clast. ‘One who attacks and seeks to overthrow traditional or popular ideas or institutions.’”

“Yes, interesting wording. So, am I an iconoclast? The answer is no, but I can see why somebody would think so. My intent is not to overthrow traditional beliefs. *That’s* not what I ‘seek.’ My ambition is to pursue and reveal truth. *That’s* what I seek, truth.

“By definition, traditional ways of thinking come from the past. When enough time goes by, things change. As difficult or scary as it might feel, like we were talking before, you have to let go of the things that don’t work any more and *change*, move on. I don’t *attack* tradition. But I do ask a lot of questions. And sometimes new answers displace the traditional ones. Is that iconoclastic? I prefer to think of it as progress.”

“So, then ... um ... is what you mean that you like truth and Dr. von Hass, he just likes stuff ‘cause it’s been around a long time and he’s too scared to change?”

Wow! Another zinger from Artie Compton.

“Are you *sure* you didn’t see that *60 Minutes*?”

“No, Ma’am! I swear! ... I ...”

“Artie! It’s OK! I’m only kidding. Well ... this is what I think. In life, in science, too, it’s very healthy for different people to have different perspectives. That creates dialogue. And when that happens, you begin to see what works, what doesn’t work and what works better. An idea isn’t good until it can stand up to scrutiny ... and criticism. That’s the bottom line of the scientific method.

“Whatever else is going on, somebody has to uphold traditional points of view so society

and science can have a stable platform, something solid to stand on, while we look at the unknown. Dr. von Hass disagrees with me ... often. That's his right, and it's also his responsibility: to promote and defend what he believes and what's important to him. He serves science and the world by helping to maintain things the way they are. His criticism serves progress by testing the soundness of my work.

"We're all doing our own things the best we can, but sometimes it's not so easy to get along because we don't understand each other as well as maybe we could."

At that point I explained that anger and fear often get in the way of understanding and went on to explain some causes and dynamics. Artie continued to respond in his own enthusiastic and inimitable way. When I mentioned how a present nonthreatening event can trigger a traumatic past memory, he compared it to the time he stepped on a peanut shell in his bare feet and thought it was a "cock-a-roach" like the one he had stomped the day before. Then he continued.

"Could I ask some other questions now, like about what you do?"

"Mmm hmm."

"OK, good ... so, could you tell me about yourself and ... um ... what you do? I mean *I* know and all, but a lot of kids I talked to never heard of you."

Artie doesn't mince words, does he?

"Well ... I'm an environmental scientist. I teach at the University of California San Diego and I do research in predictive modeling at the Supercomputer Center there. We use sophisticated mathematics and powerful computers to simulate real life situations and get a pretty good idea of what can happen before it does. My focus is on ecology, looking at sequences of events and playing out how manipulating different factors affects the outcome."

"Could you explain the CUE Principle and how you came up with it?"

"Well, the CUE Principle is an offshoot of what I wrote about in my second book ..."

"I know it! I know it!" There's a frantic rustling of papers. "*A Common Paradox: The Connection Between Unconnected Events!*"

"Yes, that's it." Artie had done his homework. We were both proud of him.

"What intrigued me was discovering links between events that you wouldn't think should be connected. When you can detect and verify cause-effect relationships in random systems, that's powerful. Our simulations pointed us in very unlikely and promising directions and provided hints for constructing chains of causality.

"We developed some very innovative strategies and techniques by studying actual situations that had occurred in the past. Since all the events had already taken place, our vantage point could be shifted back and forth through time. We examined what preceded each point and projected from there what might follow. To assess our projections, we simply compared them to what actually happened.

"The better we get at reconstructing past events and discovering hidden relationships, the more we develop our ability to link and predict future events."

"What kind of stuff did you find out?"

"Most of it is pretty abstract and only makes sense in the context of a mathematical model. Um ... here's something: when you try to project the future, the critical factors are not only *what* events you choose to project from, but also *when* in time you start. The when is just as important as the what. Sometimes more so. That's a pretty good example of the kinds of things we discovered. Of course the biggie was postulating the CUE Principle."

"Would you explain it, Dr. Manning? I mean like I said, *I* know, but—you know—it's better if you say it."

“Of course. CUE stands for Cause Unto Effect and this is what it says: there’s a factor common to all ecological crises that, when it’s discovered, will reveal a single fundamental cause. That means no matter what ill effect ... acid rain, global warming, frog mutations, changing weather patterns, extinction of plants and animals ... no matter what ... there’s one primal cause.”

“So, like, what *is* it?”

“Well, that’s the big question, isn’t it? I suppose when I find the answer I’ll be even more interesting to the media.”

“Huh! ... I’ve been wondering, Dr. Manning, why do you do this stuff? I mean I know it’s important and all, but why did you decide to do what you do and not something else?”

“Because I’ve always loved Nature, as far back as I can remember, and I’ve always felt loved back. My parents used to take me to our cabin in the woods. We would go for long walks down to a pretty stream. One time, when I was just four or five, we came across some saplings scattered on the ground. Someone had cut them down probably just for fun. There were cans and trash along the streambed and some of the vegetation had been trampled. Seeing all this made me cry so hard I couldn’t stop. I couldn’t comprehend it. How could somebody kill something so precious ... for no reason ... and defile a place that was so pure?”

“My Mom and Dad took turns explaining, over and over, how some people weren’t sensitive enough to care about the trees and the stream the way I did; they didn’t know any better.

“When I finally understood, it was chilling to me. If people could disrespect and disregard life like this, what else was possible? And how could they not know any better?”

“Up to that point, I had only known my own way: to love and respect nature and all the people and animals I knew. If there were others with ways this dark and destructive, then I had to do something about it. If they didn’t know any better, then I had to show them another way.

“I was too young to put it into words, but that’s when I decided—maybe realized is a better word—my job would be to help conquer ignorance and restore the balance that ignorance—and arrogance—have stolen from Mother Nature.

“As I got older and my talents and abilities developed, I gravitated toward science—I always had a feel for it. The choice has always made sense to me. The pure purpose of science is to reveal and establish the knowledge of truth. What better way to dispel ignorance?”

“You decided to do something so big when you were just a little kid?”

“I didn’t decide on the size or the details, just that I had to do something. I followed my instincts, did what felt right to me—one day, one step at a time—and that led to where I am today.

“If you think about how big something is, or that you’re only one person or just a kid and what difference could you make, then you’re sunk. When too many people do that, we’re all sunk.

“When you open up to the possibilities without questioning them, that’s when you can fly. When enough people do that, the world flies.”

“Thank you, Dr. Manning.”

“You’re very welcome.”

## *Chapter 2*

### *Betwixt Realities*

It's nighttime. I'm all alone standing on an endless field of polished black onyx, separated into lanes by pure white parallel stripes of luminescent inlaid alabaster six inches wide and twenty feet apart. Ahead the stripes converge at an impossibly distant horizon. The unfathomable vastness of this place is overpowering. My head feels huge and heavy. Intrinsic to the dream is the feeling this place has ponderous meaning.

A panoply of stars reflects on the infinite black surface in perfect symmetry. Although the sky and field extend forever, I feel a crushing claustrophobic pressure. There's a musty odor more in my mind than in my nose. It's like a feeling I can smell, the scent of age, immeasurable antiquity. Commingled with the sight and smell of the field is a sound, a drone as dark as the onyx, deep and thick. This confusion of the senses seems a natural interplay within the dream.

Prompted to turn to the left, I observe the striped plane morph into an infinite field of pure white that thrills my heart. It fills me with a sense of knowing and an incomparable, overwhelming joy, fragrant with the bouquet of a rose. Unlike happiness which comes and goes relative to events or experiences, this joy is simply there, tied to nothing. It is complex, more an array of feelings and impressions, a whirling dance of love, peace, wisdom, trust, freedom, truth, power, abundance, gratitude: an amalgam of all things good, each in turn coming to the fore, then receding into the mass. In tandem, the rose fragrance transforms to a variety of exquisite floral scents, some unidentifiable. My body seems weightless and translucent. An angelic wall of sound surrounds me and, at the same time, emanates from within. There is no melody or harmony per se, yet the sound conveys the essence of all music.

Prompted again, I turn back to my original position where the joy evaporates and the onyx field reappears. Continuing to turn, now facing right, the striped field morphs into unabated blackness, saturated with impregnable ignorance and suffocating fear. The abominable stench of long rotting carrion convulses me with nausea. There is no hope, no way out. My body, so heavy I can barely move, feels inextricably mired in a gloomy morass. The darkness wails a dirge of misery that shivers through me. I feel this place about to consume me and exert every ounce of my will to turn again, farther to the right.

Now I am facing opposite to my original direction. The striped field reappears with striking differences. The parallel lines no longer converge at a horizon, but seem to diverge, spreading farther and farther apart in the distance. Though the black onyx predominates, my attention is drawn to the alabaster. What little there is of it lightens my heart with great comfort. My body is charged with energy and anticipation. I just want to run forward. There is a rushing sound, layers upon layers of gentle breezes and whispers, a crowd of voices, words indistinguishable yet clearly understood, "All is well and wonderful." In the sound is the aroma of a misty, crisp country dawn. Refreshed by its possibilities, I turn back to my original position and the scene remorphs to the musty scented field.

No sooner does the image coalesce, that in the darkness I sense I am no longer alone. I hear a voice, but cannot make out the words. Just above and in front of me, a ball of light appears, becoming intensely brilliant, yet comfortable to my eyes. From within it I hear the voice more clearly, "Soon, Beloved, soon!"

I've had this dream dozens of times, once every couple of weeks, then more and more often until every night. It built to an astonishing crescendo that burst into my life: the last night of the dream it never ended. The light followed me into my room as I awoke in the middle of the night.

It hovered over the foot of my bed saying, “Now, Beloved, now!”

I rubbed my eyes and shook my head. The light was still there and I *was* awake. It started to shimmer and with the fizz of a thousand Perriers separated into inch square effervescent pixels. They divided in half and half again and again. Each time the fizz sounded a little higher and thinner. An outline became more evident with each division. As it lowered to the floor, the image clarified into the shape of a man. In a final fizzy glissando, he took form with a gentle pop.

He was about six feet tall, clearly powerful, yet not powerfully built. His face, curiously familiar, yet unknown to me, was chiseled but not worn, its features strong, softened by his demeanor and flowing snow white hair and beard. His clothing was exquisite: a knee length tunic with shorter open overblouse and loosely fitted trousers, all trimmed with a delicate brocade. The lightweight ivory colored material emitted the hint of a glow, which subtly modulated through a range of pastel off-whites. It did not hang on him, rather it seemed to flutter slightly and float with his body. Though it was the dead of night, I could see clearly because a light with no perceptible source accompanied him and softly illuminated the room.

“Beloved, I am Armaton, Special Envoy to Queen Veridia of the Society of Folk. I have travelled across time and many dimensions to be with thee now as I have always been.”

“Sir,” I said trembling, “One of us is drunk.”

He laughed so hard I thought he’d burst. Hands flat on his chest, he leaned back and swayed forward billowing pure mirth. I had to laugh, too; I couldn’t help it. But my laughter was infected with nervousness and fear—not of him but of the sheer inexplicability of what was happening.

“Aubrey, you are my delight! You prove irreverence a virtue.”

All of a sudden I caught that I was communing with what had to be a hallucination. *That* had to stop. To myself I muttered, “What’s happening? This ... this isn’t happening! Geez!”

The hallucination responded, “You are better prepared for this than you demonstrate.”

Continuing to mutter, “This is nuts! This isn’t happening! What is going *on*?”

It replied, “Calm thyself and understanding will come.”

In an escalating mental stampede, I grabbed for the phone on my nightstand and dialed reflexively. “Come on!—Come on!—Come on!—Come on!—Come ... Shoot! How could you be on the phone now? Who else?—Who else?—Who else?—Who else?—Who else?” My brain had fused.

“Aubrey!” The hallucination’s voice sounded like it came from the center of my head and vibrated throughout my body. “Why do you deny what you allow may be possible? Why do you run from the Truth?”

These words hit me like a ton of bricks, capping my frenzy. As the voice continued, its sound and feeling gently rippled through my body like a sedative.

“Thy time hath come. ‘Tis for thee now to consider the events just taken place and those to come as well. Calm thyself and observe. React not. Allow and analyze. This is no illusion. Nor do I come to trick thee. Thy destiny unfolds now before thine eyes. Observe. Listen. Sense. Consider. Do not recoil from that to which thou art unaccustomed. Do not become a bleating sheep, too nervous to leave the well-trodden path. Allow thou hast capacity to traverse illusory boundaries.”

I had calmed enough to take offense. “Look, one thing I’ve never been is a sheep ... Shoot! I’m talking to a hallucination!”

“If so, the hallucination is answering.”

Under my breath, “Yeah, except *I’m* the hallucination.”

“On that we agree. The limits you impose on yourself, your refusal to look beyond rigid



third dimensional constructs, that you deny what you clearly observe because it's deemed impossible—*this* is the ultimate delusion. Of the beings in this room, you are, indeed, the hallucination.”

Who or what ever this was had a point. Early in my research, I had learned the inexcusability of denying observations because they violated established principles.

The hallucination continued, “Fear betrays ignorance and belies truth. Is yours any different from the fear that fueled the Inquisition and had Galileo arrested for espousing the doctrine of Copernicus? Is what you refuse to believe this evening any more incredible than what the Inquisitors’ refused to believe: that Earth was *not* the center of the solar system and the Universe? That violated a concept of reality in place for two thousand years.

“Is what you shun now any more incredible than that was to them? You refuse to talk to me. You won’t acknowledge my presence, my very existence. You refuse even to *consider* it! Is that not shocking for a woman of science who argues for open-mindedness in support of her own pioneering work?”

I’d never known a hallucination to present such a compelling and passionate argument. The more sense it made, the more calm I got. What if this *was* happening? What if he *was* real? A lot of physical laws had just been violated. I’d have to let go of some pretty basic concepts, standards, what I’d learned in school, what I based my work on, Geez, *my* concept of reality.

“Your concern is my concern, dear child.” His eyes, pliant with compassion and understanding, pierced me. “Someone very dear to me once wrote,

All things are relative to things  
Within the same reality.  
To cross betwixt realities  
Unlock perceptions of learned thoughts.”

Now this *was* uncanny. I hadn’t said anything. Or did I? No, of course I didn’t. If this was real, then he was talking to my thoughts. My stomach in knots again, I kicked off the covers and bounded to him. I brought my palms together out in front of me expecting to sweep them through the air into a clap. Instead I slapped into the sides of his arms, compressing the sleeves of his tunic with a swish that released sprinkles of the tiniest silver sparks that trailed off and dissolved with a diminishing hiss.

We stood toe to toe and, squeezing his arms for emphasis, I demanded, “What’s happening to me? What does all this mean?”

“It means, my dear, you have confronted the edge of another reality, deep and far beyond the realm of the third dimensional cage you’ve questioned and craved to escape all your life.”

As I relaxed my grip I flashed back to my childhood. As long ago as I can remember I felt there was something missing, something fishy about life, the way things are. I remember being really small, walking home from school looking at my reflection in the car windows, wrinkling my nose and thinking everything seemed so strange. I couldn’t put my finger on it, just that sometimes life—this world—felt pretty weird. These were subtle thoughts, beneath the surface of my young mind, never mentioned, and long since buried in the distractions of what had become a busy life.

“What does that *mean*? How do you know about me? How do you know things I’ve never talked about?”

“You will answer your own questions when you ‘cross betwixt realities.’”

“Uh ... I think I already have.”

“No, at this point you are straddling them.”

“You talk like you know me. Should I know you?”

“Dear Aubrey, you *do* know me.”

“Who did you say you were again?”

“Armaton, Special Envoy to Queen Veridia of the Society of Folk.”

“The Society of Folk?”

“We are ageless Beings of Light who reside far beyond this third dimensional reality in a realm wherein pure Love pervades.”

I felt my sensibility shift and tears form. I could not help but draw in the beauty of this magnificent Being and his words.

“We are linked to this planet, among others, in blessed duty, sharing our profusion of Love. We can be seen, when one is aptly attuned, as the hidden Lights of Love just behind Mother Earth’s innocents, Her waters and plant and mineral kingdoms. We are kin to thee and await communion with thee.”

“Armaton, sir, you speak to my heart.”

“I speak to the hearts of all. Thine is pure and therefore receptive.”

“What you just said ... so few words, but ... I don’t know how to explain it ... I understand, I understand.”

“Proof of thy receptivity.”

“I don’t mean just what you’re saying. And it’s more than understanding ... more like ... what you said just now ... somehow ... *is* me. Do you know what I mean? When you talk about Mother Earth ... She’s such a part of my life. I care for her; I love her. My work, my purpose, it’s for her, to help her.”

“Yes.”

“But I’m a scientist. I’ve studied my whole life and everything I do is based on the science I learned. It makes sense to me. It all fits together. But it’s all grounded in physical laws you defy like they don’t exist. If I believe what I’ve just experienced, then I have to abandon everything my work is based on.”

“First of all, your *experience* has hardly begun. What’s more, nothing need be abandoned, merely supplemented. ‘Unlock perceptions of learned thoughts’ and you might find yourself in an expanded reality: wider, not eclipsing but encompassing what you fear to lose.

“Believe it or not, what made sense to you before will make even more sense from the perspective of an expanded reality. The relative motion of the stars and planets made a lot more sense when the Copernican model was accepted. Things change. Understanding broadens. Isaac Newton played a key role in establishing the principles of Copernicus. Yet, a few centuries later, his own work was questioned by Einstein. And now Einstein’s work is questioned by contemporary physicists.

“The old principles still apply within the limits of their perspectives. The new ones simply deal with a bigger picture. Don’t Newton’s Laws of Motion still apply—daily—to simple and complex situations? From shooting pool to shooting for the moon?

“Nothing you have witnessed defies your science. It simply calls upon parameters and processes that are outside the range of established understanding and perception. What I have done is the equivalent of striking a match before a trembling native, ignorant of simple concepts involving chemistry, heat, and friction.”

“Are we that ignorant?”

“In a relative sense, yes. But it’s not a flaw. Like the native you are merely unversed in simple concepts that are not a part of your culture.”

“Simple?”

“Quite. Are you willing to explore?”

“What? ... And how?”

“The question is not what or how, but when.”

“My question is how. And why now?”

“Ah! That is the answer to *my* question. When? Now.”

“Why *now*? What makes tonight ...”

“Because *now* you are ready.”

“How am I ready? And how do you know?”

“I could not be here, were you not ready. You could not have had this experience of me. Your own consciousness, your own questioning of the mundane limitations of three dimensions have opened the door to another reality and invited it into yours. That is how you drew me from the dream state into your wakeful consciousness. In that way, the journey has already begun. There is but to take the next step.”

“So you’re saying *I* did this?”

“In a manner of speaking. You allowed it, opened to the possibility, drew it to you. The dream, which I helped inspire, reconnected you to a distant memory. The first time was primarily my doing. The rest were mostly yours, rekindling ancient understanding.”

“It feels familiar, but I don’t really understand the dream.”

“Not yet. But you’ve come a long way. Now you’re ready to.”

“You realize how strange this is from where I stand.”

“Of course. But it is most normal and agreeable from where I stand and where you are about to step.”

“Okaaaaaay.”

He raised his right hand, pointing his fingers toward my forehead, gesturing to and fro in rhythm with his question, “Shall we take the next step?”

“This is altogether amazing! I mean, a half hour ago I was sound asleep.”

“Yes you were, my dear, and now you awaken.”

“I can hardly believe I’m saying this but somehow I know I can trust you. I think you can help me get a handle on something that I don’t even know what it is. It’s that feeling I had when I was a little girl, like, ‘There’s more to this. There’s more to life than what they’re telling me ... than what I’m seeing.’ So, yes, my answer is yes, but what *is* the next step?”

### *Chapter 3*

### *Foreshadowings*

He gently tapped his fingertips just above and between my eyes and I felt the breath rush from me. With the thrust of a cork, my Being was released from the long compressing confines of body and mind in a stream of light and thought that emerged from my crown. A swirling mist formed within and about me. With a touch, I felt its connection to all matter and space, encompassing all Infinity. No longer cognizant of my periphery, I was unable to distinguish myself from Armaton, my room, nor what was in and beyond it. The mist was aglow with countless points of light, which I knew to be the Folk, each infinitesimal, yet themselves infinite in scope and being. In cosmic embrace, I felt them as my own divine, beloved friends. I and the consuming mist and the lights merged. We were separate in identity, indistinguishable in essence.

I was intimate with all creation, simultaneously aware of whirling galaxies, glowing nebulae, their resident life forms, the minutia of their composite matter and energy. No detail was spared or ranked in importance. I sensed the purring of my neighbor's cat down the street, each of the four coats of paint on my bedroom walls, and the rhythmic emission of energy from a pulsar in the Crab Nebula. There were no questions for I was the answer. The joy and love would have been unbearable had I not dissolved my boundaries and expanded my capacities. Within the immeasurably brief focus of the present instant, I embraced eternity.

The infinite field from my recurring dream presented its reality and identity as the Great Plane of Knowledge, cosmic repository for all thoughts, events, histories, and possibilities, enshrining all consciousness: the complete ignorance of the Black Mystery, the all-knowingness of the White Sea, and, in between, the blends of ignorance and wisdom represented by the converging aspect of the Past and the diverging Rays of Hope, the future.

In the pause beyond an exhale, I had probed the expanse of all creation and the thought behind it. In the following inhale I returned to the room as it was before, myself never to be the same again.

My companion addressed me, "Welcome back to the third dimension!" He extended his arms and engulfed me tenderly. "Take a moment to compose thyself and settle back in."

For several minutes I absorbed the reverberations of this sublime experience. Between light sobs of joy and gratitude, I thanked him.

"I will accept your thanks only when I know for what you are thanking me."

"For giving me this experience."

"I've given thee nothing, my dear."

"Well, surely *I* didn't ..."

"Ah, but you did!"

"But you ..."

"I was your escort. I opened the door. You walked through. At graduation, you thanked the dean when he handed you your diploma, yes?"

"Of course."

"You were grateful to your professors?"

"Most of them."

"Who studied? Who wrote term papers? Who took exams?"

"I don't like answering rhetorical questions."

"Nor do I. I wasn't seeking an answer, only making a point. There is no difference here. The

brunt of the effort is yours. *You* are responsible for your own Self-realization. No one can give you what you don't already have. And what you have and who you really are, you just experienced. You are no different from any other; no more, no less a magnificent Being."

"I understand."

"Let us retire to the comfort of thy parlor."

We walked, arm in arm, to my living room and sat facing each other on the couch. There was no need to turn on a lamp, for his illumination came with us.

"Now. What else do you understand?"

The brunt of my brush with the Infinite had ebbed. Still, I retained an abundance of knowledge, understanding, and reawakened memory.

"I remember you." With a quaking laugh of recognition and nostalgia, "Master Armaton! Yes! Master Armaton! I dreamed of you when I was a child. I ... I *played* with you!"

"For a time, when you were very young, I visited frequently. As your memory improves, you will recall that the dreams were actually recollections of times together in the distant past."

"Other incarnations."

"Yes."

"I understand."

"Dear Aubrey, you have available to you a singular and most important destiny. To pursue it or not is your choice for thy will in this matter is free of obligation and expectation."

I thought, "What is he talking about? I'm well aware of my destiny. I'm right in the middle of it. I've made *lots* of choices and they've gotten me here, which is exactly where I want to be."

"Choices and experiences to this moment, my dear, but foreshadowings of choices and experiences to come."

Discomfited, "How do you do that? How do you pick up thoughts like that?"

"Thy learning will come, all in good time. The best teacher, experience."

"You mean I can learn to do it?"

"Technically, no. The ability is already and always present, not just in thee, but in all. So learning? No. Unfurling, perhaps, a more appropriate term."

"I'm completely turned around! A part of me already seems to know what I'm asking you about, but another part of me still needs to ask."

"That is most normal, dear Aubrey, for one caught 'betwixt realities.' This evening you have seen a glimpse of what is to come, of who you truly are. Yet you remain attached to what has been and who you were. This is a time of great transformation, its very nature most discomfiting. As is the saying, in gain may come pain. Yours is the challenge facing everyone on this planet. You are distinguished by a willingness to perceive and proceed with the process ..."

"I don't know what the process is."

"... despite not knowing what it is. Willingness to face the unknown is a great asset; fear of the unknown, a great detriment. You will soon face foes, intrinsically terrifying, who will relentlessly challenge your courage and resolve, their fearsomeness intensified by their unknown character and capabilities. Take solace for thine intrepid nature is equal to the challenge. You must remain undaunted in your faith for it will vanquish the adversaries, disbelief and doubt. Conquer fear or it will conquer you."

I was stunned by this alarming turn in the conversation. What was he talking about? What foes? Terrifying? Relentless? An uneasy chill quaked through my body. A minute ago everything was nirvana, and now he's got me battling demons! What was I getting into here?

“Behold! The very thought of fear lures it into being; the thought of battle entices the fear of it. By entertaining disbelief and doubt, they are born. Good! The first skirmish is commenced on the elemental battlefield where all foes must be conquered. Steel thy mind, Aubrey, for more is to come.”

Now he was getting downright spooky. What was going on? All of a sudden it felt like all the monsters from every nightmare I ever had were banded together, lurking just outside my sight. A primal terror I felt helpless to quell seethed within me. The room turned pitch dark.

“Steel thyself, Aubrey. Temperance!”

I leapt off the sofa and bent into a crouch, body taut in defensive tension, whirling about in every direction, poised to strike the demons before they overpowered me. Panting wildly, heart pounding, thoughts screaming, I waited for the right moment to spring.

... Nothing.

... Still nothing.

Then the sound of a gentle *poof* as the room was lit again. A patch of mist appeared and quickly organized itself into a scaled down holographic image of ... me. There I was, ludicrously crouched in preparation to strike, not at monsters, but the concept of monsters. Confined to my imagination, they had terrorized me nonetheless. The balloon of tension burst, I collapsed back onto the couch.

“Valiant Aubrey, thou art crowned with victory, the first of many to come.”

“Don’t make fun of me. I’m embarrassed enough as it is.”

“There is no mockery here. This is cause for great celebration. Whatever terror there may be to come, no battle shall be essentially different from the one now claimed in triumph, no foes essentially different from those now vanquished, no strategy more complicated or effective. All thy contests shall be resolved in the theater of the mind. It is so for thee and for all.”

Deep inside I sensed the truth of his words, but my stronger surface feelings ruled. I rebelled against feeling trapped within an inexorable fate that sounded like it was beyond my control.

“What is all this talk about destiny? Maybe that works where you come from, but here we don’t look at things that way. We set goals; we make plans. This destiny stuff is so ... Darth Vader.”

“Yes, I understand the term is little used, the concept ill-considered. Perhaps it is best not to construe destiny according to the strictest third dimensional definition as one’s inexorably predetermined fate. We, the Folk, consider destiny to be a life path chosen by an individual which has the potential for the greatest, highest good of All, the All in One, the One in All.

“Always choice, never force or expectation. The choice made is a function of consciousness, the degree to which one can and wishes to live in love. As a life path is chosen, the steps along the way follow.

“But thy concern lies not with the selection of terminology, more so with what the term has to do with thee, eh?”

“Well, yeah! And what does it have to do with you? If what you say: my destiny is the highest path I can choose and the choice is fully mine ... how does that involve you? You talk like you know my destiny, but how can you say what I’m going to choose?”

“If you were a dog and I a bird flying aloft with eyes to see both you and a cat around the corner you were turning, would it be safe for me to predict a chase? Perhaps. If you were Aubrey Manning and I were one who knows thee well, could I not discern from a set of possibilities those thou might opt to choose? There is, beyond this, a commitment of thine known to me, an ancient choice to which thy memory is not yet privy.

“What’s more, thou art mistaken in thine understanding. There is no one destiny, no one predetermined path, as you imply, composed of one rigid set of activities. Many choices. Many possibilities.”

“OK, then, so what do you see around my corner that I should know about?”

“Do you understand what you are asking?”

“Well, I think it’s pretty simple. You say you know what the future holds for me and I’m curious to know what you know.”

His stern gaze and tone gave me pause. “You do not understand, for if you did you could not be so cavalier. I am no soothsayer. This is not a parlor game. And thou shalt not avail thy destiny without understanding.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to offend you. I’m just a little over my head here. Could you help me to understand?”

“There is no offense and thine understanding is my mission. There is more at hand than you are aware.”

“A fair understatement.”

“This has as much to do with past events as future ... events taken place outside the range of thy recollection. There was a time, long ago, when you assumed a task of mighty import. It involved incarnations of learning the ways of the world. It further involved forgetfulness of your mission until the time of its culmination, when your memory, of necessity, would be fully restored. That process of restoration has begun. The vague images that flit through your mind are seed thoughts of experiences from your distant past. They shall grow in number and completeness.”

“Do you mean ...? I’ve been having these major *deja vu* flashes ... like every few minutes.”

“Precisely. Do not ignore them; yet do not pay them inordinate attention. In this as with all things, let one moment flow to the next, not in question or concern, but patient, calm observation. Temperance, my dear, always temperance.”

“So, can you tell me *anything* about my destiny?”

“Of course. To do so is an important point of my presence here now. Understand that what I share are streams of potential related to needs craving satisfaction. Though I have described yours as a task agreed to long ago, remember: this is not an inviolable, ironclad contract. You have made choices all along the way, through many incarnations, that have brought you to this point. This is but another choice that shall, inevitably, bring you to yet another ... and another again.

“What changes now is your perspective. All choices but your first were made in ignorance of the purpose you originally wished to serve. This afforded thee, amongst other things, the opportunity to evolve naturally into thy mission, gathering necessary learning and insight. As thy recollection grows, thou wilt recover the broader view, once complete, affording thee the final opportunity to proceed or not with thy course of action in complete knowledge and understanding.”

“Master Armaton, sir, is this one of those things you should file for later and that’s when you get it? Because right now you have me completely bewildered.”

With a gentle laugh, “Yes, dear Aubrey, it is one of those things. I’m afraid for awhile there shall be more of them, but they will begin to add up, making more and more sense as you go.”

“I almost don’t want to ask again, but what about this destiny? Could you be a little less enigmatic?”

Laughing again, “Yes, of course. Of the situation that exists, you know much already, albeit

from a third dimensional perspective. The marvel is, the choices you've made, heretofore in ignorance, have brought you to a perfect platform to accomplish the mission at hand."

"That's not helping!"

"Yes, yes, quite. Well, where to begin? You are aware, of course, of the precarious balance within and among this planet's ecosystems."

"That's my job."

Excited, "Yes, yes, yes, that's the marvel I ..." He interrupted himself clearing his throat. After a calming pause, "There is a storm gathering, a confluence of energies on many dimensional levels, of which thy work affords only a surface view. There is more, much more, at the level of prime causation about which thou hast the opportunity to learn. Once learned, the course of action thine to choose."

That turned my head. Prime causation—sounded a lot like the CUE Principle.

"As I have mentioned, we, the Folk, are privileged to serve and care for this blessed planet. Our destinies are linked, lovingly so. For millennia we have prepared for the manifestation of prophecies regarding the fates of Mother Earth and her resident guests, related to a time when the actions of some, the consciousness of many would pose a threat to the existence of all. That time is nigh.

"To be more specific, it was prophesied that one on Earth, in service to the Folk, would chronicle our imminent disappearance from this planet, enshrining our memory along with a message of warning to be revealed in the future. This came to pass already, some fourteen centuries ago. The warning, intended for a time when the world as perceived shall end, must now issue forth.

"The culmination of this task—to receive, study, and act upon the knowledge contained in the chronicle—is for thee to accept or decline. At the behest of my liege, Queen Veridia, I invite thee to expand thine awareness that thou might consider, consciously and with full knowledge, the continuation of thy role as has been foreseen in Folk prophecy."

Stunned to a stupor at first, I laughed aloud at the multiple levels of absurdity in this simplistic and presumptuous "invitation."

"So, what you're telling me is, the fate of the world is on *my* shoulders, not like I haven't already felt that, but," more and more agitated, "what you're saying is it's *all* on my shoulders ... that's crazy enough right there ... but, into the bargain there's some kind of Nostradamus thing going on that *says* I should do it ... and then you tell me I should *choose* whether or not to ..." (mimicking his voice), "... 'accept or decline' like I would *have* a choice!"

Softly, "Temperance, dear Aubrey, temperance. The shells of words, simplistic as they seem, represent not their essence. Thy misapprehension runs wide and deep, thy thinking most third dimensionally human. Understandable, yet inappropriate.

"First, the fate of the world is not on thy shoulders any more than another's, yet," with an ironic laugh, "it would not hurt for each to act a *little* more as if it were so.

"Second, there is no presumption of involvement other than what is right for thee. There are no obligations. What is best for the All is—at all times—what is best for the one. To act outside one's truth serves none. Foreswear guilt, shame, and obligation, for they serve none. Be true to thy self, as best as can, and in that way you serve the All. Realize thy highest Self and thy highest good serves the highest good of all."

"So, now what you're saying is, all anybody should do is whatever they want to do, no matter what the consequences? Even if the world depended on it."

"What I am saying is, there is no should. There is always choice. Always. No one is so



exclusively depended upon as to trump freedom of choice. Ever. This is a notion foreign and uncomfortable to present mass consciousness on Earth, where, for so many, guilt and shame are the currency of relationships. Many know not how to act in the absence of these and their medium, manipulation.

“If I might offer: your life, for the most part, has been lived in demonstration of this principle. You have always made important decisions free from the expectations and manipulation of your society and peers. It has been thy blessed fortune to be born unto parents who raised thee as such, who imposed not their needs and desires upon thee. Think back. Whenever you chose to help—family, friend, or stranger—it was done freely, always with the good will and invigoration that comes from freedom of choice and in the absence of guilt and shame.

“It was thy parents, subject to such from their own upbringing, having learned the better, spared you the lesser.”

I had only to think of my mother and my grandmother to appreciate the contrast and what Master Armaton was saying. He was right. I rarely fell victim to guilt, though in my early life Gramma had a way of getting to me.

Armaton interrupted my thoughts, “Thine objections, again, are not so much to the concepts and philosophies related to the task, but to the helplessness thou art feeling with thine inclusion in it.”

True. This talk of destiny, the situation he described, felt completely out of my control and it was hard for me to handle.

He spoke to that, “There is no less control in this situation than in any other, only a paucity of data. The seeming chaos holds information for thee. Calm thyself and observe. React not. Absorb and ponder. Allow and analyze. Patience! As more is learned, more shall be understood, that decisions can be made to serve thee and all as best thou seest fit.

“Maychance, consider this: listen for a time judging naught, receiving all with dispassion. Assimilate the whole, the better then to judge and make thy choice.”

Chill, listen, get the whole picture, and think about it. OK, I could do that. “So I’m a part of some prophecy?”

“You may be, if you so choose. The life you have lived, the choices you have made brought you to this moment of possibilities. The meaning of prophecy? Assessing a moment of possibilities. It is not the harbinger of inevitability, more a call to attention, to action; in this case a prod and guide to change.

“There are no pat hands. All is up to choice, the willingness to see, the courage to change. There are many possibilities, many futures. Absorb and ponder. Analyze and act.”

Dispassion notwithstanding, this jolted me. The way he was talking reminded me a lot of my work. Chaos holds information. Observe and analyze. Don’t prejudge or react. Look at the whole picture. It’s not about prediction; it’s about assessing the possibilities, which shift at different moments in time. Implausible as I would have anticipated, predictive computer modeling and prophecy now had the potential to occupy the same vicinity of my perception.

Just as I was getting a handle, Armaton shifted back into enigmatic gear.

“Here is what else I have to offer. Take and make of it what thou wilt.

Deep within all there is a beast.  
It lurks in hiding, poised to spring  
Whene’er it senses easy prey  
Exposed by thoughts of fear and doubt.

Enticed by greed and hatred's stench,  
It feeds by feeding tendencies  
That further darken darkened minds.

~

Deep within all there is a god.  
It waits in hiding, poised to spring  
Whene'er it senses ease of mind  
Reflected in one's thoughts of love.

Enticed by peace and joy's perfume,  
It feeds by feeding tendencies  
That further love in loving minds.

“Remember this: the beast and the god add to themselves and displace each other. That is to say, love adds to love; fear adds to fear; and each diminishes the other. Temperance always, that thou might perceive clearly, choose wisely.”

A lovely and poetic construction of image and aphorism. But what this had to do with anything else ... or me ...? File for later, I guessed. How did he say it? “Absorb and ponder.”

He continued, “Take heed to all which has been said and transpired. There is much to consider. Much! In every experience there is learning. Remember: conquer fear or it shall conquer thee. Temperance always. I bid thee, fare well!”

“That's it?”

## *Chapter 4*

### *Absorb and Ponder*

With that, I heard the Perrier fizz again as his body started to pixelate, now in a process reverse to its forming: small pixels combining to form larger. I reached out, pressed my palm to his shoulder and felt my fingers and hand slip between the enlarging cells that comprised his rapidly dissipating form.

“Master Armaton! What are you doing? Where are you going? Geez, you can’t leave now!”

“I depart, my dear, only to return. Permit thyself to absorb and ponder that thou may best prepare for the continuation of this experience.”

His final word was spoken by the ball of light, which quickly dimmed and shrank. I managed to reach the lamp switch just before the room turned dark.

Now what? The thought of sleep was absurd, yet a part of me yearned to go back to bed and slumber the night away. First of all I wanted to retreat from the discomfort of the fantastic events just taken place. Maybe even more, I wanted to do something normal, recapture life the way it’s supposed to be. Ironic for one so prone to repudiate convention. For a moment, I had a sharp twinge of empathy for Breck von Hass.

The next step was clear, my requirements obvious: tryptophane and chocolate. How strange to be in the kitchen in my nightgown sipping a hot cocoa; such a simple, tangible, and familiar comfort, on the heels of such a mind blowing series of intangible and aberrant events. The comparison or, more to the point, the utter impossibility of comparison, all of a sudden struck me so funny I began to laugh. Traverse the Cosmos? No problem! Save the world? All right then! Hot chocolate? Okeedokey!

It was a classic moment of release: laughing, laughing, crying, laughing, crying, crying, laughing, crying, snuffle breathing, deep sigh, droopy eyes, exhaustion setting in, heavy head cradled in arm on table and off to ... slumber land.

The next thing I know, a whizzing sound startles me. I awaken with a jolt. What’s left of the cocoa is churning around in my cup, faster and faster. It swirls above the rim, growing larger and larger, higher and higher, louder and louder. With a ferocious roar it turns into a brackish brown mini-tornado. The funnel thrusts to the ceiling, shaking the house with thunder. Its base, which I now want to call a tail, starts to flail around. It raps the cup on the tabletop, then the side of the table leg, across to the kitchen cabinet, and onto the floor. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

I stare in an open-mouthed daze. The tornado quiets and slows to a stop. It congeals into a gelatinous dark mass ... that solidifies, becoming a grisly, gnarled serpent. So hideous and disgusting, it’s unlike anything I’ve ever seen or imagined. Even though it’s as big as the room, it gets even bigger. No ... wait! How can this be? I’m getting smaller! It looms over me ten times my size.

This couldn’t possibly be happening. Then again, I felt the same thing about Armaton. But there’s no way this is real. I must be still asleep. This is some kind of super-nightmare. But what if it isn’t?

The thought of Armaton calms me. I hear his words, “No battle shall be essentially different ... no foes essentially different from those now vanquished, no strategy more complicated or effective. All thy contests shall be resolved in the theater of the mind. ... Conquer fear or it shall conquer thee.”

Dream or not doesn’t seem to be the issue. Either way this battle is taking place in the “theater of the mind.” I must conquer fear.

The beast hunches over, facing me from above and in front of me. Its putrid breath gurgles deeply in and out, warming and moistening my face. More than anything, I want to wipe dry with my sleeve and cover up with my arms, but I sense it is imperative that I refrain from such submissive behavior and stand my ground.

Now, in a voice that modulates between a growl and a shriek, it speaks, “Well, little missy, how do thee do?”

Ready to impress the beast with a demonstration of boldness, I reply, “What are you? What are you doing in my kitchen?”

In immediate retrospect, it seems clear I might have selected more aggressive imagery and syntax. This is confirmed by its derisive laughter.

“For such a puny little thing, thee gives me great amusement. For that I shall grant the favor of a warning. Think not for a jot thee hast the strength to resist the power in me. I am the sovereign Lord Sesavah and in this place of misery I and only I reign supreme. Defy me and face suffering beyond the pale of endurance. Align with me and if I choose, thee shall be granted favors more.”

I can’t help but grimace and shrink from the humid stench of its breath. This seems to please and rouse it more.

“Thee hast no will to resist mine overwhelming power. Thee’s mind ist weak and hobbled now. Thee knows not what ist false or true.”

Its hacking, wheezing laughter is unbearably shrill and I cover my ears. The beast rears back. Around the area beneath its head, bumps form, rapidly growing into fire hose-thick extensions that twist and turn, growing longer and longer until they are close enough to flail me. Their slimy touch is more disgusting than I think I can bear.

With a series of repulsive, squishing pops, each sprouts a head as ugly as its host, still consumed in maniacal laughter. They cavort around my head and shoulders, pecking at me and licking my face. The minion beasts begin to scream, first in turn, then all at once. They keep raging at me, each barking its message over and over and over.

“Thee ist helpless. Bow to me!”

“Thee haff no power to resist!”

“We hast dominion over thee!”

“Thee’s mind ist weak!”

“Thee ist mine slave!”

They take turns sticking their thin, slit tongues in my ears, reaching into my head and down my spine to its base where I feel a painful electric tingle. Horribly violated, terror consumes me. I lose control of my body and fall, limp, to the floor. My leg muscles jerk, slightly at first, then violently. My arms and stomach go next. Spasms cascade through my body. They stop suddenly, and I lay prone. With a jolt, they start again. Then stop. Then start. When I am still the beasts fall quiet, breaking into whispered twitterings. When I twitch they explode again with cackles and screams.

Through my panic, Master Armaton’s words again return to me. “Conquer fear or it will conquer you. ... Calm thyself and observe ... Allow ... Analyze and act.”

These admonitions and the thought of him seem to cut through the horror. “Allow.” I mouth the word to myself. “Allow.” Ahhhh! Something’s beginning to gel. Whatever this is, whatever is going on, the fact is: I’m OK. Aside from the fear, nothing bad has actually happened. I’m not hurt, only scared. Understanding this, I let go even more in surrender to the moment. The incapacitating fear withdraws, the tremors cease, and the beasts return to their muffled snickers.

Nothing has changed but my perspective and my attitude. I am not fighting and resisting, but allowing. In this state of ... suspension ... I find myself turning the situation over in my mind, analyzing what's happening. Thoughts flow and a sense of knowing washes over me. I hold back the smile that now wants to crease my face. Yes, I know this beast.

I hear its words replay in my mind, "... puny little thing ... Think not for a jot thee hast the strength to resist the power in me ... I and only I reign supreme ... Defy me and face suffering beyond the pale of endurance."

For a being claiming so much power, it seems to be making an awfully big effort to convince me. It said, "Align with me and if I choose, thee shall be granted favors more."

That's interesting. Why doesn't it just force me into alignment if it reigns so supreme? It can't, that's why. That's why it's trying to bully me. If it needs me to submit, then it doesn't have dominion over me.

My understanding erupts into a sensation of power more potent and magnificent than I had known I possessed. No longer terrorized, now the "beast" amuses me. I will play with it as it thinks it plays with me. Then I will dispatch the imposter.

In a voice deliberately meek and small, "Lord Sesavah?"

The minion beasts cease twittering and withdraw, retracting back into their host, who leans toward me to say, "Yes, little missy. Ist thee ready to submit?"

With quaking voice in feigned entreaty, "Lord Sesavah, may I speak?"

"Thee may, for thine attitude now pleases me."

Softly, "Lord Sesavah?"

Leaning in closer to hear me better, "Yes, little missy. Thee may speak."

"Lord Sesavah?"

Pressing closer still, turning an "ear" to me.

Whispering into it, "You are a liar and you have very bad breath."

There is a pause—very brief—while I guess the beast is compiling my words. When they register, it explodes with rage, roaring, snarling, and shrieking as it bounces around the room careening off walls.

The fury of this monster is hilarious, driven out of control by a juvenile insult. The more I laugh, the crazier it gets, the stronger I feel. I rise to my feet and grow back to my normal size.

It screams, "This be not the last of me! Thee ist a bug that I will crush!" Quieter and more deliberately, it growls, "Enough of thee I have, so from this battle I withdraw. Thee have shown me terror deep at just a licking down thee's ear." In a gurgling whisper, "Think thee that this ist all the Sesavah hast for thee?" Louder, "In war to come, more, much more." Increasingly louder, "For me to do, for thee to lose. Many, many more than thee. For me to strike, for thee to lose." In a climaxing scream, "Think thee know me? Hah! I know *thee*." Now it erupts in maniacal laughter again, screeching repeatedly, "I know thee! Hah! I know thee! I know thee!"

Despite my composure, I feel a shiver run through me.

The beast shrinks as its clamorous jeering fades away. With my cup still attached to its tail, the now diminutive Sesavah flits about the room and shrivels to nothing. When it disappears in midair, the cup crashes to the floor and shatters.

In my mind, I hear Armaton once more, "Valiant Aubrey, thou art crowned with victory."

Utterly exhausted, I barely make it to my bed, collapsing into a deep sleep.

In what seemed like the next instant, I heard a thumping and fluttering. Squinting my eyes in the bright morning light I looked out the window over the head of my bed just in time to see a large robin fly away. An avian wake-up call. I muttered "How strange!" which invoked the

recollection of what happened during the night with a shudder. Quintessentially strange!

Taking inventory of events, I sorted each, as best I could, into two categories which no longer held the same clear distinction they had the day before: real and unreal. The onyx field. That was a dream, easy to figure out because I'd had it so many times before. The light in my room and the appearance of Armaton. Hmm. That just felt too much like I was awake. What's more, the feeling I had about him, the fondness I still felt, that was real. OK, so everything that happened from when he showed up until he ... um ... dissolved, that was real, recognizing that my definition of real was evolving.

Making the cocoa was real. That was easy because I had spilled some on my nightgown and the stain was there to prove it. The next thing, the Sesavah. That had to be a dream. I remember getting droopy while I was drinking and laying my head on the table. The next thing I knew: nightmare. Category: dream. The only thing was, I couldn't remember waking up and coming to bed.

Then, of course, there was the present moment. That did seem to fit best in the real category.

So now things were all sorted out, but I still felt confused and disoriented. "Absorb and ponder." That was Armaton's advice. Wise counsel. Not much other choice, really.

I went out to the kitchen to put up a pot of coffee, unprepared for the shock. The walls looked strange ... discolored. So did the ceiling and cabinets. I looked closer. There were tiny spots of cocoa all over, like it had been sprayed around the room. Then I saw my favorite cup, in pieces on the floor.

A bit more to absorb and ponder.

## *Chapter 5*

### *Adjusting*

The time I took getting ready for work was spent pretty much in a blurry daze, sprinkled occasionally with befuddled mutterings. “How could ...? ... No, that’s not possible! ... But the cup ... and ... what about ... No! No way!”

I did have the presence of mind to choose my clothing mindfully, selecting a light blue blouse that always helps to soothe me when I need it. Although I usually wear jeans or slacks to school, this morning I chose a black skirt and jacket. Somehow it felt better dressing up a bit and wearing black feels very grounding to me.

Getting out of the house felt better, too. The brisk mountain air helped ground me. So did the drive down the winding road into town. The trees and chaparral and granite outcrops that line the way always make me feel good.

But the deeper I got into town, the more uneasy I became. By the time I pulled onto the freeway I felt really disconnected. The world around me seemed surreal. It was like I had just arrived from another planet and didn’t perceive things in their normal context.

Looking around, I didn’t see cars as cars, but—from a more fundamental perspective—as these rumbling metal and glass boxes of different sizes, shapes, and colors that people opened up, crawled into, and then used to transport their bodies from one place to another. They were powered by exploding processed swill formed from microscopic plants and animals that died millions of years ago. It seemed so odd and primitive.

Perceiving such “normalcy” to be so strange propelled me back to my childhood musings. The ones I had told Armaton about. In a vague way, he seemed connected to them. Armaton. Yes, I remembered more. He consoled me then, told me that compared to his home, this place *was* a bit strange, that my feelings were understandable, and they would diminish in time.

A vivid recollection of him came to me. One of my early, early memories—I couldn’t have been more than two—was seeing him looking over me as I was falling asleep, with his twinkling eyes and gentle, loving smile. He would visit me frequently when I was a little girl. Thinking about it, I couldn’t remember a time when I didn’t know him. How could I have forgotten him all these years?

We would talk. I would tell him about the birds and plants and trees. He would tell me stories about where he came from. Things were very different there. Everybody got along. He said most of what seemed so serious and important here just didn’t matter there ... and a lot of things that we thought silly here were what their lives were about. He made it sound so sweet and kind, a place you’d want to go to, but you could only get there in your dreams.

He insisted it was real and that one day I would get to see it, but only if I wanted to. He was really into the choice thing even then.

I caught myself chuckle and realized how much better I felt. What a weird experience. I was pretty close to flipping out for a while there. It struck me: the effect thinking about Armaton had had on me. The same thing happened last night when I was so scared. Thinking about him calmed me. Yes, that’s what happened when I was little, too. What was his magic, I wondered?

Before long, I pulled into a parking spot on campus. On the way to my office, I saw a colleague, Harold Skirtlandt, walking toward me. We had known each other for six years. He was my first post grad assistant, a stellar inquisitive researcher, always open, always receptive to out-of-the-box, off-the-wall possibilities. A keen, intuitive analyst and mathematician, he was able to thoroughly, swiftly, and reliably assess possibilities to determine the most viable

approaches. Although he was eminently qualified and long overdue to be a primary investigator himself, he chose to remain on my project because he felt it was cutting edge and very important work. Not because he had this crush on me we both knew was never going to happen.

As he approached, Harold had his head buried in an open book held in one hand and a stack of papers crumpled in the other. He glanced back and forth between each, muttering rapidly in conversation with himself.

“If you factor in the ... hmmm ... no, wait! ... It’s because the ... no, that doesn’t explain ... well, yeah, but that shouldn’t really matter because ... ”

Admittedly, he often came across as the exemplary geek: single-minded, distracted, quirky. This was clearly one of those times. The horn rimmed glasses helped clinch it. Other times, when he wasn’t so absorbed in thought, he was quite personable.

His sandy blond wavy hair hung over his ears and onto his neck, and was naturally well kempt, like all he needed to straighten up was run his fingers over his scalp. He was always clean-shaven. Medium height, thickly robust build, he usually wore the same thing every day: khaki trousers, matching short sleeve shirt with two pockets and epaulets, and thick soled brown casual oxfords.

When Harold was absorbed in his work, he spoke in a drone, each word melding into the next, like a groaning buzzer. Other times, especially when he got excited, quite the contrary: he was animated and enthusiastic. His smile looked more like a sheepish grin and he flashed it often.

He was heading straight for me, oblivious of my presence.

“Harold, Hi!”

“... which variable does the ...? ... No, it’s more a matter of ... ”

Now he was right on top of me.

Sharply, “*Harold!*”

“OK, that’s right ... that’ll do it ... *Aubrey!*” With his self-conscious grin, “You shouldn’t sneak up on people like that!”

“Yeah, Harold. I’m a Ninja.”

“What’s wrong?”

“What do you mean?”

“You have the blue blouse on.”

“Well, it’s not something I ...well ... it’s a little complicated.”

Alarmed as he notices, “You’re wearing a skirt! They turned down the grant!”

“What are you talking about?”

“We’re screwed! *I’m* screwed! The guy from Stanford is here! You’re gonna interview with him! That’s why you’re all dressed up.”

“Harold!”

“What am I gonna do? Aubrey, you gotta get me ...!”

“*Harold!!!* The grant is still happening. I keep telling you, chill out. It’s going to be OK.”

Rapidly amping down, “OK. Alright. I just thought ... well ... OK. So what is it?”

In a futile effort to avert an answer, “What’s what?”

“C’mon, Aubrey. You know you’re gonna tell me eventually. Why drag it out? You know ...” shifting into a mock German accent, “you haff no power to resist!”

The look on my face must have perfectly reflected my utter shock at this almost exact replication of an expression the Sesavah used.

“Wow, Aubrey! What’s that about? What’s wrong?”



I started to come unglued, trembling while trying almost successfully to stifle the tears.

“Holy smokes, Aubrey! Now you gotta tell me!”

Between rapid breaths, “OK, but not here. Let’s go to my office.”

We walked in silence. Somehow Harold managed to stuff everything he was carrying under one arm so he could hold mine with the other. Such a dear! Though I kept my eyes straight ahead, I could feel his frequent concerned stares in my direction. As we passed people we knew, all I could manage was a weak, polite smile. Harold uncharacteristically greeted each with an effervescent smile and a, “Hello. How are you? Good to see you. Have a good day!” as if to distract them from me. When we reached my office, he closed the door behind us and we sat in two overstuffed easy chairs that obliquely faced each other.

“Alright, Aubrey, tell me.... Are you in some kind of trouble?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think so. But maybe. I don’t know!”

“OK, so what?”

“Well last night ... it was just so weird ...”

“The dream again?”

“Well, yeah ... and then some!”

“What does that mean?”

So I told him: the whole thing, from talking light to shattered cup. I’d never seen Harold so rapt in attention doing anything other than his work. He hardly blinked, never took his eyes off me, and never said a word; even after I finished, not for a minute or so.

Then he said, simply and softly, “Whoa!”

“I tried to call you when it first happened, but your line was busy.”

“When? What time?”

“I don’t know. Two? Three?”

“I was home! I was asleep!”

“That’s what I figured. I think maybe I dialed my own number.”

“Aubrey, I know the answer to this question I’m gonna ask and I know that you know that I know, but ... I have to ask any way ... just because ... well ... Is there any way that ... you know, like peyote, for example, has especially potent psychotropic qualities that are often used to induce ...”

“No peyote, Harold. No drugs. Chocolate.”

Harold rushed to where he felt more comfortable, “Well, that could be something. Chocolate contains several pharmaco-dynamic substances. Theobromine stimulates the central nervous system and has the capacity to stimulate muscular activity. Phenylethylamine has a chemical structure similar to amphetamines. There’s your psycho-stimulation. And chocolate stimulates endorphin secretion. That’ll give you the same effects as opium.”

“Yeah, Harold, and it was used in an aphrodisiac concocted by the Aztecs in the sixteenth century. So now you’re a chem major? I read the same candy box you did. And you’re overlooking something: I had the chocolate in the middle of the experience. The whole thing with Armaton happened before.”

“Well in certain Aztec rites, now that you mention them, peyote was used to induce time transitions in the experience of events, so that things that happened after other things that happened before felt ... like they happened ... before the ... first ...”

He trailed off in acknowledgment of the exasperation clearly displayed on my face. Then on his, he revealed the fear and concern he felt for me.

“I guess I don’t know what to say, Aubrey. Should I be worried?”

“I think we’re both past that point, Harold.”

“So, you’re worried, too?”

“Maybe worried isn’t exactly the right word. Uncomfortable, definitely. But I’m not thinking, ‘Uh oh!’ It’s more like ... um ... adjusting.

“You know when you move into a new place? It feels strange at first and maybe you miss where you’ve been, but, at the same time, it’s exciting, like, ‘I wonder what this is going to be like?’ You explore new places, find out what’s there. It takes getting used to, but it’s not bad.... No! It’s not bad!”

I had myself pretty convinced. That didn’t seem to be the case for Harold, who was now overtly morose.

“It’s OK, Harold. I don’t understand it either, but somehow I know it’s OK.”

He didn’t say anything, just stared; at me, then at the floor. I smiled reassuringly, reached out and patted his hand resting on the arm of the chair.

“You know,” he finally said, “it was almost better when I thought you were gonna see the Stanford guy. I mean, at least then I knew you were OK.”

“I’m OK *now*, Harold. Trust it, please!”

There was nothing I could do to change his quizzical, distressed expression. Then it hit me. He wasn’t concerned so much for my safety as for my sanity. Well, that made sense. If he had told me what I told him ... Denying I was nuts didn’t seem like a particularly effective tack. Probably just look like another symptom.

He slid forward to the edge of the chair saying, “Well ... um ... I uh ... um ... have a class ... so ... I ... um ... should go.”

Smiling, “I know you do, Harold. Go do it! Give ‘em all you got!”

We both stood up.

“OK, you too.”

“Alright. See ya!”

“Yeah.”

With that, Harold gathered his things and made his way out the door. He disappeared around the corner of the hallway while I watched, waiting to swipe the air with a reassuring wave. He never looked back.

## *Chapter 6*

### *The God or the Beast*

The rest of the day slipped by quickly and uneventfully. For the most part, what happened the preceding night didn't come to the surface of my thoughts, though there was an awareness just beneath. To follow the analogy I used with Harold, if you move to a new place, when you're away at work, your mind's not directly on it all day, but a sense of the new circumstance is there.

However, driving home, getting closer and closer to the "reality" waiting for me there, it occupied more and more of my awareness. I felt uneasy again, the same as in the morning. Just the memory of my broken cup on the floor and the cocoa stains sent a shiver of anxiety through me. The more I ran the details through my mind, the more anxious I became.

To forestall actually confronting the evidence and the cleanup that faced me at home, I stopped at *El Taquito* for a tostada. I thought of the times I had brought my Dad there. He was such an even-tempered man, not much bothered by it; so it was a riot when we were there one night and he did a rant comparing the Italian food in California to back East.

"The tomato sauce is an abomination and the pizza ... What can I say? You can't get a decent pizza west of the Mississippi. For that matter, it's hard to find one west of Jersey."

"But, Dad, we're *here* now ... eating Mexican food! And *it's* not nearly as good *east* of the Mississippi. Doesn't that compensate?"

Smiling as best he could with his mouth stuffed, he nodded and grunted his agreement. Such a happy, vivid memory. I thought of it from time to time, not just there in the restaurant.

My recollection was interrupted when the jukebox came on, playing some Mexican music. So bouncy and jubilant, it made me smile. The horns blared these joyous refrains and beneath them a tuba—not a bass guitar, a *tuba*—played an alternating bass line. "Brrrrrt. Brrrrrt. ... Brrrrrt. Brrrrrt." It was so gleeful, it made me laugh. I enjoyed my meal, then headed out to the car.

For some strange reason, when I opened the door, I made a point to check out the back seat. This scene that's in a thousand movies and TV shows played out in my mind. The one where the driver gets in the car, drives off, then all of a sudden the fugitive or the missing hero pops up from the back seat and says, "Just keep driving!"

"Silly!" I thought. Satisfied the car was vacant, I got in. Pulling out, I looked over my left shoulder to make sure the lane was clear. While my head was turned, I heard a sizzle, then a familiar voice, "Just keep driving, Aubrey."

Snapping my head around in shock, I beheld Armaton sitting in the passenger seat, beaming at me.

"Nice ride!"

"Geez!!! Are you crazy? My heart's gonna explode!"

"Temperance, dear Aubrey, all is well and wonderful. And, Harold's opinion notwithstanding, there are no crazy people in this vehicle. I gather you've had an adventure since last we spoke."

Too upset to answer, I helped myself to a few necessary deep breaths, aspirating "Fwoof!" and "O Geez!" on the exhales. "An adventure!" I thought, "He's got some nerve. My hot chocolate turns into a beast and he calls it an adventure! And where was he anyway when all this was going on? Traipsing around in the land of Love while I'm there with snakes licking down my ears."

"It is more polite to refer to me in the second person when in my presence. Even in thought,

my dear. Do I sense a pout in my midst?”

“Well, where *were* you? You leave me, then all of a sudden this absolute insanity starts happening. I mean, it was completely over the top. Completely! How could you leave me like that?”

“Perception can be a tricky thing, limited to the third dimension. Let me assure you, I was there to witness the entire event. But I was—the best way to put it is—between the parameters of your perception.”

“That’s even *worse*! Witness! How could you be there and not *do* something?”

“You did extraordinarily well on your own, I thought.”

“Did I? What about when I was on the floor flapping around like a fish?”

“That was undoubtedly your finest moment.”

“How can you make fun of me like that? I mean you come into my home in the middle of the night, you turn my entire life upside down and my head inside out, you lay trips on me about destiny and saving the world—for all I know the beast came *because* of you—and you have the temerity to laugh at me?”

“It is good that you are releasing these emotions. Always better than keeping them inside. It’s all energy; it must go somewhere. If not released, it can fester in the being and, after sufficient time, cause disease in the physical body. Thy tears released much. This is the remainder. I trust thou art experiencing relief now.”

He was right. I was.

“Good. To be clear, I do not laugh at thine expense, but with a light heart, in appreciation of the richness of thine experience and realization. And your flapping was, in fact, your finest moment, for at that time—the point of your deepest despair—you summoned the calmness, the courage, the will, and the audacity that ultimately dispatched the beast.”

“That *was* very cool, wasn’t it?”

“It was, indeed!”

“You know, the thing is, once I figured out what the deal was, the beast didn’t intimidate me at all. In fact the thing was almost ludicrous. I mean it talked like a cross between Col. Klink and the Cookie Monster. Aside from the shock value, there really wasn’t that much to it.”

“Ah! The elementary miscalculation of battle, underestimating the opposing force. You were wise in your conclusion that the beast held no dominion, but that would not be to say it wielded little power. Were you not on the ground flapping like a fish? That was not an act exclusive to your own choosing, uninfluenced by the actions of the beast, as you are wont to call the Sesavah.”

A chill rose up my spine.

“Frankly, you did suffer, as it were, at the hands of the beast. In fact, for a very dangerous moment, you considered capitulation. Perhaps more dangerous, prior to that, you considered the experience to be an unreality. By continuing to do so, you would have withdrawn your attention. Most dangerous, for to ignore circumstances or attack is to be under the control of circumstance and foe.”

Alarmed, “Are you saying this thing has power over me?”

“Not in the least. I am saying, yes, it holds vast power; it is vicious and clever; but whether or not the Sesavah rules is of your own choosing.”

“That doesn’t make sense. What if, God forbid, it has *overwhelming* power?”

“Then you are overwhelmed. But I stress, it is only with your cooperation, your assent, your acceptance that this could occur. You choose the extent to which you are affected. *You* forbid ...

or consent.

“I shall state the obvious, what your recent experiences have shown you. The power of thought, particularly fired by feeling, emotion, is supreme. Trace your experiences as they relate to thought. What happened? What was in your mind? How did your thinking change? What followed? Begin, please, from the time I withdrew.”

“Well, I was feeling pretty weird, very uncomfortable, like my life was spinning out of control. I started laughing at how crazy the whole thing was.”

“The laughter was ...?”

“Pure anxiety. I mean it seemed funny at first, but—really—it was just a lot of nervous energy. Then I started crying and all of a sudden I got so tired, like I couldn’t deal with it anymore and I fell asleep in the kitchen.”

“Your last thoughts? Do you remember?”

“Nervous, scared, wondering what I was getting into and if I could handle it.”

“Doubt and fear would be a fair assessment?”

“Yes.”

We pulled onto the freeway. He lowered his window, stuck his head out and shouted over the din of the wind, “It’s just air ... such a wispy thing ... but with speed ... it feels almost solid.”

He closed his eyes, tilted back his head, smiling lips pressed tightly together and long white hair billowing in the wind. We cruised that way for miles. As we neared the end of the freeway, he leaned back into his seat and closed the window.

He resumed, “Then what happened?”

“This sound wakes me up, like a buzzing, and I look into my cup and the cocoa is ...”

“Spinning out of control?”

“Well, yeah, I guess so—it turned into a tornado.”

“Not the very words you used a moment ago to express one of your fears?”

“Spinning out of control? Yeah, but that’s just a ...”

“Figure of speech? A coincidence? Not so. It is an alignment of thought with experience. What next? You may spare the details as I am aware of all that transpired. This brief overlook is only for the benefit of thy realization.”

“The tornado turned into the Sesavah which way freaked me out. But I thought of you and I remembered some of what you said and—it was amazing—I calmed right down and stood up to it.

“Wow! Right! That’s the thing I noticed: it happened another time with the Sesavah and again this morning when I started to lose it on the way to school. When I was in trouble and really upset, terrified even, I thought of you and that made me calm. What is that? How do you do that?”

“Excellent! This is the precise point I was hoping to draw out of you. The answer is, *I do nothing*. Again you look to a power outside yourself. You look for magic. Seeking in this direction, the source of power shall always elude you. Do you know the legend of the musk deer?”

“I know they’re close to extinction in the wild because they’re killed by the thousands each year to harvest their pods for medicines and perfume.”

“Yes, yes, this I know, but it is the legend of which I speak.”

“That I don’t know.”

“There comes a season when the male musk deer is consumed in a frenzied search for the source of the intoxicating fragrance he smells. It is said that the musk deer will catapult off a cliff

to his demise chasing the wind carrying the scent that emits from a gland in his own navel.”

“So what you’re saying is ...”

His interruption was abrupt, “Is that not a warehouse store?”

“Yes ... why do you ask?”

“It would facilitate our process to go there.”

“You want to go to Costco?”

“Yes, that would be splendid, most helpful.”

Circumspectly, “Okaaaay!”

I parked the car. We got out and as I fumbled for my membership card, Armaton picked out a cart, carefully examining the performance of the wheels.

“Sometimes they stick,” he said.

So there we were. I flashed my card and alongside me, wheeling the oversized shopping cart, was Master Armaton, Special Envoy to Queen Veridia of the Society of Folk, traveller across many dimensions ...

“Many paradoxes in the Universe, is it not so?”

He winked at me in the most delightful way and I burst into laughter. There was such joy and lightness in that moment. We walked through most of the aisles, which he thoroughly enjoyed, looking at this and that, making comments and asking what I liked. As if he didn’t already know, I thought.

“Ahhhh ... fun is not in the knowing, but the sharing and opening of hearts.”

He stopped, squinted his eyes in deep thought, and pointed to a shelf.

“Please ... these ... six will suffice.”

They were sponges—huge sponges—twelve to a pack. More sponges than I had used my entire life.

“That’s seventy-two very big sponges.”

“Yes, I have performed the calculation myself.”

“But ...”

“Trust, as well, lies not in the knowing, but the sharing and opening of hearts.”

And that was that. Back in the car, we resumed our conversation.

“The musk deer,” I recalled. “You’re saying I did it myself? I turned things around myself.”

“Precisely.”

“Then why was it always when I thought about you that it happened?”

“It wasn’t always about me. What of the anxiety you overcame in the restaurant? Your thoughts were not on me, but on thy father and then immersed in the joy of the music.”

It struck me then how quickly accustomed I had become to having someone so privy to my innermost, private thoughts. It was like Al Michaels doing play by play from a sportscaster’s booth inside my head. I gasped at the potential for embarrassment.

“Concern thyself not. There is respect for privacy at all times. You assume our mental connection is orchestrated solely by me, not recognizing the inherent control you wield beyond the range of your conscious perception. Yet another manner in which you express this most human trait we are discussing: ascribing innate attributes to forces and power outside oneself.”

It had been easy to consider he was responsible for the recovery of my calmness, given the extraordinary things I had witnessed about him. Yet the change that took place at the restaurant removed him from the equation. Pondering this, it became clear: the power lies not in the object of thought but the thinker.

Armaton responded, “Further, it is not the particular subject of thought, but the quality of

thought. What was the factor common to each subject? Myself, thy father, the music.”

“The feeling. Each thought gave me a good feeling.”

“Yes, that is it. That is the key. Please go on.”

“What seemed to happen each time was, I got distracted from the anxiety I was feeling by thinking about someone I loved or how I felt about the music, the joy.”

“Prithee, permit me to restate it thusly: the thought of an object of love or joy crowded out the feeling of distress. It is so because the two, incompatible as they are, cannot exist in simultaneity within the same being.”

“It’s what you said last night: ‘... the beast and the god add to themselves and displace each other.’”

“Most certainly. The key is now in the lock. Turn it.”

“So the thing that did it was what I thought about. When I was afraid, thinking of you or my Dad counteracted it.”

“And?”

“It doesn’t matter what you think about, it could be anything, it will have the same effect, like the music.”

“Precisely. Any thought, be it a recollection or an imagining, that engenders good feeling will displace at least an equivalent intensity of bad.”

“Another thing you said last night was to ‘perceive clearly’ and ‘choose wisely.’”

“Now the lock is disengaged. Open the door and proceed through.”

“Well it’s back to the choice thing you talk about so much.”

“It is that.”

“Choose? ... How I feel?”

“Bravo! You’re in!”

“How do you choose how you feel? I mean, things happen, and you feel how you feel.”

“Within the framework of a life lived reactively and not deliberately, that would, of necessity, be the case. But, consider thy recent experience, inadvertent as thine actions may have been. You were upset, terror-struck at times by what ‘happened,’ yet in each case quickly recovered temperance by thoughts upon which thy mind was focused. Wouldst thou not consider such a process might be deliberately initiated?”

“So you’re saying, *Whistle a Happy Tune?* ... like Jiminy Cricket?”

“Actually, you’re referring to a Rogers and Hammerstein song from *The King and I*,” and, in a resonant baritone voice, he broke into:

“While shivering in my shoes  
I strike a careless pose  
And whistle a happy tune  
And no one ever knows I’m afraid

The result of this deception  
Is very strange to tell  
For when I fool the people I fear  
I fool myself as well.

“Although this is a viable technique, what I recommend, not precisely the same, is even more effective. As soon as possible, place the mind on a thought that uplifts, brings laughter, in

whatever way feels good, and you will see it chase the less pleasant away.”

“As simplistic as this seems, I can’t deny it works.”

“To do so would be to deny a fundamental law of reality ... all realities. As simplistic as it seems, always remember this. The deliberate management of thought is a most powerful tool for extricating oneself from oppressive fear or any other untoward emotion. Controlling one’s present state of mind yields the power to control one’s life and destiny.”

“So you’re saying that’s how ...”

“Please, no more to be spoken on this for a time. Absorb and ponder.”

“But ...”

“Please, dear Aubrey, only for the time being.”

“OK, but how does the Sesavah fit into all this?”

“The Sesavah is a composition of entities, real, discrete, and most potent, possessed of mission and motivation. It pursues its own preservation and the dominance over all who would submit. It is the embodiment of fear, doubt, hatred, greed ... all matters not of Love. To entertain these properties is to resonate with the essence of the beast.

“Similarly, we, the Folk, are a composition of entities, real, discrete, and most potent, possessed of mission and motivation. We pursue our own preservation and the empowerment of all who crave sovereignty. In contrast, we are the embodiment of Love. To entertain It is to resonate with the essence of the god.”

I pulled up to the house and parked. We continued to talk in the car.

“I think I may see the connection. You said the beast and the god are deep within all. So we all have the capacity for love and hate, the elemental contrast ...”

“Love and fear would be more precise in contrast; hate, a product of fear.”

“OK, love and fear. We all have the capacity for love and fear and when we place our attention on either.... How did you say it? ... ‘feeds by feeding tendencies’ ... when we place our attention on either love or fear that attention feeds itself and you get more of the same.”

“Excellent. What more?”

“You just used the word, resonate. What you entertain, you resonate with, either the god or the beast, the Sesavah or the Folk. When an object vibrates at the resonant frequency of another, the second object is caused to vibrate.”

He guided me, “The same applies to living entities. Consider thyself one. Consider love and fear as vibrational thought frequencies. The implication?”

“When I feel fear ...”

“Or any of its subcategories, doubt, hatred, shame, jealousy, etcetera ...”

“ ... I can get caught in a vortex of negativity, what you’re calling the ‘beast within’ which resonates with the essence of the Sesavah ...”

Armaton added, “ ... which awakens and attracts it ... ”

I continued, “ ... and it ‘feeds by feeding’ my fear.”

“Yes, yes! That is it.”

“So why has it never come before last night?”

“Last evening is not the first time it has fed upon thine infirmities.”

“Whoa! That is just too much! You mean that thing has been around and I didn’t even know it?”

“So for thee and for all.”

“Get out of here!”

“Awareness of its presence is not necessary to be subject to its influence. In any event, I



agree with thine assessment of this dialogue: it has become too much. We shall continue later.

“There is, however, one more item I wish to address, a comment made by thee earlier: including me amongst thy loved ones. I am deeply touched by thy declaration and wish to aver, I love thee, too!”

And then he quickly dissolved.

What I said had slipped out without my realizing it. Yes, I did love him as I have my father. And, it seemed, for at least as long.

I picked up my brief case and the bags of sponges and, mind full to the brim, headed for the house.

## Chapter 7

### *The Process ... Already Begun*

Just before I reached the door, it opened. There was Armaton greeting me.

“Permit me to assume responsibility for thy packages.”

He took the sponges and stood inside the front door as I headed to my office. I gasped. He was waiting for me in front of my desk. Somehow he had gotten there ahead of me. At his silent smiling gesture, I handed over my brief case and headed to the bedroom.

Again I gasped. He was waiting there, too. After helping me take off my jacket, he took it to the closet to hang up. I headed out to the kitchen. There he was again, at the front door, holding the shopping bags and smiling in silence.

There was surely some point to him flitting about in this baffling way. Maybe this was another demonstration of his ability to dance around (how did he put it?) “parameters and processes that are outside the range of established understanding and perception.”

This also had to be a test of my even-mindedness, which I determined to pass. A few deep breaths and a shake of the head collected me. Cool, calm, and prepared, I sauntered into the kitchen. Sure enough, he was there. I didn’t bat an eye.

Facing him, I casually asked, “So what did you do with the sponges?”

He answered in a voice that seemed to come from behind as well as in front of me, “I thought I would take them to the kitchen.”

I wheeled around and there he was, behind me. Quickly, I faced forward again and he was there. Like a cartoon character, I jerked my head back and forth until the one of him with the sponges joined the other of him at the sink.

My methodically constructed composure crumbled.

From the laundry room, a third Armaton emerged holding up two bottles.

“Which of these cleansers do you prefer? One is ‘new and improved’ and the other is ‘extra strength.’ I discern no difference in their essence.”

Stammering was the only form of communication available to me.

“Wh...! Eh! ... How ...? ... Uh! ... Oo...!”

A fourth appeared and reported, “I thought it best to lay thy brief case flat on the desk rather than upright on the floor.” ... and another who informed, “I set aside thy jacket for dry cleaning.”

I backed into a cabinet and braced myself, pressing palms down flat on the countertop behind me. There was a knock at the back door and he let another of him in carrying the mop and pail from my storage shed.

The doorbell rang. All the Armatons, with a sweeping motion of their left hands, gestured for me to get it. Looking backward over my shoulder the whole way, I staggered to the front door. When I opened it, three more filed in, each carrying six boxes of pizza from Molinari’s, my Dad’s favorite place in Hoboken.

I followed them to the kitchen, where they assembled—nine of him—smiling slyly at me.

“I thought you could use some help with the cleanup,” they said.

I was giddy, “I just ... I mean ... I can’t ... How do you ...?”

“Never question a man on a mission ... especially in your own kitchen ... wielding cleaning paraphernalia ... and food. I offer this: what thou seest is but a small part of that which shall unfold before thee. Observe and participate for thy reward shall be ... pizza!”

Two of him came to either side of me and, holding my arms, gingerly escorted me to a chair. They took turns gently stroking and patting the top of my head.

After a few minutes, I was able to ask, “This is just a part? You mean there’s more to this?”  
 “Quite! ... and soon.”

I had recovered my sensibilities enough to note, “Well, I think you might be a little heavy on the pizza. I just ate so I’m hardly even good for one slice. With what you’ve got, we would ... um ... ‘each’ ... have to eat like a couple of box...”

He cut me off to amend my estimate, “... slices.”

Before I had a chance to object, each of him sizzled and pixelated into a ball of light that divided in two and each of them divided again and those yet again. Reassembled now, the crowd of Armatons said, “Dear Aubrey, I will spare a slice for thee. But first, to the task at hand. Wouldst thou pass out sponges and, perchance, fill yonder sink with a solution of thy favored cleanser?”

One of him filled the pail and mopped the floor. The others and I (in somewhat of a daze) split into two groups, half washing, half rinsing. In a way that I could not comprehend, much less explain, we all fit and never bumped into each other. In a matter of minutes, the job was done and we ate the pizza. It was as fresh, piping hot, and delicious as I’ve ever had. After we finished, one of him bundled up the boxes and took them out to the recycling crate.

Those remaining said, “A most satisfying repast, particularly this far west of the Mississippi. Ample reward for a job well done.”

Each, in turn, then closed his eyes, bowed to me, and dissolved in a cadence of effervescence. When they were gone, I plopped into a kitchen chair and tried to let it all soak in, absorbing and pondering.

The back door opened and closed and Armaton came back inside saying, “There’s a bit of a nip in the air.”

“It cools off a lot at night.”

“Indeed. May I fix us a spot of tea?”

“Yes, I’d like that. Thank you, kind sir.”

He continued while preparing the tea, “I know things seem to be proceeding a bit rapidly ...”

“Ha! A bit! I would say mind bending screechingly off the scale rapidly!”

“... yet I feel certain thou art capable of keeping pace. There are situations unfolding outside thine awareness. As such, time is of the essence. Pardon me for any discomfort. Soon thou wilt understand.”

“Well, that will take some explaining on your part.”

“Yes, I shall begin presently.” Clearing his throat, he continued, “Long ago, a book was written of utmost importance to a future time when mankind would face great challenges. That time is at hand, Aubrey. I invite thee to read this book. It will offer insight into thy destiny and understanding of events recently transpired that so bewilder thee.”

“Now we’re getting somewhere. Please, let me have it and I’ll start reading right away.”

“It’s not that simple.”

“How come that doesn’t surprise me? What’s not simple?”

“To read it, thou must retrieve it.”

“OK, where is it?”

“It may be found in the south of England.”

“Who has it? I’ll arrange to have it FedExed.”

“There is a question more key than ‘Where is it?’ and ‘Who has it?’”

“And that question would be?”

“*When* is it?”

“Oh, geez! What does that mean?”

“It was written nigh unto fourteen centuries ago and must be retrieved from its place *and* time.”

Too much had already happened for this to faze me.

“I don’t think FedEx has a yesterday pickup, so how do you propose I get it?”

“I shall instruct and escort thee.”

Reentering the giddy zone, I laughed heartily while replying, “So, we’ll just go over and ... uh ... back ... there ... then.”

“Yes. Shouldst thou choose to proceed, I shall instruct thee in the evenings until thou art prepared for the journey.”

“Setting aside what an incredible notion that is, I have to say, you, Master Armaton, are an extraordinary salesman. In twenty-four hours, you show me things beyond the range of my imagination, much less understanding. Then you offer me a ‘choice’ ... whether or not to ‘choose to proceed’ ... and you do it in such an understated way. If you ever run out of Special Envoy work, you could make a fortune in commissioned sales.”

With a thin, sly smile, “I believe this is a variation of a technique referred to in the profession as the ‘warm puppy’ close. Another is the alternate of choice question. Would you like to start this evening or would you prefer tomorrow instead?”

“If you’re as good at this as I suspect, why don’t we start yesterday?”

“How do you know we’re not having this conversation tomorrow?”

We both laughed. He served the tea and joined me at the kitchen table.

“Please, sir, tell me more about the book.”

An air of tenderness and gravity settled upon him. He bowed his head, looking down for a moment, then tilted his head back with his eyes closed. Turning to me, he took a sip of tea and answered.

“It is entitled *Sacred Memories* and was written in 626 A.D. by a parchment maker named Auriel of Darluse Wood, a soul most dear to me. It documents the disappearance of the Society of Folk from this planet we have long been blessed to serve. It was a time of greatest darkness, a time in which our presence could no longer be envisaged here.

“In this remarkable tome, Auriel describes the process of his transformation from a being most humble to a Being of Destiny. He depicts his journey to our realm and the wonders to be experienced there. What he has written will offer much in explanation of thy recent experiences and those that yet may come.

“Reading *Sacred Memories* will afford the knowledge and perspective with which thou mightest understand and assess the opportunities before thee, that thou wouldst make a proper and satisfying choice.”

His tone and demeanor were compelling and majestic. This had become one of the most poignant moments in my life.

“Dear Master Armaton, I know so little right now, but one thing is certain: I trust you. Even when I didn’t believe what was happening last night, deep down I had a sense about it, a feeling of connection. It’s been getting stronger, if not clearer. Whatever’s going on, this is a part of me. I am so, so drawn to you, especially when you talk about your ... uh ... people—the Folk. And hearing about *Sacred Memories* just now made it even more intense.

“As farfetched as I’ve been trained to think this is, I trust that you will guide me on this journey and,” with an ironic chortle, “somehow, we *will* get that book. How do we begin?”

“Thy magnanimity blesses this task. The process, in so many ways, has already begun, my

dear. Of note, two recent experiences: the recurring dream and thine excursion outside the physical body into the Cosmos. Both represent vital components necessary to arrive at our rendezvous.

“In leaving thy physical body consciously, that is: not in the death state, but with the capacity to return, thou hast already demonstrated the ability most fundamental to the process. What is now required is a refinement of intent and trajectory that thou wouldst not traverse the length and breadth of Infinitude, but focus on a particular destination. That is to say, thou must learn, upon exit, to proceed with sharper aim and greater control.

“The primary destination is already familiar to thee, the Great Plane of Knowledge, the infinite and dynamic field shown to thee in the dream state. For the present, it will suffice to explain that the Great Plane, among other things, serves as a way station, a means of traversing time and space. Calling forth the appropriate time portal will channel us to the coordinates of the book we seek. Is this clear so far?”

“Truth be told, sir, clarity isn’t the issue for me. I understand everything you’ve just said. If it were a fantasy, I could add details of my own, but accepting what you’re telling me as a functional reality, that’s tough for me to get ahold of.”

“Yes, Aubrey, I understand. There is no criticism for this nor disappointment; only admiration for thy courage and willingness to face and enter unknown realms.”

And that’s how my “training” began. Each evening we would visit for a while together. Then I would take a “trip,” similar at first to the one I’ve already described. In the beginning I learned to control the “duration.” That term, of course, has no meaning in the context of the infinite regions I was visiting. What I mean more clearly is: I was able to remain outside the physical body for longer periods of time as measured by one who might observe my body while I was gone from it, appearing asleep or, given that it wasn’t breathing, dead.

At the same time, I became better acclimated to the more subtle, higher vibrational realm of light beyond solid physicality, referred to by some as the astral. With practice, I became better able to select and attain a discrete destination. It became easier to sharpen my focus, narrow my field of vision to a particular object or event I wanted to observe. Doing so immediately propelled me there.

What was it like? Actually, once I became accustomed to being out of my physical body, it didn’t feel as different as you would think. It never felt like I didn’t have a body. My astral body wasn’t as dense; it was composed of light, not matter, yet seemed to have properties of each. The most glaring difference was a wonderful sense of freedom and ease.

All physicality was observable and appeared to exist in a parallel state, that is, each physical object or being was naturally joined to an astral counterpart, each a component of the whole. What I was doing, consciously separating my astral body from my physical, is not a common practice. Nonetheless, it is a capability available to all, but rarely exercised due to lack of knowledge and ignorance of technique.

According to my focus and intent, I could easily see and hear both realms. Armaton explained, on occasion the world of light, the astral, is observable from the physical realm according to the consciousness and sensitivity of the beholder.

The sense of touch was more of a challenge. I could feel and interact with astral objects and beings as if they were “solid” because they and I were at the same vibrational frequency. Master Armaton suggested that, while in my astral form, I refrain from attempting to interact with physical objects, more gross vibrationally, because it required “a dexterity of perception and operation not yet available” to me.

The senses of taste and smell seemed the most different. Describing how they are experienced in the astral realm of light is a little like trying to describe a particular taste or smell on earth without comparing it to something else. They come across more as feelings, as enhancements of the other three senses, a heightening of pleasure or displeasure.

There was an entire astral civilization, teeming with beings, objects, and activities; some independent, some related to the physical realm. I observed confirmation of the stories I had heard and read about people who reported near death experiences. I saw resident astral beings silently comfort the sick and assist the dying in making their exit from the physical body, a process I had learned to do and reverse at will.

I saw humans invisibly assisted, silently inspired by astral beings whose function was to encourage, activate, and promote love, understanding, and compassion. They seemed to kindle and share in the joy of striving, accomplishment, and laughter. In all these situations an increase in the astral and physical vibrancy of each human involved was evident. The astral benefactors seemed to benefit as well.

In contrast, there were situations of conflict between people that were surreptitiously fueled and inflamed by astral beings who had a different, more murky appearance. As one person would abuse another I saw damage inflicted on each of their corresponding astral bodies, appearing as wounds or dark spots, where the flow of life energy became impeded. In my state of heightened awareness and sensitivity, I perceived and understood that repeated energy blockages had a cumulative effect which, unreleased, could eventually impact the physical being with malady or misfortune.

I saw these murky beings, similar in feeling and essence to the Sesavah, exult in violent and degrading human actions. They seemed to thrive on misery and catalyze its repercussions and dissemination.

“There is more to life than meets the eye, is it not?” commented Armaton.

“What is happening here? What am I seeing?”

“There is more to be learned, more to be gleaned in understanding of matters which exist, things which occur, outside the range of limited earthly perception for which *Sacred Memories* will act as a primer. Suffice it to say at this time, creation exists in a multiplicity of dimensional realms.”

Making these nightly journeys required an amalgamation of mental and emotional components: complete relaxation, calmness, a sense of well being, surrender, undistracted concentration; and the direction of my intent, unattached to outcome. It was not a process Armaton explained to me, nor was my progress linear, accomplished one step at a time. It was more like placing myself in the vicinity, in the feeling of what I wanted to do and doing until my ability to do became more refined and more apt to achieve the object of my intent. Soon I was able to exit from the physical body without Armaton’s assistance, though always in his company, cautioned never to attempt outside his supervision.

For approximately three months, we conducted these exercises. Most of the time they took the better part of the night. Remarkable to me at first, after one or two hours of sleep, I awoke well rested and full of vitality. Then, of course, I realized, that my physical body was in deep slumber, resting, while I was out of it occupied in activity.

One evening Armaton turned especially solemn.

“Soon, Beloved, soon!”

A shiver of excitement pulsated through me.

“You think I’m ready, really?”

“Thy progress has met our highest hopes, rapid and extensive. The morrow’s journey shall be of great consequence.”

## *Chapter 8*

### *The Anomaly*

When I woke up the next morning, the only thing on my mind was Armaton's broad hint that tonight would be the night. All I wanted to do was get through the day as quickly as possible. I went to work expecting it to be as routine as things had become over the last few months.

Contrary to my nature, I was grateful for the lull, given that so much was going on during the nights. Even Harold had settled down and stopped looking at me with such concern all the time, asking if I was OK.

What was going to happen when I got home tonight? Were we really going back in *time*? To pick up a book? That notion seemed almost funny and *very* strange to contemplate in *this* environment, such a bastion of rigorous scientific methodology, with such strict parameters of perception and judgment. What would they think of me if they knew? What would they *do*? I mean, Harold, who's a friend, thought I was wacky after hearing only the *beginning* of the story. He was OK now only because I never mentioned it again. That probably let him relegate it all to a bad dream and a bad day.

These thoughts gave me a shudder. I flashed on the Inquisition, the closed-minded, intolerant opposition that Galileo faced. The world I lived in was beginning to look a little less enlightened and tolerant than I had previously thought. I was grateful to keep my experiences so private.

After coasting through two classes and lunch, I headed to a staff meeting in the Supercomputer Center. On the way I stopped at the reception desk outside the machine room to ask Belinda, one of our receptionists, if she had found her lost cat. She was telling me a very funny story about the misadventures of Fwed the cat and how he showed up after two days missing when, suddenly, I got a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach.

"What's wrong?" Belinda asked.

"I don't know! Something!" shouting over my shoulder as I rushed to the machine room.

As soon as I stepped through the door into the chilled, isolated environment, a blast of acrid air penetrated my nostrils, the unmistakable smell of fried wiring.

"This isn't good," I thought, "How could nobody else be noticing this?"

The answer became clear. Nobody else was in there. I bolted down the center aisle of the room alongside the parallel banks of the Blue Horizon, a multiteraflop IBM computer, one of the most powerful in the world. The smell got stronger and ahead I could see a gray haze hanging in the air near the five data storage silos. Each one holds about 6,000 cartridges and they contain data from all our supercomputers.

The machine room has a raised floor: a grid of removable tiles and metal grates. All the wiring and cooling ducts are in the space below. There's also a smoke detection and fire suppressant system that's designed specifically for what this situation had to be: a wiring fire under the floor. When smoke is detected, the system releases Halon, an inert gas that's heavier than air. Electric power is cut to all the equipment and the fans. The stillness of the air allows the Halon to settle to the lower few feet of the room choking off any combustion. At the same time an alarm is sent to the fire department. Impossibly, none of this appeared to be working.

My mind raced, trying to figure out what was happening and an effective strategy to deal with it. I dialed George Scribner, director of SDSC (San Diego Supercomputer Center) on his cell phone, knowing he was attending a conference at Caltech.



He clearly conveyed his annoyance at being disturbed as he answered, "Scribner. This better be good."

"George. Aubrey."

Very terse, "Yes?"

"George, we have an electrical fire under the machine room floor that's evaded the smoke detection system. So far there's been no response."

Behind his stunned silence I could hear the conference discussion, "...by linking terascale facilities, the TeraGrid has been unprecedented in its capacity and had a profound, global impact on all scientific disciplines. There are ..."

Now the scraping of a chair eclipsed the conference dialogue along with George's hushed, carefully controlled, placid voice explaining to those nearby, "Sorry. Got to take this. Family crisis. Kids!"

Rapid footsteps, the clicks of a door opening and closing, more rapid steps, breaking into a run. Then they stopped and, out of breath, George raspily snapped into the phone, "What are you telling me?"

"There's an electrical fire..."

"I got that. I'm not deaf and I'm not stupid! What are you doing about it?"

George doesn't handle crises very well. No matter what it is, he invariably perceives and analyzes matters with respect to their impact on him and his career.

"I'm not sure what to do. Even though it doesn't seem serious yet, the Halon should have been released. I think we should do it manually. Do you know how I can access ..."

"Wait! Do not release any Halon. Who else knows about this?"

"Well, no one, that's part of the problem, nobody's doing ..."

"OK. Good. Just wait. Do you know the location of the electrical anomaly?"

Even in an emergency George couldn't help indulging in Safespeak, diluting his language to mask the problem as much as possible.

"It's in the back of the room behind the Blue Horizon."

"Near the HPSS and the silos?"

"Yes."

"Damnit!" Big pause, then, "And nobody else knows."

"Nobody, not yet."

Then, over the hum of the machines, I heard a man on the far side of the room shout, "Is anybody here?" His voice faded as he apparently left, screaming, "Fire! Clear the building!"

"Er ... George?"

Sharply, "What?"

"Check that. As of just about now, I think everybody knows. A guy just popped in and out and I think he's running through the building yelling 'Fire!'"

"Damn!"

"The other thing, George, it's starting to really smoke up in here and I'm having a hard time breathing. This is a land line so I've got to hang up and get out."

"No, you can't, you've got to release ..."

"It's too late now, George! I can't breath! I'm hanging up. I'll call back as soon as I can from outside."

My eyes were tearing up and if I didn't know my way blindly through that room I would have had a much harder time getting out.

The reception area was empty. I could hear shouts and scuffling from the stairway. I opened

the door and joined the last of my colleagues rapidly and excitedly making their way to the parking lot. The crowd gathered outside seemed bewildered. There had been no alarm and no evidence of flame or smoke since the machine room was sealed off from the rest of the building, yet people were yelling, "Fire!" Some were cynically amused, thinking it to be a practical joke run rampant.

George wasn't amused. He had been dialing my cell incessantly since I hung up. As soon as I could, I picked up.

"Aubrey, why the hell didn't you answer me?"

"Well, George, I was a little preoccupied."

"Damn it, you've let this thing get totally out of hand."

It became very clear where George wanted to go with this.

"George, before you get too involved with covering your butt trying to put some kind of blame on me, maybe we should get the fire out."

"How dare you purport such a thing? Your insolence is ..."

I removed the phone from my ear. George needed to calm down and I needed to speak with the police who had just arrived.

As I approached an officer emerging from a cruiser with his partner, he addressed me with a wry grin, "So, are you in charge?"

"No, this guy is," holding up the phone, "but I have a feeling I may be of more use."

"What seems to be the problem, Ma'am?"

"There's an electrical fire in the wiring under our machine room and the detection and suppression system hasn't responded. As glad as I am to see you, I was hoping for the other guys in the big red trucks."

"Your name, Ma'am, and your position here?"

Holding up the ID strapped around my neck, "Aubrey Manning. I teach at the school and I'm one of the directors of the facility."

"Thank you, Ma'am. We're responding to a 911 call. We've got backup rolling and SWAT on standby." His partner was on the radio. Looking and gesturing to her, he verified with me, "So it's just a fire we're talking about here?"

"Yes sir. Can we get the fire department out here?"

"My partner's already got that handled, Ma'am."

As I turned my attention back to my cell phone, "Thank you, officer. Excuse me a moment."

George was just wrapping up, "... and if this type of behavior persists, there will be repercussions. Do I make myself clear?"

"Crystal, George. Now, about the fire ..."

"Well, it's not a fire really, just a minor ..."

"George! The room is filled with smoke and the fire department is on the way. Trust me. It's a fire. This is what I think happened; nothing else makes sense. There's a short in the fire detection system. Isn't that crazy? The fire detector probably *caused* the fire. We can end this by releasing the Halon and cutting the power. Can you tell me *now* how to access the system?"

"Aubrey, this is a very serious matter. We can't just go off willy-nilly making wild guesses and doing whatever pops into our heads. Especially now that other agencies are involved. There are procedures. We have to answer to NSF."

Holding the phone away, I turned to the officer who was carefully monitoring my conversation and asked, "How many bureaucrats does it take to change a light bulb?"

He shrugged his shoulders. I finished, "How many doesn't matter. They'll all tell you it

can't be done."

He laughed. Just then, Harold, engrossed in thought as usual, came out of the building led by two graduate assistants. Muttering to himself, "... as long as the scalable parallel simulator continues to run on heterogeneous machinery. Uh huh!!"

I shouted to him. "Harold!"

He was clearly oblivious to all the excitement, "Yeah, Aubrey. Hi! What's happening?"

"Harold, there's a short in the fire detection system under the floor of the machine room and it's started an electrical fire..."

"Whoa, what are the odds of that?" Laughing, "What a trip!"

"Can you tell me how to manually release the Halon?"

"Well, you can go down there and open the valves or maybe cut the ..."

"Harold! I don't mean *literally* manually. Can you get me into the system and bypass the auto function?"

"Hm... Slight pause. "Well, there's only one terminal you can do it from and that's in the room. I told them not to lock out *all* the others, but they wouldn't listen. They didn't want any external access. No way. No how."

"If I can get to the terminal, can you talk me in?"

"No problem."

Putting the cell phone to my ear again, I could hear George ranting and shouting my name repeatedly.

"George! I gotta go. We have a solution. Call you when it's over."

I hung up and blocked his number just as the first fire truck screamed in. The police officer led one of the firemen to me and introduced us.

"Lieutenant Monahan, this is ... Doctor ...?"

"Yes, Doctor. But Aubrey is fine."

"... Doctor Aubrey Manning," then addressing me, "Dr. Manning, Lieutenant Toby Monahan."

We shook hands. Without stating it, Lieutenant Monahan made it clear he was from the Deep South.

"Officer Hampton says there's an electrical fire and y'all seem to know an easy way to put this sucker out. Just give me the details and we'll send a crew in."

"Well, it's not *that* easy. I've got to go in and do it."

"Hell, Dr. Manning, we just can't allow that. This is a dangerous job and we're the ones that are trained and paid to get 'er done."

"There's a Halon gas emission system under the floor where the fire is. All we have to do is release the gas, cut power to the fans, and the fire is out in seconds with minimal impact to the equipment. The only access to the system is on a computer terminal in the same room as the fire. Neither you nor any of your people have the technical expertise to do the job. It's either me in there or you come up with another idea."

We stared eye to eye. Then he broke into a grin and called over his shoulder, "Let's gear up the good doctor here. *Now*, people!"

I grinned at Officer Hampton, "He's no bureaucrat!"

Lieutenant Monahan bounced back, "If I'm catchin' your drift, little lady, let me make it real clear: somethin' goes bad with this and my head's gonna roll ... big time ... and there's a part of you I'm not gonna mention is gonna be in a major sling. Comprende?"

We nodded to each other our mutual understanding.

They dressed me in full firefighting regalia. It weighed a ton. I was covered from head to toe and had my own air supply.

Lieutenant Monahan shouted to me over the din of several fire engines arriving and being positioned, "You got sixty minutes on each canister. You let Firefighter Reyes here know if you have any problem breathing. She's gonna monitor your O2."

I nodded to him and she and I touched our gloved fists together.

I lifted my mask and shouted, "Hi! I'm Aubrey!"

She answered, laughing, "Yeah! Hi! Me, too. Audrey Reyes."

Lieutenant Monahan broke in, "You're goin' in with a crew of three firefighters. They're gonna watch out for you." He directed his attention to the four of us, "Make damn well sure you all stick together like bare thighs on leather in the middle of July."

That he was absolutely serious made what he said all the more hilarious. As hard as I tried to stop it, the laughter burst out of me in stifled spurts.

I heard a pop and the rest of what he said through a headphone in my helmet. "Now, Dr. Manning, you're on a live com line. That means you can chatter back and forth without pressin' any damn buttons. You can talk to the other members of your team and this fella over here, too," pointing to Harold, grinning as they helped him into firefighter headgear.

Harold flashed me the thumbs up and a look that said, "Cool, very cool!"

The lieutenant continued, "Just so's you know, I'm on the same frequency and what's more this ain't no gol durn comedy show so let's get down to bid-ness."

My team entered the first level lobby. Monahan was just too much. I couldn't stop laughing like a ten year old. To cover it I started snorting and coughing.

Over the headphone blasted, "Reyes, gol durnit, she's choking. Check her gol durned O2!"

My team members knew exactly what was happening. Audrey helped me take off my mask and defeated the com line link on both our mics. The other two firefighters covered with radio check chatter, elbowing each other and pointing to us while she and I laughed hysterically.

With a lilting Hispanic accent, Audrey gasped, "I been with him three years already and I still ... I can't stop laughing. We all love him, but he is such a hoot! I never heard the leather in July thing before."

It was great to laugh with them. It got the jitters I had been feeling completely out of my system and bonded us instantly. I knew that together we would get the job done.

After the laughter subsided, Audrey pointed to the other two, "That's Larry and that's Dan." They each waved in turn. "Guys, this is another Audrey."

"Actually, my name is Aubrey. A-U-B-, like 'B' as in boy, -R-E-Y. Aubrey."

"Aubrey?"

"Right!"

"Get outta here! What kind of a name is that?"

"Actually, it's British. The name's been in my family for generations, all the women going way back."

"That's a new one on me. But I kinda like it. OK, guys, this is Aubrey-with-a-'B,' as in 'boy.'" Larry, Dan, and I waved to each other as she asked me, "You wanna go for it?"

"Definitely."

She helped me back into my gear. After we checked the com line with each other, the lieutenant, and Harold, who was thoroughly enjoying every minute, I led them up the stairs one level to the reception lobby. Through the glass panels of the machine room we could see it was full of smoke.

Dan (or Larry—it was hard to tell) said, “Looks more like a smoker than a burner. Do you know how far this door is from the source?”

“It’s got to be at least a hundred feet,” I replied.

Audrey determined, “I say we’re good to go.”

I offered, “The terminal we need to get to is down the center aisle almost to where the fire is. Even though the smoke is thick, I know my way through here blindfolded.”

Audrey seemed to be in charge, “OK, Aubrey, you go first. I’m gonna be right behind you with my left hand on your left shoulder. If you don’t feel my hand, you stop right away until we reconnect, you got it?”

“Yeah, got it.”

Dan or Larry gently opened the door and we went in, single file. It was hard to see more than two or three feet in front of us. We turned to the left and carefully wended our way to the aisle and turned right. I used the Blue Horizon’s lights as a guide. Twenty feet down the aisle I could barely see at all. It was very disconcerting.

Audrey seemed to sense my discomfort and coaxed me through it, “It’s OK, Aubrey. It can feel very freaky the first time you do this, but you’re all right. Me and Dan and Larry do it all the time, so just try to relax. This is nothin.’ Right, boys?”

They both chimed in. One of them said, “ You focus on the mission, Aubrey, and on where you are right now. Don’t get ahead of yourself. One step at a time. And we’re here with you, remember? Stuck together like sweaty thighs and leather.”

As we all snorted into our mics, Lieutenant Monahan chimed in, “Like dandee-lions in a country boy’s buttonhole! You’re doin’ fine, Aubrey. Good work, people. Keep goin.’”

A few feet past the last main bank of the Blue Horizon were three workstations. We had to get behind them to access the keyboard and monitor we wanted at the middle station. Gingerly I turned to the right and, feeling my way along the edge of the first desk I turned behind it and continued on.

Suddenly there was a huge crash, Audrey’s hand slipped away, and one of the men exclaimed, “Whoa! Audrey! You OK?”

I answered, “Yeah, I’m fine. What happened?”

“No, Ma’am, not you. Reyes, answer me, you OK?”

Silence.

I turned back and shuffled my feet along the floor, arms extended, feeling the air for Audrey. My foot struck something soft and I felt a hand grab my leg. I bent down and heard her muffled voice shout, “Com’s out. No O2. Got to get out quick!”

“Dan! Larry! She fell down. Something’s wrong with her air and her com line’s out!”

“OK, Aubrey, I’m on the other side of her. Larry, Can you back track Reyes out of here?”

“Affirmative.”

“Do it.”

They helped Audrey up and as she and Larry headed out, Dan said, “Larry, you let us know when you’re clear.”

“Sure thing.”

“OK, Aubrey, it’s you and me. You up for it?”

“Yes, Dan. We’re almost there.”

I felt the reassuring press of his hand on my shoulder. A few more steps and I gently bumped into the workstation chair. I sat down, took off my gloves, felt around for the keyboard, pressed a key and—voila!—the monitor flashed to life. Despite the almost zero visibility, the

screen was bright enough to read.

“Dan, Aubrey. Reyes and I are clear. She’s got her headgear off and doing fine.”

“Roger, Larry. Thanks. We’re OK, too. You can stand clear. Aubrey’s at the work station.”

I was ready to start. “Harold! I’m there. Talk me in.”

“Affirmative, Aubrey.” Harold was having the time of his life. He guided me into the fire suppressant system and I released the Halon and cut all the power.

After a moment of darkness, the orange emergency lights came on. I got up from the chair and led Dan back out to the reception area, down the stairs, and out the door where Audrey and Larry were waiting. We stripped off our headgear and hugged each other while the crowd cheered. Harold was high-fiving everyone.

We strode over to Lieutenant Monahan who was beaming. “Good work, people. Excellent! Well, little lady, I think my head and your derriere are gonna be good for another day, don’t you think? How did you like working with my little team here?” nodding to the three firefighters.

“Well, it was incredible, sir. Amazing how quickly we gelled.”

Exaggerating his drawl, “Yes, Ma’am, you sho’ did. You started workin’ together right off jus’ like sugar and grits.” Then he abruptly dropped all traces of his accent and, with erudite diction, said, “Even a modicum of levity can bond together a work force most expeditiously.”

He winked and concluded, playing up his twang again, “Sometimes peoples knows more what they’s doin’ than other peoples thinks.”

He placed one hand on his stomach, one hand behind his back and bowed deeply. Then, standing at attention, he saluted me, did a sharp about face, and sauntered away.

## *Chapter 9*

### *Overwhelmed*

The rest of the day was consumed by following up the fire with paperwork, phone calls, email, and assorted other red tape. This went on for hours and totally absorbed me. As the avalanche was beginning to subside, Harold breezed into my office.

“That was so absolutely cool today, Aubrey. And I just got interviewed on TV. They kept asking for you, but then they gave up.”

This was not a day I wanted to deal with the press and so far I had managed to successfully evade them.

“Are they still here?”

“Nope. They rushed off. I guess there’s just enough time to get it on the eleven o’clock news. Hey, when did you eat last? Do you want me to pick something up for you?”

I looked at the time, “Ten-thirty! How can it be ...?”

There was something important I was going to do, but I couldn’t for the life of me remember what it was. My PDA was no help.

“Well,” I thought, “if it was so important, I wouldn’t have forgotten.”

To Harold, “No thanks. This won’t take much longer. I want to finish up and then get home,” thinking of my nightly sessions with Master Armaton.

Then it hit me. Armaton! Tonight’s the night! It had been completely wiped from my awareness, like it didn’t exist.

“I gotta go!”

“What do you mean, Aubrey? You were all calm and now you’re freaking out. Where do you have to go?”

Gathering all my things, I sprinted for the door, “Harold, I gotta go!”

Harold had that concerned look again, but I was gone before he could ask if I was OK. Running to my car, I hoped Armaton would be there waiting for me. No sign of him. The whole way home I kept looking over to the passenger seat to see if he would appear beside me. By the time I got home I was a nervous wreck. Maybe he was inside waiting. He wouldn’t be upset, but I felt awful thinking I had let him down. It was so important. How could I have forgotten?

I flew to the door, never bothering to get my keys, hoping he would open it. He didn’t. After letting myself in, I searched every room, then outside, but he was nowhere to be found. Forlorn, I retired to the kitchen, eased myself into a chair, and waited. It was eleven-thirty.

By twelve-fifteen, I was convinced he wasn’t coming and maybe I was looking in the wrong places. Maybe he wasn’t coming to *me* this time. Maybe I had to go to *him*. With this thought, his warning flashed in my mind, “Do not attempt these journeys without the benefit of my company and supervision. There are many subtleties that challenge one’s judgment and facility for navigation; to the inexperienced, many dangers.”

But that was over a month ago. I’d learned a lot since then. And last night he said I was ready. That had to be it! Why else would he not have come? This was my time to solo.

I adjusted my posture in the chair, straightening my spine, began the breathing process that helped relax my body, and eased into the technique I had developed to leave it. In the blink of an eye, I was gone.

In the same blink, it became clear this was a very serious blunder. I emerged in a place I had never encountered before with Armaton. It was dark and very dingy. Patches of blurriness moved about in the periphery of my vision. It appeared to be the ruins of a huge hall, perhaps an ancient

cathedral, the roof and floor long gone, dirt beneath my feet. Strange sounds reverberated throughout it: clicking, dripping, and distant eerie whistles and wailing.

Unnerved, I decided to make my retreat. Unfortunately, my mind was too agitated and I couldn't establish the calmness necessary to integrate back to the physical.

With the shock of a rifle shot, someone behind me called out, "Bravo!" and applauded slowly and deliberately. Each clap resounded through this place.

"Excellent!" The word echoed as I wheeled around to face its source. "What facile execution of technique! Wonderful, truly! And I'm so pleased you finally chose to repay my visit! Had I known you were coming, I would have tidied up, baked a cake, put on some ... mmmmm ... cocoa! How good of you to visit, little Aubrey!"

Ten yards in front of me stood a tall being whose appearance kept rapidly changing. At first, a pallid, slippery looking man with slick black hair and a thin moustache, impeccably dressed in white tie and tails. His image was alternately in and out of focus, with rhythmic pulsation. As it vibrated this way, the image briefly flashed to a different one, then back again. Then alternated with others. Most were unknown to me, some hideous, and some familiar. I recognized Breck, Gramma, George, Mike Wallace, the girl three grades ahead of me in grammar school who used to bully me, several of my teachers and professors, and a host of others.

The dominant figure was the pale man in the tuxedo. The others seemed to be a part of him, in a way that happens only in dreams, all present at the same time.

"Wouldn't that be nice? Just a dream! Easy way out. Poof! Just wake up. Sorry, darling, it's won't be that easy. *This* is reality. To be more specific, this is *your* reality."

I tried to speak, but couldn't.

"What do I mean? Just this, you puny, wretched, less than scum insect, how do you think you got here? Did I come and grab you? No, you came to me all on your own, little dear. The first time out by yourself and you came to me. Not to him. To me! Even though he taught you, even though he tried to keep you away, you came to me! Why do you suppose, eh?"

I couldn't answer. Frozen in place, I couldn't move. I couldn't even look away or close my eyes. It seemed to have complete control of me. I thought of Armaton. I tried to remember something he said that would help, but it was no use. I was trapped and helpless. The terror overwhelmed me.

"Because *you* belong to *me*. Your very nature *is* me! You *feel* it, don't you? The fear. Yes, the fear. It consumes you. The fear is real. The fear *is* you and it is I, the overwhelming force and presence in the lives of men ... and women, dearie ... all the little women just like you.

"And you thought I needed to ask you to submit! You miserable speck of dust, you're *already* mine!"

A crowd of other morbid beings appeared behind him. I felt more of them gather around me in a wide circle. The man smiled, bobbing his head up and down affirming his satisfaction as he stared piercingly into my eyes, purring contentedly. I had never felt so lost, so forsaken.

Suddenly, he was distracted and looked up. He raised his fists over his head, shaking them, and began to grimace and growl.

At the same time, I heard a drone high overhead and behind me, faint at first, then louder, approaching rapidly. Drawing closer, I discerned it was a chorus of masculine voices, each sounding his own tone in a dense and powerful harmonic chord. It was glorious! The morbid crowd moaned and shrieked their dismay.

A wide shaft of the most exquisite white light dropped around me. Its edge fell a yard or so short of the surrounding throng. A long golden spear coursed down with a hissing screech and



thumped into the ground in the illumined area right in front of the pale man. Then another. I could hear them land all around me. More and more rained down, each a few feet apart from the others, until they filled the huge circle of light.

Oddly, the sound of the chorus was coming from the spears. They began to quiver and thicken. Bulges formed. The ends stuck in the ground split in half and two shafts sprouted from every upper section. Before my eyes, each spear developed into a majestic warrior, covered in gleaming ringlets of golden mail, brandishing a clear crystal shield emblazoned with a flame-like red insignia.

I felt myself rise from the ground. As this happened, the warriors closed ranks in spherical formation around me, their shields facing outward to form a protective barrier. We moved as a unit up the shaft of light, and followed it out of this place to a distant region far more comfortable and secure: a lustrous green meadow sprinkled with a multicolored array of scintillating wildflowers. As we lowered to the ground, the rescuers below broke ranks and allowed me to settle gently onto the grass.

Now that I was safe, they dispersed, then regrouped on the ground in a large diamond formation, standing three men deep around its perimeter, all facing me in the center. In a smoothly orchestrated fade, their chanting ceased. The newly established silence was penetrated by the sounds of a gentle wind and the light clatter their armor made as the warriors shifted posture.

I turned in a circle, both arms extended out to them, repeating, "Thank you! My goodness! Thank you!"

They responded in unison, closing their eyes, bowing their heads slightly, touching their right palms to their hearts, their brows, and then extending their arms toward me in a gesture of acknowledgment and salute. The sound of their armor clinking was breathtaking, the vision magnificent and unforgettable.

In the next moment, a familiar hiss signaled the arrival of Master Armaton beside me. As soon as he took form, I hugged him like there was no tomorrow.

Returning my embrace, he said, "Thine impatience for my arrival hath brought upon thee another adventure, is it not?"

We let go of each other.

"I thought *I* was the one who was late! I got so tied up at work, I didn't get home until after eleven. I thought *you* gave up on *me*!"

"Such a thing could never occur."

"You don't understand, I completely forgot about you, about what we were supposed to do. I don't know how, but ... there was this fire and I got involved and it completely took me over!"

"Single minded devotion to good works, to the responsibilities one assumes, is not necessarily a flaw as thy tone seems to imply. Wert thou not so attentive to the task of the day, far graver consequences mayest have ensued, having impact, perhaps, on the outcome of our work as well.

"Regret is an emotion of privation, a frailty in which most humans indulge, unwittingly, at the sacrifice of their sovereignty. Discard it as such."

"So, it's OK then? I thought we were supposed to ..."

Smiling, he touched an extended forefinger to his lips to shush me, "We shall, all in good time. I trust this experience has served to emphasize my caution at venturing unattended into the realm beyond the physical?"

Laughing, "I don't want to go *anywhere* unattended!"

He smiled back, “An exaggeration not so far from the truth! As understandable as temporary.”

“How did I wind up there, anyhow? The guy in the tux—that *was* the Sesavah, wasn’t it?”

“Most certainly.”

“Well, he said I belonged there, that’s why it was the first place I went to on my own. Even though you taught me, I went to him because he was my nature.”

“The most clever deception is one with basis in reality. If you consider your thoughts before making the exit from physical, you will see the unmistakable, ineluctable trajectory. Were you not filled with worry and regret? Not the most ideal frame of mind with which to embark upon a journey to a realm wherein thought and emotion manifest outcomes so easily. In that state, frankly, you *did* belong there.

“We begin our evenings together with pleasant repartee as a natural expression of our friendship, yet with added purpose. Through our banter we set a joyful vibrational tone that is most conducive to poisoning the mind for focus on the higher astral realms.

“Until thou art more thoroughly experienced, my guidance is necessary to expedite the process. Even subtle variations can have significant impact upon one’s destination and ability to conduct the journey.

“Thy mood prior to physical exit was aligned with fear. The Sesavah’s deception was in purporting that was your inherent state. Believing so, you allowed yourself to be overwhelmed. It rules only with your cooperation, your acceptance. This I explained after your first Sesavan encounter.”

“So what happened to the dorky serpent?”

“The beast, Fear, comes in many disguises, ever newly testing one’s discrimination and mettle. Its first appearance was intended not only to challenge you, but to misinform your perception of its cunning. It is, as you have experienced, heinously clever.”

“I was helpless. There was nothing I could do.”

“There were many avenues of activity open to thee, but thy belief wert beguiled by the chicanery of the Sesavah. It’s power lies in the ability to deceive and convince and, to that end, it had its way with thee.”

“I tried to think of you ... of what to do, but nothing worked.”

“By that point you were overcome. Having succumbed in thought to such an extreme, no other thought was capable, at this stage of thy development, to extricate thyself, thus requiring our intervention.”

“Lucky for me. I would never have gotten out of there.”

“To the contrary, the Sesavah can permanently restrain no one without continued cooperation. Eventually thou wouldst have recovered thy wits and escaped. We were blessed and pleased to save thee much time and tribulation.”

“Who are these men who rescued me?”

“They are the Golden Warrior Guardians.”

“Are they your people ... Folk?”

“Yes, astral manifestations of Folk. We play many roles, perform many duties, assume many aspects.”

“Even as spears!”

“Our forms are flexible, artfully suited to our varying functions.”

Laughing, “I’m getting to the point where I have to remind myself what the world is *really* like, I’m getting so used to such fantastic things.”

Suddenly Armaton turned very serious, “Why wouldst thou deliberately choose to reinforce a more limited perception? You refer to such reality as if it were the *only* reality, when, in fact, it is only one among many.”

“It’s just that ...”

“Permit me, but there is no rationale. Shouldst thou continue with the task before thee, such perception must be amended for success to be possible. Dost thou not understand, this is a process of immense transformation? For the greater to prevail, lesser concepts must be released. The ‘fantastic’ must become the norm.”

“I was only ...”

He took my hand, held it tenderly between both of his, and gazed at me imploringly, “Dearest Aubrey, I do not quibble on what may seem an insignificant point. I am stressing the absolute necessity for thee to let go the common concept of humanness—what all wouldst clutch to their bosoms to protect and preserve—so that thou mightest experience thyself as Divine, the innate and ultimate human identity.”

Tears welled in his eyes and then mine as I realized the profundity of his words, to which I softly replied, “Yes, sir. I understand.”

After a reflective pause, he said, abruptly, “Then to the Divine task at hand!”

## *Chapter 10*

### *The Work Begins*

From the ground beneath us, I felt a rumble. It tingled my feet and surged up through my body, vibrating my spine. A thin vertical shaft of light, coming from an infinite distance above me penetrated the top of my head. As it coursed down the length of my core, it intersected and melded with the rising vibration. Simultaneously, a second shaft penetrated Armaton, who stood facing me, arms extended straight out to each side. I knew to mirror his posture and as I did, the light in each of our bodies shot through and out our arms to the infinity on either side.

As the rumble intensified, so did the light, becoming not brighter, but more pure. The two crosses of light expanded, growing toward each other. The instant they touched, we and all that surrounded us were engulfed in a massive flare. As the flash ebbed, a new reality was revealed to me. Its essence seemed far more subtle and sublime than what I had become accustomed to in my astral experiences.

Words penetrated my awareness without being spoken. “This is, dear Aubrey, yet another realm, its quintessence: thought. As the physical body encases the less dense astral body composed of light, so *it* encases the still finer causal body, the essence of which is pure thought. The Golden Warrior Guardians shall watch over our astral bodies as we now traverse the domain of thought in our causal forms.”

I didn’t turn to look, yet I could see clearly the astral body from which I had just emerged. “It” remained, opposite Armaton’s, both with arms outstretched, frozen in place. Seeing required only the thought of it. Whatever I wished to examine was instantly observable.

The disconcerting thing was, no one sight predominated. All was before my vision simultaneously. It was like there were a huge number of televisions, each tuned to a different channel. But the TV screens weren’t next to each other, they were superimposed on each other and each one encompassed my entire field of vision. To “see” something wasn’t a function of visual focus, but of mental focus. What was uppermost in my mind, I saw most clearly. When my thoughts drifted, my vision would become cluttered with a jumble of multiple images that terribly disoriented me.

“Pray, Aubrey, take all effort to keep thy mind fixed, single-pointed, or thou wilt be driven mad by the escalating thought stampede of an uncontrolled mind. Thou hast the ability. Focus.”

It was a matter of concentration, which comes naturally when anyone is engrossed in something particularly enjoyable or interesting. Early in life, my parents taught me to focus my mind deliberately on anything I chose. With practice I got better and better, to the point where now, it only takes me a second to tune out distractions and tune in to whatever I want.

With the concentration skills I had developed, I was able to adjust fairly quickly to this very unusual domain and remain focused on what I wished: my immediate surroundings.

Armaton explained, “This realm responds forthwith to the slightest inclinations and must be entered and occupied only with the greatest self awareness and control. Thoughts here manifest fair instantly. On thine own at present thou art incapable of making this journey. However, by thy willingness to proceed and to align thy consciousness with mine, thou hast received a dispensation. Pray, keep thy thoughts focused on me and thine own divinity shall be reflected back to thee. Through this tandem effort our task has been abridged, affording now the opportunity to avail ourselves of that magnificent construct, the Great Plane of Knowledge.”

His words confirmed what I had been guided to do intuitively. From my “immediate surroundings,” it was Master Armaton that I had chosen as my primary point of focus. And I did

see my own Divinity in him.

Though we related to each other as precious friends, there was a much deeper and profound aspect to our relationship. He was my spiritual mentor and my perception of him included the recognition of his oneness with Divinity.

Whenever I had come close to verbally acknowledging this perception, he would interrupt me, turn solemn, squint one eye, and point a forefinger back and forth between the center of my forehead and his, saying, "I am but a mirror. We are all but mirrors."

As I focused on him in this realm of pure thought, I understood the meaning of these words. I saw that the most lofty perceptions I had of him, I could not have, if I were not already in possession of the same qualities on some level. This was not a matter of pride or accomplishment, simply a recognition of the potential within me and all of us.

I received this response, "Thine understanding blesses thee, that thou wouldst see the delusion in the thought of separation betwixt thee and me. We are all One and the Same, all Divine, manifesting various levels of realization."

This was a place imbued with magnificent understanding. On the physical plane I lived in constant pursuit of knowledge, asking questions whose answers generated more and more questions. Here I beheld answers, each leading to more and more answers.

As I became more accustomed to this realm, I expanded my range of vision. Now I could see that Master Armaton and I, still facing each other, hovered above a vast white plane. We floated down to its surface. In my mind I heard, "Behold, the White Sea Attitude of the Great Plane of Knowledge!" I couldn't tell if the "voice" was Armaton's, my own, or the great White Sea's.

"The source of Knowledge is of smaller consequence than Its presence. For a moment, whilst adjusting to this new and unique circumstance, thou art experiencing some difficulty in discerning thine identity from its surroundings. In the causal realm of thought, there is far less to differentiate one from another, so close is all to the Essence. Even now thou art more finely adjusting thy perceptive faculties."

This was so. I could now sense these words had come from Armaton and was better able to discern myself distinct from my environment.

On Earth, we are accustomed to describing a place by telling how it looks: how big, what colors, etc. The best way to describe the White Sea is to tell how it felt. It was an exquisite and perfect blending of knowledge and joy, the epitome of wisdom and love, a paradise where science and poetry are one.

"Dear Aubrey, there will be other opportunities to tarry. In this now, we must be keenly focused and true to our mission."

"Yes, sir. Of course."

With my agreement came a rumble that felt more agitated than the first. The ground beneath me rotated in a circle whose center was where I stood. Remaining stationary, I could feel the motion of the Plane on the bottoms of my feet as it swiveled. When it stopped I saw that the thinnest imaginable parallel black lines had formed on the white surface. Each line was about twenty feet from the next. They were so thin, I could only see a few to either side of me and short lengths in front of me. The lines were growing wider, barely perceptibly at first, then more rapidly.

When they had widened enough, I could see there was no end to their number or length. They converged at an infinite horizon. The pace of the thickening accelerated. Soon there were equally wide lanes of black and white. Then the black predominated until it consumed the entire

Plane. Immediately the thinnest imaginable parallel white lines formed on the black surface and the process continued in reverse. Soon the acceleration stopped and the expansion and contraction reached a constant rate. White to black, black to white, back and forth.

“This is the Past Attitude of the Great Plane of Knowledge. Observe the Breath of Creation, the alternation of consciousness between Its two extremes: Wisdom’s Bliss and the Misery of Ignorance. Through the Ages, consciousness rises and falls in cyclical motion. More can be learned by study of *Sacred Memories*. Suffice it to say for now, we shall call forth the consciousness, era, and location coordinates of our destination. Pray, Aubrey, join thine intent with mine.”

With no further explanation, the full meaning of his instructions became clear and I linked my thoughts to his. Like one racecar drafting another, I allowed his intent to draw mine and at the same time I willfully followed the thought path I discerned felt right. A familiar feeling welled up within and around me. The Plane’s “breathing” stopped at the precise ratio I had seen countless times in my dreams: six inch wide white bands, twenty feet apart.

Now the lanes moved sideways from left to right with a swoosh then abruptly stopped. The Plane seemed to lock in place when a particular pair of white and black lanes aligned with us. Only then did I notice that Armaton and I had ceased facing each other. Our forms were integrated and we stood as one before the Plane, surveying it.

I felt motion again, as if we were propelled backwards at a very high speed. But I knew we were stationary. The Plane, itself, was moving, faster and faster. Then the strangest thing happened. Its speed had become mind-boggling and was approaching what I knew to be an absolute limit. The moment the limit was reached, the motion instantaneously, yet smoothly, ceased. At the same time, the white stripes shrank to nothing, leaving a vast field of black.

A grid arose out of and perpendicular to the Plane. It loomed over us. The grid was two dimensional yet seemed to have stairs that reached out from its apparent flatness. Very odd. Four large squares were arrayed off each side of an equal sized fifth. Each of the five squares was divided into nine equal smaller squares.

Armaton declared, “We are at the time gate tower through which we shall pass to Darluse Wood, England, 626 A.D.”

At these words, one of the squares began to glow.

“Let us hasten onward,” he prompted.

As one, we floated up to the illuminated square, a portal to our destination. We entered and passed through to the other side of the grid to a place that appeared exactly the same as the one we just left.

“Appearances are not to be trusted, dear Aubrey. Indeed, the Great Plane seems unchanged, yet the transition has, nonetheless, been accomplished. This shall become most clear as we emerge.”

There was another massive flare of light, during which Armaton and I separated. Again facing each other, we were each permeated by a cross of light that diminished and disappeared. We found ourselves suspended in a deep blue sky, floating downward to settle in a grove of tall oak trees.

I took in the verdant beauty as I had done many times before in other forests, but there was a heaviness about this place that was unfamiliar and disconcerting. Being in Nature always exhilarated me, yet here I felt weighted down.

“The density thou art sensing is that of the astral and physical planes. Though we remain in our causal bodies, yet the denser realms can be discerned. Perceived from the sublime vibration

of the causal, they feel leaden.”

That was no understatement. The air alone felt like jello. We approached a small clearing outlined by five huge oaks.

“The Cave of Trees. Tarry here whilst I attend a divinely endowed appointment. If you desire a better view, you may discreetly come forth, but conceal thyself behind yonder brush.”

What was he saying? In this realm you could see anywhere you wanted, just by shifting your attention. The puzzle soon became clear.

I heard a familiar sizzling sound, the same I had heard many times when he showed up out of nowhere. This time it came from me as well as him. As Armaton moved forward he manifested another astral body that coalesced with his causal body. So did I.

It was the most unusual sensation. I felt a light vibration, like a buzzing, throughout my being. It was a very high frequency at first, then it cascaded lower. There were several points where its sound shifted, like a harmonic. I could feel a critical point was being approached. I felt a jolt of electricity; then my “body” fizzed like carbonated water and condensed “cell” by “cell” into a matrix of separate effervescent units. They congealed, merging to form a *second* astral body, in *addition* to the one I had left in the green astral meadow. I knew this was so because I could sense that other body, though it was in a distant place and, apparently, a distant time. As incredible as this event may seem from the perspective of the earth realm, here, nonetheless, it seemed quite natural.

While adjusting to this surprise, I stood in place and watched Armaton enter the clearing. Another astral figure came out from behind a tree on the opposite side. As they met, each bent his right arm up at the elbow and extended it forward. They pressed their open palms together in a prayerful gesture and bowed their heads to their fingertips in mutual supplication and respect. It was chillingly beautiful.

I moved closer, stopping behind a small thicket of scrub oak. Although the distance and the intervening brush prevented me from registering details, I could not help but detect a majesty about Armaton’s companion. For much of their brief conversation, Armaton stood between us, blocking even more of my view than the brush. But for one extraordinary event, I would have thought my own presence was undetected.

It happened when Armaton shifted his position. For an instant I could see directly into the other man’s face and in that instant his gaze met mine and locked. In the eyes of Aerial of Darluse Wood, I peered into the depths of infinity. The intensity of that moment returns whenever I recall it. Abruptly as it occurred, it ended when Armaton blocked our view again.

Then Armaton was handed something, a few words were exchanged, and they parted, backing a few steps away from each other. Across the space that now separated them, another mutual tribute was expressed. Each bent his right arm up again, and bowed his head to the fingertips of an opened palm. Armaton turned on his heels and walked briskly away.

When he rejoined me, eyes welled with tears, Armaton gently whispered, “From the All That Is through a Beloved Son to a Beloved Daughter and the Many in the All.” He placed *Sacred Memories* in my outstretched hands.

Holding it for the first time, I felt a thrill unlike anything I had experienced before. It was not excitement so much as a sense of great promise, completion, importance, and power; the anticipation of great change and immense relief.

I looked again to the Cave of Trees. There stood the solitary figure of Aerial of Darluse. Who was this man, by no means congruent with the darkness and morbid ignorance of this time and place? How had he come to write this book, whose touch alone inspired me? No sooner had

I formed these questions when I received a response.

“The answers lie within the book now given thee to read and share, as well to many questions more, confounding thee with puzzlement. When satisfied, close scrutiny will yield a possible surprise: what answers sought ye from without shall have come forth from deep within.

“This humble tome is but a spark to kindle dormant wicks of minds. ‘Tis but a breeze to fan the flames of Knowing and Remembering. The story is alarming and inspiring and magnificent, a tale of many wanderings, a quest to grasp a Destiny.

“‘Twould be a blunder to conclude it is the saga of one man to the exclusion of the rest; a story told for story’s sake; a passing fancy to be read, enjoyed or not, then cast away to be replaced by fancy’s thrall with yet another in a maze of brief, distracting interludes designed to occupy a mind in fear of facing solitude and grave responsibilities.

“If it be felt these words be harsh, apologies to those offended, but at the time and place in which this book of Mem’ries issues forth, the situation shall require communication sharp and clear. Lo, if ignored in form of words, the message shall be sent again and yet again repeatedly in forms not as negotiable or language so deniable or essence so avoidable.

“If it be felt *these* words be harsh, let those which follow salve the wound: the point is not to threaten ye, but prod ye to remembering the days of yore when humankind possessed more balance, less control; expressed respect and reverence for all life and for Mother Earth.

“With progress ye have gained the pow’r to celebrate or decimate all life about ye and thine own with choices made and yet to make.

“‘Forsooth! What choices?’ ye may ask. The very ones made every day betwixt extremes of love and fear in matters great or import small: the choices made to seize the mind and guide its course or give the wheel to habit or to circumstance and fall prey to the Sesavah.

“Above all else remember this: more powerful than circumstance, ye are more loved than many feel; yet fear more than ye recognize. Let go thy need for dominance. Crave harmony and balance more. Let Love and Knowing come to ye. Quaff deeply *Sacred Memories*.”

I was transfixed. These words had come from everyone and everything. Were they Aerial’s? Yes, they were. Were they Armaton’s? It seemed so. They came from the forest on the breeze. Their source felt as familiar as I am to me. Had Mother Earth, Herself, just spoken? Undeniably.

Glancing about, I embraced all that surrounded me with unbounded joy and appreciation. To be here, to be part of this majesty, so infused with love, compassion, and power, was the fulfillment of any dream or ambition I could hope to conjure. To share this with anyone, with everyone who would listen, became infused into my life’s purpose.

From Armaton, “This is a blessed moment, one to be cherished evermore. The blessings are not for thee alone, but me as well, for the honor of thy company, engaged together as we are, in this most sacred mission.”

We stood together in silence until the time was right, when my companion said, “And now, dear Aubrey, the work begins.”

I nodded in reply. We both turned for a last glimpse of Aerial. He bid his farewell by touching his brow again. I returned the gesture. Then he disappeared.

Armaton gently prodded, “Let us hie now to thy home.”

In a reversal of the process I had experienced before, my astral body separated into a matrix of component units. These decomposed with a fizz into their fundamental vibratory state. Its frequency cascaded higher and higher until my astral form had completely dissolved. I was once again only in my causal body.

We retraced our journey through the Great Plane of Knowledge back to the meadow where



we reintegrated with the astral forms we had left there and rejoined the throng of Golden Warrior Guardians. With a glorious clamor and display, they stood at attention and saluted, holding their shields outstretched toward us in their left hands while tapping their right fists to their hearts.

In parting, Master Armaton and I bowed our heads and touched our brows, returning their honor and respect, then floated up and away from the meadow. In the next moment we were both back in my kitchen in physical bodies, brewing a pot of tea.

## *Chapter 11*

### *Sacred Memories*

Over the next several weeks I poured over *Sacred Memories* on my own and with Master Armaton. The nightly excursions I had become accustomed to making with him were now replaced by sessions of reading aloud interspersed with discussion. This led to extraordinary discoveries.

At the outset Armaton reasoned, “Now that this book is in thy possession, we need not go out traversing other realms to reveal knowledge or catalyze thy transformation. For a time, immerse thyself in it and observe the changes this experience alone shall bestow.

“As time passes, the path—thy destiny—will become more clear. For now, as always, let go all time but the present. Focus only upon tasks at hand: reading *Sacred Memories* and thy chosen professional responsibilities. Foreswear all else. Read, work, relax, absorb.”

In *Sacred Memories* I found a true friend, one I could rely upon to inspire and uplift me and never let me down. Like a friend, I always looked forward to our time together. To this day, I haven’t tired of its company and often revisit its embrace. Each reading has been a fresh experience. Familiarity has served only to increase my appreciation. As I’ve gotten to know it better, my understanding has grown and so have I.

As Master Armaton predicted, *Sacred Memories* had a profound effect on me. The book’s essence and its calming rhythmic cadence attuned me to deeper and deeper understandings that were beyond any my prior life could have offered. Yet this knowing did not come from beyond me; as I had been told in the Cave of Trees, it came from within. It was revealed, not assimilated.

And I did transform. My capacity for insight grew noticeably. Memories stirred: vague recollections that taunted me with their familiarity and elusiveness. Just as Armaton had said, a sense of destiny developed within me. A realignment of purpose, also vague, came in brief momentary flashes, like *deja vu*’s that extended to the future as well as the past.

I was enthralled with the surprises and extraordinary places and events Auriel described. What he wrote was so fantastic, it was difficult to accept as true. But then so was what happened to me ever since Master Armaton reappeared in my life. Along with my continuing amazement during months of adjusting to a new and undeniable “reality,” I had recognized that the current thinking of some scientists, theoretical physicists among them, offered explanations for much of what Auriel wrote about and I experienced.

It was a comfort knowing that at least some of my colleagues saw the limitations of confining perceptions and thinking to the third dimensional realm. Some have been questioning the perceived separateness of all things, the “reality” put forth by Newton and Descartes who saw a world of separate objects whose behavior and interactions could be flawlessly predicted according to relatively simple sets of equations.

However, Newtonian and Cartesian laws, once considered sacrosanct fundamental truths, have been shown to be in a constant state of violation at the subatomic level. They are convenient and accurate predictors only in the macro world, a limited portion of the multidimensional realms theoretical physics proposes and I have experienced. What’s more, experiments conducted over the past few decades substantiate the *interconnectedness* of all things: life, matter, and energy. I know this to be true from my own observations.

My progress led to feeling more sure of my course of action, if not more certain where it would lead. I was in uncharted territory that required openness and detachment in unprecedented ways and amounts. This “letting go” in combination with reading *Sacred Memories* was

tremendously increasing my intuition and creativity. At work I couldn't help but notice how much more efficiently and directly I was able to solve intricate problems. Answers seemed to be coming *to* me.

Inexplicably, I was getting an ever-growing feeling that *Sacred Memories* and my connection with the Folk, however tenuous it still felt, had something to do with my CUE theory. Now *that* was intriguing.

All the statistical analysis we had done at school seemed to validate the possibility of a factor common to all the ecological crises we studied. Interestingly, we looked at some societal problems, for example, crime, international disputes, economic downturns, and found correlation with them as well. The analysis was showing a statistical linkage, but offered no clue to identify the root cause. From the standpoint of the math, we had come to an impasse we couldn't seem to get past.

The only ray of hope was coming from this unanticipated source. I wondered where it would lead and how I would be able to integrate what information I might glean into what had to be a rigorous scientific presentation.

One evening during our reading session Armaton turned uncharacteristically grave. Something was up.

"Dear Aubrey, it is time for a decision."

"About what?"

"To proceed or not, to confirm or recant thy participation in the unfoldment of ancient prophecy."

"You don't get that I'm completely committed? Why would you even ask?"

"As I explained on the evening we commenced this process: to afford thee the opportunity of continued choice, to reaffirm thy freedom to act, at all times, from the depth of continuing conviction, not from a sense of inertia, obligation, or conformity to expectation."

"I don't feel any of those things."

"I did not sense you did, but it is necessary to again extend the opportunity for a choice to proceed or not. Wouldst thou care to render a decision now or is more time required?"

"No, I don't need more time. Of course I want to keep going."

"So be it. Through thy continued involvement, Folk prophecy is fulfilled. We are most grateful to thee."

"Now, that's the part I'm having a hard time with. I just don't get that I'm part of some prophecy."

"Does that deter thee in any way?"

"No, but it just doesn't make any sense."

"Thine acceptance of this notion is not a requirement. Is this an issue you can let go for a time?"

"Let go? I guess. But shouldn't the person the prophecy is about believe it? I mean how is it going to work if even *I* don't get it?"

"Prophecy does not require the knowledge or, for that matter, agreement of even those it most intimately involves, to 'work' as you put it. Prophecy is not a contractual agreement that binds parties involved. It is not necessarily a precise and never an inflexible predictor of events. Its highest purpose is to forewarn, to call attention to a situation that may still be ameliorated.

"There is *always* room for choice and it is never too late to make choices and take action. 'Tis true, as time passes and warnings go unheeded, options may diminish or become more difficult to pursue. But even in the darkest hour, when it appears all is lost, *then* it is *most*

important to remain calm and never, *never* give up. For to give up is to give in to the dark influence of the Sesavah. To give in is to become lost.

“As to acceptance of thine inclusion in Folk prophecy, we shall give it time, eh? It is more reasonable thou wouldst grow into this as more information comes thy way.”

“What information?”

“That is not for me to say. It shall unfold before thee in its own good time. Prithee, read on.”  
So I did and I found one astounding thing after another.

Aurial’s purpose was to preserve the memory of the Folk at a time when they were to disappear from Mother Earth because of the abject ignorance, the diminished consciousness of the day.

He explained their mission. In their realm where all beings and things are imbued with pure Love, the Folk distill this potent Force into liquid jewels of dew. Each day, they travel across time, space, and multiple dimensions to distribute their precious gifts of Love throughout all Nature, to all the planet’s innocents, Her plants, waters, rocks and soil.

Armaton added this to my understanding, “Sadly, during dark times, the masses of Earth’s peoples have, for the most part, been incapable of receiving such Love directly, so identified and consumed are they with the contrary force of fear and fear-based thinking. Such thinking is aligned with the Sesavah, and offers it a domain and the capacity for influence.

“The commonly experienced concept of love strays far from its true essence and is limited to the emotion expressed between people who are engaged in familial or romantic relationships. This is far afield from the Folk experience of Love.

“Such relationships are often infected by desire for control, suffocating attachment, expectations, conditions, judgment, or other elements which diminish the sovereignty of all involved. This is not Love.

“Love is not an emotion expressed between people. It is a Universal Force, ever existing, ever available, not something to be cajoled or manipulated from another, but realized within.

“Given mankind’s widespread incapacity to access Love directly, the Folk deliver their abundance daily, infuse it within Nature so man can indirectly derive its benefits.

“Such is why an agitated mind can return calm and renewed from walking through a lush forest or along a quiet sandy beach; why the sight of a flower or a stunning vista can effect a feeling far deeper than an appreciation of its beauty. It is the unseen Lights of Love, the Folk, hiding behind the beauty of Nature, who inspire the recovery of this sense of well-being.”

Although this was a radical explanation, given my recent radical experiences, I had to allow it was true.

“A wise and open-minded policy, dear Aubrey. Thou hast come a respectable distance from the evening my very existence was held in such doubt.”

“Well, I’ve seen a lot.”

“And, verily, much more to come. Prepare thyself.”

I thought I was pretty well prepared, but still a lot startled me. Apparently I wasn’t the only one to have direct encounters with the Sesavah. So did Aurial.

Armaton questioned this thought, “Didst thou think thyself unique in this regard?”

“I didn’t think about it and you never really went into detail. It kind of took me by surprise. There was something ... spooky just reading about the Sesavah.”

“That is most understandable.”

“But now that I *do* think about it, it makes sense. If all that attracts it is fear, who’s safe? It must be having a heyday with all that’s going on nowadays. It’s got to be everywhere, going

after just about everybody.”

“That is the case. In fact, this is a critical time, when much is at stake. Stemming its influence is at the root of our mission.”

“Fighting it?”

“Not precisely. We are in combat with the Sesavah’s influence. For each of Mother Earth’s children the battle is one on one. No one can defeat it on another’s behalf. Our mission is not to fight. It is to Love and thereby inspire this alternative in others. In that way, all who would avail themselves of Love’s influence may utilize it to neutralize and move beyond the Sesavah’s.”

“I understand.”

“*Sacred Memories* and its power to transform is a most valuable asset. The time is nigh when it shall issue forth. In the meantime, avail thyself of its essential guidance. It shall lead thee to many resources, outer and inner.”

And nothing mentioned in *Sacred Memories* could surpass the importance of the hallowed *Book of Symbols*, which contains the “history and mysteries,” as Aerial described it, of the Society of Folk.

The *Book of Symbols* contains no words in a form we would recognize. It is written entirely in the beautiful geodimensional language of the Folk. The symbols resemble mandalas, geometric designs that are used in Buddhism and Hinduism as aids to meditation. According to Armaton, the Book appears to be made entirely out of alabaster, yet its pages are as thin and pliable as parchment.

Each Symbol is holographic in nature and contains multiple layers of information. The *Book of Symbols* encompasses all existence, all time, all space, and all dimensions. It holds limitless Knowledge and is the repository of Folk prophecy. The Symbols have the power to inspire intuitive perceptions and healing.

By special dispensation from Queen Veridia of Folk, the *Book of Symbols* was brought to Earth by Aerial and made physically manifest in an indestructible form of matter. According to Aerial, during a battle with the Sesavah, the Book fell into a pit and was lost somewhere in a field in the south of England.

Upon learning this, I turned to Armaton with great excitement, “Sir, if the Book is really indestructible, isn’t there a chance it might still be there?”

“My dear, beyond mere chance, destiny requires that it is.”

“Master Armaton! We have to recover it.”

“Do we?”

“Well, of course. There’s no way I could find out about this and just let it go. There’s no choice here. We *have* to do this.”

Solemnly he fired a quick reply, “Aubrey, there is *always* choice. No matter can ever preclude conscious choice. ‘Tis only those too deeply steeped in ignorance who fail to see the ever present opportunity and necessity for conscious choice.”

“Sorry. I used the wrong words. Yes there’s a choice, but it’s such a no-brainer. I couldn’t dream of not doing it.”

“Understood. Because freedom of choice is such a fundamental issue, it is important to be very clear. Then this is something to which thou art committed?”

“Yes, without any doubt or hesitation.”

“Excellent. Given thy firmly stated resolve, I can offer confirmation and encouragement now without concern for influencing thy decision: this has been foreseen in Folk prophecy.

“Although Aerial required the *Book of Symbols* to complete his mission, ultimately, it was

intended for another. I call thine attention to *Sacred Memories*, Chapter 1, in which Aerial quotes the prophecy as I had revealed it to him.”

In these quatrains, Armaton is speaking to Aerial:

The Folk will show Themselves to thee.  
Thou hast been summoned by Their Queen  
To meet within a secret place  
Where she will give to thee alone

An ancient treasure, very rare,  
The “Book of Symbols,” which includes  
The history and mysteries  
Of the Society of Folk.

It is a Gift ordained to be  
A sacred treasure for someone  
Whose Destiny, aligned with thine,  
Is to decipher what it means.

Armaton continued, “ That ‘someone,’ dear Aubrey, is thee.”

I hesitated for a long moment before answering, “If that were true, I’d be ... I don’t know what to say. It *looks* like it could be me, but I have nothing in my own life to confirm it; nothing that’s ever happened to me ... nothing I know about. I’m so sorry, but I just don’t see it the way you do.”

“No cause for sorrow. Rest easy with this. Confirmation will come, all in good time.”

While I was speaking, he had turned to a page in *Sacred Memories*. Now, as he tapped his finger on a sketch of a Symbol Aerial had drawn, he said with a knowing smile, “Thy link to the Book will soon be realized.”

“Well, in any event, I’ve got to figure out how to get away from work long enough to take the trip to England. Then I’ve got to figure out where to even *begin* looking.”

He smiled again and rubbed his fingertips in a gentle caress over the sketch while replying, “Rest easy with this, as well. The location of the book and thy link to this place will also soon be realized.”

With that comment our session ended. He bowed deeply and faded out of sight with the familiar sizzle. I stared at the sketch for a moment and puzzled over the caption that accompanied it:

Where Mother’s hair reveals this sign,  
Go straightaway in search of It.

This was the only part of *Sacred Memories* that baffled me. For the time being, I let it go and headed off to bed.

## *Chapter 12*

### *The Sacrifice of Truth*

My job has always been a thrill for me. Waking up on a weekday morning was just as good as on the weekend. But after learning about the *Book of Symbols* I felt a change. As each day passed I felt more and more drawn to the task of finding it, less so to my work.

Of course, Armaton had some insight to share. “Do not concern thyself in this matter. Thou art not facing a premature midlife crisis, but feeling the magnetism of thy destiny pulling thee towards the next step.”

“Well, it feels like the next step is going to England, but with what’s going on at school now, leaving even just for a couple of weeks seems out of the question.”

“Relax and allow, my dear: day by day, in fact, moment by moment. When the time is right, knowing shall come and there will be no stopping thee. Obstacles will disappear or cease to matter and decisions will be obvious.”

At work, an organizational crisis with a political undercurrent was brewing. Each day it got closer to boiling over. The Supercomputer Center had been a part of the Distributed Terascale Facility since its inception. The TeraGrid, as it’s more commonly known, is a project that was intended to build and interconnect some of the world’s largest and fastest computers in order to create a more powerful capacity for scientific research.

The TeraGrid started out with four universities and plans for expansion to others. The understanding all along had been that the partnership would include only well established educational institutions. Much to the surprise of virtually everyone involved, a private research institute, the Academy for Weather and Resource Evaluation (AWARE), had recently joined. They were approved directly by the Executive Board without consulting the existing partners and informing them only after the fact.

What made the matter especially volatile was that very little was known about this organization, even though it had been around a long time. With no good explanation for an extraordinary exception to policy, tongues wagged and rumors abounded.

As Director of Computational Sciences I was in the thick of it and my boss, George Scribner, was even more so. George thrived on political intrigue and seemed to live for moments like this, seeing them as opportunities to maneuver and improve his career status and potential.

That’s why the position he took seemed so calculating. Despite widespread opposition, he was an adamant and very vocal supporter of AWARE’s partnership in the TeraGrid. In the past, George had championed only very popular issues, taking great care not to create enemies or hard feelings.

I’m not a fan of the wild speculation that goes on in these kinds of situations, but I couldn’t help wondering what his eloquent rhetoric was concealing. George was just too guileful not to have an ulterior motive. For some reason, displaying his agreement with the Board in such a public way was more important than his popularity.

Of course George expected anyone he perceived to be within his sphere of influence to march in lockstep with him. For the most part everyone did. Not because they agreed, but because it was obviously the safest thing to do.

The money and resources necessary for research aren’t easy to come by. It makes sense to stay in good favor with the person who decides how much support you get, if any. So the right and wrong of a situation is trumped by the impact any actions you take will have on your job.

Did most of our researchers and George’s staff agree with AWARE’s acceptance into the

TeraGrid? Not by a long shot. Did they suspect something fishy was going on? Undoubtedly. Did they think it was worth risking the displeasure of George Scribner to voice their opinions and concerns? Not for a minute.

On the surface, there was a lot to lose and nothing tangible to gain; only supporting a principle by questioning a hidden agenda. When you believe your work contributes to the advancement of science and the betterment of mankind, it's easier to rationalize looking the other way in order to protect yourself.

“ ‘Tis another way fear expresses and the Sesavah controls. It is a sneaky beast and will use whatever means, take advantage of whatever opening there may be, to perform its dark alchemy ... in this case turning dedication to a lofty goal into apathy.”

“Well, you can't really blame them, I mean they've worked all their lives to get where they are.”

“There is never blame from the perspective of Love. Blame is an agency of the Sesavah. We, the Folk, do not judge or criticize behavior, only point out consequences and possibilities in the hope that with greater understanding man will make choices that better serve his highest good and the highest good of All.

“That they shrink from action is perfectly understandable, seemingly justifiable human behavior ... and that is precisely what we are up against, the very construct we must attempt to instruct and influence if Love is to flourish more than fear.

“Many do not understand the impact of their actions or inaction upon the world at large and are, therefore, tempted to assume they matter little... especially in comparison to the more immediate requirements of family and career and the desire for success, income, security, and a comfortable life. When dedication to these noble pursuits is out of balance, living more closely resembles survival. This is a particularly grievous temptation for those who misperceive their occupations to be mundane, lacking the humanitarianism of a scientist or the verve of an artist.

“Many do not identify with their roles as citizens of Mother Earth and the special role each has to play in life. They do not recognize the possibility, much less the importance, of being true to oneself, of perceiving and dedicating a life well and joyfully lived in the pursuit of personal destiny and higher purpose.

“As the Sesavah would have it, for many this appears to be a daunting, frightening, and confusing prospect. Life is too frequently instructed to be lived in a way that requires sacrifice of personal preference and integrity for security: a job's purpose is to put food on the table and a roof over the head. Yet, so much more is possible ... and attainable.

“As Love would have it, many are blessed with dreams and hope early in life, signposts to their destiny and brightest future. To live a life of destiny requires recognizing the dream as an achievable reality, exerting the will to take the first step, and understanding each step will suggest the next. Furthermore, there is *no* mundane occupation. Purpose and destiny can be expressed in all pursuits. It is a matter of attitude and alignment of the occupation with one's disposition and prevalent desires and talent.

“To disavow one's dreams or integrity is the greatest loss. To exist, clutching tightly to the illusion of safety, is to lose no small measure of sensitivity, respect, and reverence for all life, especially one's own. The irony is, the more one focuses sharply and exclusively on personal matters close to work and home, the more one loses a greater sense of Self.

“Little wonder thy coworkers would refrain from risk. They perceive no potential gain, only danger for that which they hold most dear. They believe their silence is justified because it serves a higher cause: their work, their survival. Alas! Much is sacrificed with the sacrifice of truth.



One's essence is drained and identity compromised.

"In many First World countries, particularly the United States, the tendency toward complacency in matters other than personal is aggravated by the pace with which life is lived. Little opportunity is taken for relaxation, much less contemplation and appreciation of the subtle spiritual essence of life.

"This is now passed on to children whose days are overloaded with appointments and duties intended to prepare them for life. In fact, this accomplishes little more than forcing them to mount the treadmill at an early age and deprives them of the opportunity to develop inwardly ... exacerbating the fundamental problem: insufficiency of inner development.

"To make matters worse, in moments between activities, the tendency is to bombard the senses with the frantic and often dark vibration of contemporary entertainment. As I have said, the Sesavah is a sneaky beast and will use whatever means to distract and divert attention from Love and its inherent wisdom. Life nowadays appears more sophisticated than in Aerial's time, yet an equivalent ignorance reigns."

I protested, "How can that be? It doesn't just appear to be more sophisticated, it *is*. We understand the mechanisms of life at a level of detail that was incomprehensible in those days."

"What you say is mostly true, but for the finer point which is missing: the mechanism is understood, but the essence of life still escapes or bewilders many.

"In the seventh century man lacked spiritual understanding because his knowledge and capacity to think were limited, relegating him to a very difficult and dangerous life fraught with many adverse distractions that precluded deep thought and contemplation. To some extent that remains the case today amongst unindustrialized peoples.

"In industrialized society, man lacks true spiritual understanding because his vastly expanded knowledge and capacity to think have created an easier, less dangerous way of life fraught with a different array of innumerable distractions, pleasurable as well as adverse, which preclude deep thought and contemplation. And *that* is what we are up against."

I protested again, "But it can't be as bad now as it was in the Dark Ages."

"It is, dear Aubrey, as bad, far worse, and also better. There are many, many who walk upon the face of the planet today whose expression of ignorance is as profound as Aerial's contemporaries. Back then, virtually all lived their lives in reaction to circumstances, never altering their course or their thinking, because they accepted without question the way things were. Ignorant of their capacity for choice and change, they were shut off from the way things *could* be."

"Well, that does describe a lot of people in *this* day and age; including ones that are pretty intelligent. And it sure sounds like what's happening at work. Mostly what I hear is 'What can we do about it, anyhow? That's just the way it is.' It's like they're trapped and powerless."

"In perfect conformity with the deception of the Sesavah."

"I get that, but what can they do? How do they go up against the system?"

"To oppose it is only to reflect it, another temptation of the Sesavah. 'Tis far better to align with one's inherent nature, Love and Truth. Think, contemplate, listen, and act."

"That's just not going to go over with them."

"I didn't mean to imply that it would. You asked for a course of action. That was my recommendation. That is, in fact, my only recommendation and the fundamental message we must communicate."

"How is that going to work? I understand what you mean, but the world—I mean the one I was used to—only responds to tangible things. They want 'This is what you do; this is when you

do it' ... and concrete reasons why ... not 'Use the Force, Luke.'"

"Our message *will* go over with some and not with others. If *no one* would follow my recommendation, then *you* do. Think, contemplate, be still, and listen for thine innate intuitive guidance. The first step will present itself. It may defy logic or seem disconnected from the objective. If it feels right, take it, knowing each step will suggest the next in a similar manner. Let thy life prove me ... or prove me not."

"You said things are worse now. How?"

"Mankind has acquired vast power through intellectual development and an impressive understanding of science and technology. Therein lies the danger, one without precedent, a situation far worse than in Auriel's time."

"You mean the power we have to destroy the world."

"Not the world. Much of man's power is expressed through his acquired ability to extract and manipulate Mother Earth's resources. In that regard, he remains dependent upon her. She reigns supreme and will not be destroyed."

"But we can destroy ourselves."

"Precisely ... and many other beings as well ... as has already begun ... in a panoply of ways, all foreseen in the *Book of Symbols*."

"How are things better?"

"Ah! ... The bright side. 'Tis most appropriate to thy role in this drama."

"In Auriel's time few possessed higher consciousness. The depth of his understanding and his capacity for transformation were most unique. The saving grace in this day is the presence of many with that same capacity. In them lies salvation. To them and through them we direct our efforts."

"So you're saying there are people who will listen ..."

"And *understand*."

"... so we need to figure out who they are and how to get to them."

"Indeed. 'Tis an issue, however, for another day. There are preliminary matters that are of more immediate concern. Leave the future for the time it becomes the present."

Armaton had a way of exploring the height, depth, and breadth of a matter, penetrating accepted and unquestioned norms and exposing their inappropriateness and instability. He could also take simple, personal issues, like people in fear of losing their jobs, and integrate them into a global perspective.

We are all part of an integrated whole. We do not live or act in isolation, despite perceptions to the contrary. The only real security is in Truth. It's possible to achieve unassailable stability in our lives by following Polonius's advice to Laertes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "This above all: to thine own self be true."

This requires being very conscious and aware, analyzing alternatives, and questioning traditional mores. In such a paradigm, "Don't rock the boat," "Don't make waves," and "You can't fight City Hall" are countermanded by "Never dodge Truth; it can't be avoided."

The funny thing is, the TeraGrid controversy wasn't nearly as much of a problem for me as everyone else. First of all, timidity has never been one of my challenges, something my parents could attest to early in my life. What's more, my position gave me a bit more flexibility than most of the others. I was a tenured full professor, which meant I would have to screw up big time to lose my position on the faculty.

Into the bargain, my popularity with the media gave me some measure of protection. If I lost funding for my research, I'd get a lot of sympathetic news coverage. As a result, my occasional

dissidence was tolerated and usually met with polite, jaundiced smiles and a “There she goes again!” public reaction by affected parties. Of course, what happened in private was another matter entirely.

George rarely visited anyone. When there was something to talk about in person, you usually got a summons from his assistant with the unspoken—yet clear—expectation you would come immediately. When he burst into my office one morning and slammed the door behind him I braced myself with calmness.

“Damn, Aubrey! I can’t believe ... what the ...” George stammered at me. “What the hell were you *thinking*?”

George was holding the current issue of *Science Today*, which included an interview with me. It was for a regular feature, “The State of Science Today ... and Tomorrow,” in which scientists from many different disciplines share their insights and visions of the future.

The brunt of my comments had to do with the CUE Theory and my expectation that a uniform approach would yield the best and most consistent results in reversing the effects of man’s insults to the environment.

Off the main topic, they asked what I thought about AWARE joining the TeraGrid and what kind of precedent that set for the future. I gave them my honest opinion: I didn’t know what it meant as a precedent, but I detected no foreseeable advantage for the original partnership and a potential for disadvantage.

A synergy had developed with the founding partners that came from our unity of purpose. Although machine time was at a premium, the sense of cooperation and mutual concern far outweighed any impetus to competition. Priorities were mutually agreed upon, arguments were rare, and often, machine time was voluntarily deferred, out of turn, to someone who had a greater immediate need.

I pointed out that, although this was intangible, it was a very important component of the partnership. To dictate the introduction of an unknown, disparate entity, especially so abruptly, posed a threat to the organizational harmony that has been such a critical element of the TeraGrid.

“You’ve got no damned right to go spouting off like that. Damnit!”

“I can see you’re upset, George, and I’m sorry you’re taking it that way, but what I did was speak my truth.”

“Why the hell ...? Couldn’t you just dodge the question? Make them go somewhere else?”

“Now, George, you know me better than that. That’s not how I operate. I prefer to be pretty open and straightforward. It’s gotten you upset again and I *am* sorry. But there *is* a flip side. Being so direct, I think, is a big reason for all the media attention I get ... they come to me because they know I’ll give them a straight answer and, in the end, I think that’s put the Center in a good light also.”

With a lecherous sneer, “Well, I can think of two bigger reasons ...” He glared at my chest just to make sure I got his repugnant point.

I glared back with a fire that could have singed his eyebrows. He knew he had stepped over a dangerous line. That sent him into a disgruntled retreat.

But he couldn’t resist a final shot. “I like you, Aubrey, you know that. But things like this, the mamm ... uh ... excuse me ... the *memories* ... they don’t go away quickly. You should be careful not to create too many of them. They can come back to haunt you.

“Don’t forget the staff meeting at two.”

Before I had a chance to react, he turned abruptly and walked out. His veiled threat didn’t

concern me. I'd heard them so many times before. But I was taken aback by the *way* he had spoken to me. He'd never come *close* to displaying this level of disrespect. It was like he didn't care at all. Because he was so calculating, I knew this wasn't a slip up. There was some meaning to it, a portend of something to come that made me very uneasy.

## *Chapter 13*

### *A Magic Flower*

No sooner did George leave than Harold showed up.

“What was that all about? His extreme lordship, the great emperor Ming the Merciless has come down from his lofty castle on the sixth floor of the planet Mongo ... to cross the threshold of a crude, unworthy peasant? He would never come for good news, so what kind of trouble are you in?”

“I can’t really tell. I mean he saw the ...”

“He is pissed supreme about *Science Today*, am I right?”

“Yeah, but there’s something else that’s a lot deeper and a lot heavier.”

“You told him you want to take a vacation?”

“No. I’m talking heavy, very heavy.”

“Aw, geez, Aubrey, now you’re freakin’ me out.”

I should have known better. Harold had an old habit of taking the possibility of bad news and running to extremes with it.

He went on, “I don’t even *know* where my resume is. I’ll have to buy a suit, probably a couple. God, I’m gonna have to take a *thousand* interviews ...”

“Harold! Stop it! You’ve got yourself on a breadline and nothing’s happened.”

“Yeah, but you said ...”

“I said something’s up with George and I don’t know what it is. That’s *all*. Nobody’s getting fired. Least of all you.”

“You mean it might be you, Aubrey. Aw, man they can’t do that!”

“Harold! That’s right! They can’t and they’re not. Stop. Calm down. You’ve got to remember what we’ve been talking about and *do* it.”

Harold and I had discussions from time to time about his habit of getting caught up in worst-case scenarios. I shared with him what I’d learned about fear and being conscious and very deliberate about where I let my mind go. Being very practical, he immediately understood the advantage of monitoring and managing thoughts over falling victim to old habit patterns.

He had made a lot of progress, though something big, like he perceived this was, could knock him off balance. But after a few minutes he recovered his composure.

“Wow, that really got ahold of me didn’t it?”

“Uh huh. Is it over?”

“Yeah. You know, Aubrey, it’s kind of incredible now ‘cause there was a time, not that long ago, when I would have been freaked for days over something like this. But now I seem to be able to get it really fast: that all it is is my imagination, the dark side of it, running away with me. That’s a really good thing you did for me, Aubrey. Thanks.”

“It *is* a good thing, Harold, and I’m very happy for you. Just remember, though, *you* did it. I just brought it to your attention. You listened, you figured it out, and then you did something about it.”

“Yeah, huh! That’s pretty cool.” He beamed at me. “Hey, did you bring anything or do you want to go out for lunch?”

“Out. Where?”

“I’m dying to go to People’s, not so much for the food, but I want to see their new place. Aubrey, they’ve got like thirteen *thousand* square feet of photovoltaics on their roof.”

Harold was talking about People’s Organic Foods Market in Ocean Beach, about fifteen

miles south of campus. It's a food co-op dedicated to supporting an ecologically sustainable, healthy lifestyle for its customers and employees, who are also its owners. They had moved into a new building that was a wonderful example of sustainable, cost effective architecture and construction. The photovoltaic system supplied much of their electricity.

"I'd like to see it, too, Harold, but the drive time is going to make it a long lunch and I've got to be back for a meeting at two. Maybe some other time. Why don't we just go to the cafeteria?"

This made perfect sense, but saying it made me feel a little antsy and out of sorts. Past experience had shown me that discomfort like this was intuition expressing through my feelings that I was headed in the wrong direction.

Before Harold had a chance to sputter out a rebuttal, I reversed my stand. "You know, maybe People's isn't such a bad idea after all. If we leave right away, we can jump onto the 5 and maybe beat the lunchtime traffic."

Immediately I felt better. That was confirmation. Who knew why, but we were headed for People's. Harold stared at me quizzically for a moment then realized where we were going and became the environmental researcher equivalent of a happy puppy.

The freeway was as clear as I'd ever seen it in the daytime and we got there in about twenty minutes. Harold didn't give a hoot about food. He was totally into the building.

"It's completely passive, Aubrey. There's no heat or A/C, but it's pretty comfortable, don't you think? Man, this is very cool. Let's go see if we can get up to the roof and check out the PV panels."

Now very attuned to my inner prompting I replied, "I don't think I want to do that, Harold. I'm feeling like I want to settle in and have a relaxing lunch. You go, OK? Have fun."

Harold looked like he was on rubber band tethers. One was attached to me and the other was very tautly bound to the object of his desire. He was being pulled back and forth, taking a step or two away and then back again. When I released him, he was off like a shot in his happy puppy way.

Being here felt good, comfortable, yet there was also an edginess about it, an excitement. I didn't think it was just the garlic eggplant, which I was very happy to see on the menu.

I found a table in a corner of the outside patio and made myself comfortable. As I ate, I leafed through a copy of *The Messenger*, which I had picked up from a rack inside. It's a bimonthly newspaper I enjoy reading as a change of pace from the mainstream publications that are so inundated with bad news. There are always thought provoking articles on subjects like ecology, spirituality, health, and self-development.

I started to read one that interested me, but just couldn't get into it. I went back to the beginning several times, but it was like nothing registered. The same thing happened with a second article ... and a third. Frustrated and curious about this uncharacteristic inability to focus, I rustled the paper noisily in my annoyance as I turned to the next page.

What I saw took my breath away. To my utter astonishment, there was a photograph of a design identical to the sketch of the Symbol Aerial had drawn. How could this be? No one, absolutely *no one*, other than Armaton and myself even *knew* about *Sacred Memories*, much less had access to it. For a couple of minutes I was too stunned to do anything but stare at the picture, gasping and muttering softly to myself.

Then, with the suddenness of a bracing slap, I dove headlong into the article that explained this was an aerial photograph of a field in England and the image was a crop circle. Now I had heard about crop circles. They were patterns formed in some mysterious way in large fields of

growing plants as some were bent to the ground and others remained standing.

This was just too weird. This picture taken a couple of years ago was the spitting image of a sketch Aurial made fourteen hundred years ago in a book that wasn't discovered until a few weeks ago. I was completely baffled and giddy in my dazed confusion.

"Aubrey, it's unbelievable!" Harold's voice startled me out of my befuddled reverie. He seemed as astounded and giddy as me. *He* knew, too? How could *he* know?

"You've got to come and see. There's like two hundred and thirty-five PV panels. They crank out a *third* of the power they use here! That *includes* refrigeration, these huge walk-in coolers ... It's amazing!"

My mental gears had just been stripped. Harold and I were in two different worlds. He was yammering about a technology that was completely logical and sensible in his. In my world, where logic and sensibility had been lost, what he said was incomprehensible and, compared to my shocking find, inconsequential. I was truly speechless.

"Harold ... I ... um ... it's ... uh ..."

To make matters worse I broke into nervous laughter that I had a hard time controlling.

"What's so funny, Aubrey?"

I used every ounce of will and concentration to compose myself and put together my best attempt at a sensible, acceptable answer, "I'm just ... you know ... something struck me ... um ... funny."

"In the paper there?"

"Um ... It was just something ... that ... um ..."

As my voice trailed off, his enthusiasm took over. "Maybe you can read it to me later. The thing is, you gotta see some of this stuff. We can go up on the roof!"

"OK, Harold, yes, well I could ... but ... it's just that ... right now I'm ... um ... not so ... um ..." I was so overwrought that I began to puddle up with tears.

All of a sudden a light bulb went off in Harold's head. A placid understanding modified his demeanor and he became very soft-spoken. "Ooooh. I'm sorry. I didn't get it. This is one of those ... um ... special ... like ... um ... lady times and you need to be alone and it's not so good for you to be ... you'd just rather be alone, right?"

He was so wrong in so many ways, reverting to such a stereotypical gender archetype, the all too common masculine knee jerk reflex in a futile attempt to "understand" a woman when her behavior became a little complicated and, God forbid, emotional. After a long pause, I gave him the only answer possible under the circumstances.

"Yes, I'd like to be alone."

Harold bobbed his head knowingly, testimony to the great sensitivity he perceived in himself. He spoke very quietly while backing away from me, "I'll just leave you to your ... um ... I'll ... Maybe in a while ... I'll check back ... and then ... um ... OK?"

"OK," I sniffed, "Thanks."

He stumbled into a table, waved equally clumsily, then headed back to his explorations. I returned to the mental maelstrom created by my discovery.

According to the article, the field where this crop circle had been found was in Avebury, a village in the southern county of Wiltshire. Avebury! I could hardly believe it. A lot flashed through my mind while I was reading: Aurial's sketch, Armaton calling attention to it, the related passage in *Sacred Memories*, and elements of my family history.

Armaton said my link to the *Book of Symbols* "will soon be realized," the whole time pointing to the sketch. Aurial wrote, "Where Mother's hair reveals this sign go straightaway in

search of It.” “It” with a capital “I” meant the *Book of Symbols*. On one hand, this was pretty nuts! On the other hand, it was pretty clear: where you see this, that’s where you should look and be quick about it.

Armaton also said, “The location of the book and thy link to this *place* will also soon be realized.” Well I *had* a link to Avebury and it went back for generations.

Like me, my mother was named Aubrey, as was her mother and a continuous line of maternal ancestors going back as far as we could trace. Family lore had it that our original namesake was John Aubrey, a seventeenth century British writer and antiquary. In 1648, at the age of twenty-two, he saw something in Avebury that had eluded notice for untold centuries.

In and around the village were huge stones and earthworks arranged in circular formations covering about twenty-eight acres. The outermost circle, about 1300 feet in diameter, was a ditch, estimated to have originally been thirty feet deep, with a berm just inside its perimeter. Just inside the berm was another concentric circle of large oblong stones standing vertically. Inside this were two smaller circles, side by side, about 350 feet in diameter also composed of standing stones. Three taller stones stood in the center of the northern circle; a twenty-foot high stone was at the center of the southern circle.

In the ignorance of the Dark Age and its aftermath, no one thought to question the presence of this magnificent construction or consider it may have had some purpose. The stones were considered impediments to farming and many were destroyed.

This is how the story was told to me: John Aubrey was accustomed to staying at Hartham House near the town of Calne when hunting for wild boar and venison with its owners, the Ducketts, on their 2,000 acres. On his way there one day, he was overcome with dread, which became unbearable as he entered Calne. Sensitive to this omen, he passed through without stopping and the apprehension diminished.

Feeling better, he reversed his course back to Hartham House. The dread returned. At a crossroads he turned to the north. The dread remained, as well when he turned to the south. Only when he faced the east did he feel some relief. So he proceeded in that direction. Five miles outside of Marlborough, he felt the dread again. It subsided only when he turned to the north. This road led him to Avebury.

As he approached the village he felt an increasing joy and sense of purpose. By the time he discovered the great stones and earthworks he was ecstatic. Any plans for a hunt were forgotten. His purpose now was simply to be in this place and experience its magic and energy as no one had done, consciously, for an age. What had been ignored by so many before in their ignorance became the focus of his deep intuitive understanding.

As he contemplated the formations, it became as obvious to him then as it is to us now, that they were constructed for a purpose; that this was the site of a great prehistoric temple. Furthermore, he felt there was deep significance to the placement and alignment of all its components in relation to each other and the cosmos.

This event led to a lifelong study of Avebury, Stonehenge, and other sites. He detailed his findings in a lengthy writing, *Monumenta Britannica*, which he tried to publish, unsuccessfully, in 1692, five years before his death. Amazingly, the manuscript still exists and has been duplicated online.

And now, a crop circle, another mysterious formation, was calling attention again to Avebury, this time as the possible location of the lost *Book of Symbols*. It was evident I was involved and, in some strange way, had been all my life. The final proof was in an old family tradition my mother honored: a lullaby she sang to me each night after tucking me into bed.



Maiden pretty, maiden so fair  
Mother Earth is in your care.  
When you see a magic flower  
You will find a treasure there.

The crop circle was in the shape of a flower.

## *Chapter 14*

### *Changed*

My mind was racing, but there was too much to process. Amidst the fray, passages from *Sacred Memories* lilted through my thoughts.

Armaton to Auriel:

Thou wilt endure what few could bear:  
Great fears and joys and sorrows deep.  
Use temperance with each extreme.

Auriel's insight in response:

I understood the irony  
That all emotions are the same,  
Are but a means unto this end:  
Great misery, if not controlled.

Armaton's amplification:

It matters not that feelings come,  
That they are felt as good or bad.  
The matter is: art thou proclaimed  
A magistrate or slave to them?

If not controlled, then habits rule.  
When habits rule, there is no Peace.  
Without the saving grace of Peace,  
A soul of Destiny is lost.

I had a parallel experience and realization. Feelings, when in my control, acted as an intuitive guidance system. Just as John Aubrey's had, they guided me to come to this place at this time to make this discovery. When out of my control, as my emotions had been since seeing the picture, they clouded my vision and judgment. I was not thinking clearly, if at all, and operating on automatic pilot. I made a very deliberate effort to calm down and regain my focus by practicing the concentration technique my parents had taught me.

With calmness, thoughts still flowed, but at a manageable rate and with much greater clarity. Before proceeding, in my mind, I bowed again in salute and gratitude to Auriel for the power, grace, and understanding his writing continued to bestow.

Another passage came to mind. It referred to:

... an ancient prophecy  
Set down in Symbols to be seen  
In fields of grass, impossible  
To miss; but worse, to chance ignore.

I struggled to keep the wave of excitement from overwhelming me again. I had glossed over this quatrain in my reading, not knowing what it meant. Now it seemed pretty clear. The greatest concentration of crop circles had been in the south of England, mostly in fields of cereal grains: *grasses*.

This quatrain pretty broadly implied there was a link between Symbols and crop circles. It also very succinctly summed up the world's reaction to crop circles. They were certainly impossible to miss, often several hundred feet across. They were also mostly ignored by the media and the world at large because it was established that some of them had been formed by human pranksters and artists.

Mainstream society's assumption is that most crop circles are manmade and, therefore, none deserve attention or investigation. It seemed to me that if even *one* (and there have been *many*) was inexplicable, the astonishing nature of such a phenomenon would merit scientific inquiry. But a very tangible barrier exists. Any orthodox scientist who seriously pursued this would be branded a crackpot and lose all credibility and standing among his peers.

From behind me I heard a familiar voice, " 'Twould be a fate worse than ... not being published, I suppose."

I turned quickly and was startled to see Armaton walking toward me carrying a tray of desserts and two cups of coffee. His white hair was tied back in a ponytail. He looked out from behind brown tinted aviator sunglasses, no doubt shielding his eyes from the bright red Hawaiian shirt with hibiscus flower pattern, open to mid chest. Below that he wore gray faux-suede baggy shorts with white triple stitching over the seams and large cargo pockets. The finishing touches were a gold loop earring hanging from his left ear and a pair of classic Birkenstock sandals.

"Over these many months thou hast favored me with much tea and treats. 'Tis only fair I respond in kind, given this opportunity."

His ... *incredible* ... garb and sly smile completely evened out my feelings and I laughed with delight and relief.

"The apricot bars and blueberry muffins are wheat free and sweetened with fructose. Perhaps thou wouldst consider taking in a bit more of thy main course before joining me for dessert."

"Yes, I'll do that and, thank you, I'd love some dessert."

As he put his tray on the table, I got up to greet him. Bowing our heads, we pressed our right palms together and touched our fingertips to our brows. This had become an occasional greeting and parting gesture since seeing Aerial.

As soon as we sat, I started to tell him what I'd found out. With closed eyes and a wave of the hand, he stopped me. "What you wish to share is already known to me and the reason I am here. There are weighty matters to consider. 'Twould be best, for a moment, to pause and finish thy lunch. That is the most immediate present matter. Please do so in calmness and silence, riveting thine attention to *this* now."

He was asking the impossible. Outwardly calm, beneath the surface I was ready to explode. Apparently my whole life had been in preparation for this ... and I wasn't even sure what this *was*. I had a thousand questions and he was asking me to eat ... in *silence*.

"Temperance, dear Aubrey. At the extremes of emotions, thou art fodder for the Sesavah."

I knew what he was saying. I knew it was true. So I took every ounce of my will and headed my mind in the direction of calmness.

"It requires more than sheer will to direct the mind, my dear, for will is often no match for the emotions. To achieve stability in calmness requires a more powerful force. Use will to direct

thine attention to Love. Feel Its presence within and about thee. Practice this as you eat.”

This was not the first time he had given me such instructions. It was surely one of the most difficult times putting them into practice. This excitement seemed almost harder to stem than fear. With colossal determination, I managed to attune my thoughts to the presence of Love and hold on to it while I finished my lunch.

“Now, art thou prepared to hold a discussion on the same platform of calmness?”

“I’ll do my best.”

“Very well. And I will do my best to address thy questions. Let me begin by confirming all that thou hast deduced is correct.”

“Then the crop circle in the picture will lead to the *Book of Symbols*?”

“Yes, Aubrey.”

“And there’s something *to* the crop circles?”

“Yes, Aubrey. I had hoped to avoid a line-by-line itemization. Let us move forward from that which thou hast already accurately established.”

I paused to gather my thoughts and let his validation filter through my understanding. “So, how is it that a phenomenon as incredible and unavoidably noticeable as the formation of crop circles could be so completely overlooked?”

“How is it, my dear, that the formation of earthworks and standing stones in the same vicinity could have been so completely overlooked ... for a millennium?”

“But that was different.”

“Was it?”

“It was during the Dark Age ... I mean, ignorance was *rampant*. There was no technology except for simple basics like wood and metal working, nothing in their palette of understanding that the formations could be related to.”

“Other than a more sophisticated level of technology, perhaps the same can be said for today with respect to the crop circles.”

I remembered what he had said the night he first appeared in my room, “Nothing you have witnessed defies your science. It simply calls upon parameters and processes that are outside the range of established understanding and perception ... the equivalent of striking a match before a trembling native, ignorant of simple concepts involving chemistry, heat and friction.”

“So we *are* that ignorant!”

“Again, I remind, that is not an indictment, merely the recognition of a certain lack. To understand not merely crop circles, but the fundamentals of life, of creation, one must stretch beyond accepted bounds imposed by perception limited to three dimensions. To those with limited vision, the obvious is invisible.”

Aurial gave a wonderful illustration of the extraordinary possibilities inherent in the higher dimensions:

Consider, if thou wilt, this page  
 Within a two dimensioned world.  
 It would be flat, could not be turned  
 As thou canst do quite easily.

Surmise then quantifiably,  
 How much is added to thy world  
 By one dimension more than two.  
 The difference is incredible.

Now add eight more beyond Earth's three,  
 Extrapolate this difference  
 To comprehend the scope expressed,  
 Comparably unlimited.

Armaton continued, "It must be stressed: there is a vast contrast between mass consciousness, that of the mainstream, and the elevated consciousness of more evolved individuals. Therein lies the poignant difference between now and the Dark Age. Then, except for those few considered to be "saints," none had the capacity for higher dimensional understanding. Now *many* do. They do not summarily reject phenomena like crop circles and remain open to the possibilities. In them lies hope and salvation. To them we shall direct our attention and communication.

"We must use discrimination, of course. Not all who wear hats of higher understanding have the heads to fill them."

"So the crop circles, the ones that aren't provably manmade, they're expressions, creations of higher consciousness."

"That is correct. Now let me surprise thee. The same may be said for many that *are* provably manmade."

"How can that be? If they're done by pranksters, people just looking for attention ... I mean in that sense they're just like graffiti."

"Some are. Many are not. The same creative force is at work. How are the images chosen? What meaning can be derived from them? What are their implications beyond the conscious awareness of the pranksters or artists? The Divine often flows through the most unlikely channels. If there is meaning, understanding, inspiration to be gleaned, what matter is it through whom or what process such is expressed?"

"So you're saying there's meaning to virtually *all* the crop circles, that they're expressions of ..."

"They are meaningful to the extent one would give them attention and consideration ..."

"Well, you can say that about anything. The real question is do they all have an *inherent* value?"

"Some more, some less; as is the case with more traditional forms of art. Thou wouldst quantify the unquantifiable. The third dimensional human tendency is to group and label. That the crop circles defy such tidy compartmentalization is testimony to their capacity to provoke original, multidimensional thought. They cannot be lumped together in a convenient category. They cannot be trusted to provide definite, irrefutable, cogent data. They are not intended to provide pat answers, to fit safely and securely in the established modality, but to provoke thought and take man to and beyond the edge of his understanding.

"If complicated patterns, often depicting sophisticated mathematical formulae, can be formed in fields of grass in the dark of night and they're *not* all proven to be manmade, what other unanticipated possibilities might there be?"

"This discussion is well and good, but we are not about presenting treatises on the phenomenon of crop circle formation. Such whys and wherefores are not the point of our mission. There are matters far more urgent and important. Please renew thy focus on the task at hand."

As he said this, I felt a profound calmness and sharpening of my attention. This led me to

respond, “The immediate priority is simple and clear. Now that we have the location of the *Book of Symbols* narrowed down to a small area, it’s time to go there and find it. Nothing else matters.”

“Balance matters, dear Aubrey. Do not make choices in the face of urgency that conflict with the essence of that which we are about. Grave tasks may impose grave responsibilities and dangers. Keep a hand ever on the touchstone of the Love that motivates our activities ... and on Its ensuing Peace. Let It ever guide thee, knowing that with difficulties comes grace: the capacity to endure, and the determination to triumph.

“This is a blessed and sacred mission. Thou wilt be assailed by forces seen and unseen. Be thou ever courageous and confident, knowing thou art assisted by far greater forces, seen and unseen. And know this, too: I shall ever be with thee, seen or unseen, never more than a thought away.

“We are complete. My purpose, now satisfied, has been to assure thee thine interpretations are correct and to contribute my humble blessing to this occasion. Today thou hast realized and accepted more fully thy destiny and role in our ancient prophecy.”

My eyes welled with tears. As much as I’d accomplished in my life, I had never felt so complete nor did I possess such an intense sense of purpose and commitment. This was ... *home* ... to me.

Armaton was equally moved. I could feel the intensity of his gaze even from behind his sunglasses. A single tear rolled down his cheek as he said, “Twould be best and least complicated for me to depart now. Thy companion returns.”

With that he stood up abruptly then bowed as he took my hand and raised it to his brow. “Take a moment and share thy dessert with Harold.”

Armaton strolled away, giving Harold an acknowledging nod as they brushed past each other. As he eased himself into a chair, Harold motioned toward the now departed Armaton, “Who’s the senior dude? He looks familiar ... and I got a *very* intense vibe off him.”

“An old ... um ... colleague, nobody you know. Would you like some dessert?”

I gestured to the food on the table and was taken aback. Armaton never ceased to amaze and touch me. There were two fresh, steaming cups of coffee. The supremely healthy apricot bars and blueberry muffins had vanished, replaced by Harold’s favorite, butterlogs from Peterson’s donut shop, thirty miles away in Escondido.

“Aubrey! Man! How did you score these?”

After we polished off our treats, I broke the news, “Harold, I’m leaving for England.”

“What do you mean? When?”

“Right away.”

“How can you do that? What about the programs we’re running?”

“You’re already handling most of it. I need you to take it all on for awhile, my classes, too. Will you cover for me?”

“Well, yeah, but for how long? What’s going on? What’s up with England? How do I deal with Ming? How can I do your classes? He’s not going to let you go. This is like major freak out territory for him ... How do I ...”

“Harold! Slow down! It’s OK. One thing at a time. It’ll all work out. First, I don’t know how long. It could be a few weeks.”

“A few weeks! Aw geez, Aubrey. I can’t ...”

“Calm down, Harold. It’s nothing you can’t handle. My syllabuses are complete through the end of the term ...”

“The end of the term! I can’t do the whole term! No way!”

“Harold! I’m not going to be gone the whole term. Look, you’re doing it again.”

“No I’m not. I’m not making this up. This *is* bad.”

“Doesn’t have to be, not the way I see it.”

“What do you mean?”

“You’re OK in front of a small class, right?”

“Yeah.”

“And they pepper you with questions, right?”

Hesitating, “Yeah.”

“And you answer them all because you know the material cold, right?”

“Uh huh.”

“So what’s the problem? You’ll be in front of more students ... big deal! All you have to do is present, nobody interrupts with questions, and if you find your resume, you can add this to it.”

As Harold calmed, the once hidden benefits replaced the once prominent problems. “So the only thing extra I’d have to do is handle your lectures.”

“Just stick to the syllabus.”

Brightening a little, “And I could use your office?”

“And you can use my office.”

“What about George?”

“Leave him to me. However he reacts, you’ll be part of the solution, not the problem.”

“Why England?”

I pondered my answer, “Because ... something is there ... that’s very important ... to me ... to our research ... very important. I can’t explain more now, but when I get back ... then ... well, we’ll see.”

Looking at my watch, “It’s one twenty-eight. We’ve got just enough time to get back. Let’s book!”

We raced out to the car. That he was quiet and not on a rant about PV panels and radiant barrier emissivity let me know just how serious this was for Harold. I glanced at him as I pulled out of the parking lot. The expression on his face pressed that point.

“It’ll be OK, Harold.”

Reluctantly, “Maybe. But I’ll tell you one thing for sure.”

“Mmm hmmm?”

“Something’s changed, Aubrey. I can feel it ... and it’s never gonna be the same again.”

## *Chapter 15*

### *A Critical Point*

One big change was the traffic. A mile up the freeway we hit gridlock. The radio explained it. Some poor soul had lost it and was attempting “suicide by police” about ten miles up the road. Both directions were shut down. We weren’t going anywhere, not for a long while.

If I had seen the traffic when we approached, I would have avoided the freeway and wended my way along surface streets. It would have been time consuming, but we could have made some progress. Now we were completely stuck.

“Fortuitous.”

I turned quickly to Harold. Brow furrowed, he was deep in thought. He hadn’t spoken. Besides, I didn’t think that word was in his vocabulary.

“An opportunity, perhaps.”

Startled out of his contemplation, Harold spun toward me, “Huh? What did you say? And why are you talking so funny?”

The mystery was solved in the rear view mirror.

“Harold?”

“Yeah, what?”

“Uh ... we ... um ... we have a passenger.”

Turning to look in the back seat, “What do you mean? There’s nobody ... Holy smokes! What ... what are you ...? Aubrey, it’s *him*: the guy from lunch!”

Almost in unison, Armaton and I tried to comfort him, “Harold, calm down. It’s OK.”

“How do you know my name? I’ve seen you before, but I don’t ... How do you know me? Where did we ...?”

“Thou art already privy to the answers to most of thy questions. Understanding is about to blossom. It brings calmness; and together they shall displace bewilderment.”

“Whoa, Aubrey! This is too weird. Where did he come from? There was nobody there when we got in the car. Nobody! I’m telling you!”

“Harold, listen, I *know* this seems weird. I mean I *know*! He does that, he just sort of ... shows up. It used to freak me out, too before I understood.”

“Understood? What’s to understand? This isn’t possible. There’s nothing to understand. This is some kind of freakin’ acid trip. Oh man! Aubrey! What’s happening to me?”

“It’s not you, Harold. I see him, I hear him, too.”

“Aw, geez, Aubrey!” He held his head in his hands, closed his eyes, and scrunched up his face, like he was trying to squeeze out a clue. It seemed to work. “Does this have something to do with that stuff you told me about? That monster thing in your kitchen? The dream you used to have with the light and the guy that showed up in your ...?”

Harold abruptly stopped and gasped ... in both amazement and recognition. I could almost feel him filling in the gaps. Just as Armaton had said, understanding blossomed, calmed, and informed him.

Turning toward the back seat, Harold went on in an even, deliberate tone, “I *do* know you. I *know* where I’ve seen you. The question is, where have you seen *me*?”

“In the same place, at the same time, dear Harold.”

“And where would *that* be?”

“In thy slumbers, dear boy, whilst fast asleep.”

Harold’s jaw dropped. Wide-eyed, shaking his head back and forth, he stared at Armaton for



at least a minute, stealing a glance at me every few seconds. Then he started to get it.

“Hmm!” he eventually exclaimed, a mutter of satisfaction derived from figuring something out. He closed his eyes again and continued to grunt in escalating intensity, “Hmm! ... *Hmm!* ... HMM! ... *HMM!*” He was compiling data and more and more was fitting together. Then his grunts grew softer and more resolute, “... HMM! ... *Hmm!* ... Hmm!” Finally, he started to chuckle and shake his head up and down.

I asked, “So you’ve dreamed of Armaton, Harold?”

Slowly and calmly, “Yeah. Like every night ... for weeks. He tells me stuff.” To Armaton, “How do you *do* that?” Back to me, “... and we go places ... I mean like *fantastic* places. I thought they were just normal dreams ... I mean they weren’t normal, but, you know, *dream* dreams ... as opposed to like ...” He chuckled again and continued, “... but I couldn’t figure how it could be every night ... I mean every ... single ... night.”

To Armaton, “I’m not complaining. It’s *very* cool.” Then back to me, “But I thought it was just ... like I was in OD mode, tripped out on sci fi. I mean, I *read* about all this stuff and I’ve always thought it was ... but, now, to think that ... Well this is just totally cool. It’s like stepping into ...”

Armaton completed his sentence, “... another reality.”

“That’s it! Totally! I’m sitting here and it’s like ... I have to rethink ... *everything!* No matter what it is, it’s like, ‘Recompile! Recompile!’ I’ve got to adjust my parameters to a whole ‘nother reference frame.”

“As Aubrey and I have discussed, the Newtonian and Cartesian no longer suffice.”

“Absolutely! This is a riot. The things that I read and love to think about, what everybody says is total fantasy ... they turn out to be real!”

“Reality is defined by one’s perspective.”

“Right on!”

I repeated the first quatrain from *Sacred Memories* Armaton had ever quoted to me:

“All things are relative to things  
Within the same reality.  
To cross betwixt realities  
Unlock perceptions of learned thoughts.”

Armaton addressed Harold, “Thy mental meanderings, from a limited third dimensional perspective, would appear to be pointless indulgence in imagination. In fact, thou hast long been attuned to thy Soul’s inspiration.”

Harold was beaming. It appeared he was adjusting to reality being altered a lot faster than I did, which led me to ask, “So, you’re OK with all this, Harold?”

“Are you kidding? Having all the coolest stuff you ever dreamed of turn out to be real? It’s like not only getting to meet Captain Kirk, but then finding out he’s your missing biological father.” Spreading out his arms as if inviting an embrace, he shouted, “Daddy!”

We all laughed. Then Harold continued, “The thing is, though, I get that this isn’t just for fun. There’s something very heavy going on and ... somehow I’m in the middle of it.

“So what are we doing here, sitting on the freeway at ...” looking at his watch, “Aw, geez, Aubrey! It’s like ten to two. Your meeting!”

This was a third dimensional reality that required immediate attention.

“Well, there’s nothing I can do about it, Harold. Just a minute while I call in.”

George's assistant picked up.

"Hi, Tina. It's Aubrey."

"Yes, Dr. Manning. Did you wish to speak with Dr. Scribner?"

George was the only department head who forbade his staff from calling faculty by our first names. But she sounded unusually formal, like George was there breathing down her neck.

"Yeah, can I talk to him real fast, Tina? I'm stuck on the freeway."

"I might be able to catch him, he's got a two o'clock ... uh ... excuse me ..." She cupped the phone. I could hear an indistinct conversation on the other end.

"Dr. Manning?"

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry, where exactly *are* you?"

"Tina, what difference does it make? Can you put George on?"

More muffled talking.

"Dr. Scribner has a staff meeting at two o'clock and is unable to take any calls at this time,"

"Tina, that's why I'm calling. I'm supposed to be there, but I'm stuck on the freeway and I want to let him know I'm not going to make it. He's there, isn't he? Would you please put him on the line?"

Another pause, then, "Dr. Scribner ... um ... isn't available at this time ..." I could have sworn I heard a whispered voice prompting her, "... but I know he would be very concerned ... about your absence ... especially since attendance is mandatory. ... Can you tell me ... *exactly* where you are, Dr. Manning?"

Exasperated, "Well I don't have a GPS handy, Tina, so I can't give you planetary coordinates. I told you, I'm on the freeway, the 5. Look, if he's not going to come to the phone, would you please tell him what's happened and apologize for me?"

"Yes, Ma'am. Would you like me to put you through to his voice mail?"

She seemed insistent on avoiding helping me.

"No, Tina. I want you to tell him yourself, *now*, as soon as we hang up. Would you please do that?"

"I'm afraid Dr. Scribner won't be available until after his meeting. Would you like to try calling back after 3:30?"

"No, Tina. Please do the best you can. I've got to go."

To my companions, "That was very weird. Something's going on with George and I have no idea what it is."

Armaton responded, "There is no point in speculation. It can lead thee into worry and open a channel to the Sesavah's influence. Be comfortable with the unknown in matters beyond thy control. Let the future unfold as it will, knowing thou hast the resources and attunement to deal with all in its own good time.

"Now, as for Harold's concern ..."

"Wait a minute," he interrupted, "You mean to tell me this Sesavah, the thing I dreamed about, the thing in Aubrey's kitchen, really is *real*?"

"Quite. With the joys of added dimensionality comes the baggage."

"Whoa! I need to let *that* sift through."

"Do. Now, permit me to address why we are here at this time. We have come to a critical point in our mission ..."

Harold interrupted again, "You mean that part is real, too?"

"Yes, my lad. Perhaps we need take a moment to help adjust thee to thine expanded

horizons.”

Armaton talked at length with Harold, helping him to get a better grasp of the wider world he'd opened up to; that all they had experienced together in the dream state was, in fact, real. From time to time Harold looked to me for corroboration, which I gave him in the form of a smile, a nod, or an explanation if necessary. Armaton was remarkably patient and kind, reassuring him with an occasional pat on the shoulder. In the end, Harold seemed satisfied, better adjusted, and happy to have a role in this mission.

Master Armaton picked up where he left off before, “We are at a most critical point. Until today all our activities have been in private and in secrecy. We have proceeded at an easy pace driven by thy respective levels of comfort because our concentration has been on the process of thine initial unfoldment. We are now moving into a more advanced phase as our primary focus shifts to the outer tasks at hand.

“Though ye are well versed in the multidimensional pliability of time, yet our work, ultimately, must manifest in the three dimensional realm. Let me stress: time, here and now, is of the essence.

“Henceforth, thy pace must substantially quicken and thy capacities must significantly increase as well thy tolerance for great trials and discomfort. Such conditions are required not only by our mission, but also by the continuing process of thy transformation. Only with fire is brittle iron converted to mighty steel.

“Are there any questions or comments?”

Harold, wide-eyed and slowly bobbing his head, just let out a breathy whistle.

I spoke, “I can feel the urgency ... it's very strong ... not anxiety, more like a pulling, a magnetism ...”

“A vortex,” Harold chimed in.

“Yes,” I went on, “and what it's confirming for me is ... I've got to go ... *now* ... to find the *Book of Symbols*. Harold, do you know what that is?”

Grinning, “I know I dreamed about it.”

“Well, I've got to get on the next flight I can make. Maybe even tonight.”

We worked out all the logistical details including how to handle George. Just as we finished, a wave of car engines starting reached us.

“Wow!” whispered Harold, not missing the extraordinary timing.

From the back seat, “Fortuitous,” then the familiar sizzle, and Armaton was gone.

“Whoa, Aubrey! Did you catch that? He is gone, absolutely solid gone.”

“Yeah. He does that.”

The freeway cleared like the Red Sea did for Moses. We reached the campus about 4:30 and went straight to my office. When I tried George, Tina stiffly informed me that he had gone for the day. He didn't answer his cell.

“Harold, there's one more thing I'd like to ask you to do.”

“Sure, Aubrey, what is it?”

“I can't get through to George and he's got Tina doing a gatekeeper thing with me. I don't know what's going on, but I'm getting the feeling I should send him something in writing about me leaving. Will you make sure he gets it?”

“No problem.”

“I mean absolutely sure, like hand it to him in front of witnesses.”

“That sounds a little spooky, but, yeah, OK, I'll go to Ming's lair.”

I printed out and signed two copies of the following note:

Dear Dr. Scribner:

As you know, my primary responsibility at the university is finding and substantiating a prime causative agent in support of the CUE Theory, about which I have published many well-received papers and one text.

Earlier today I discovered the location of a source with the strong potential for leading me to the discovery of this agent. The nature of the situation is such that it requires immediate action. Therefore I am leaving as soon as possible to secure what may prove to be an essential element of my work.

Since this has come up so quickly and I don't have full knowledge of what will be involved, I have not had the opportunity to plan my activities. As a result, I cannot accurately predict how long I'll be gone. My best estimate would be several weeks. I have made arrangements with Dr. Skirtlandt to take over my responsibilities, including lectures, in my absence.

I had hoped to discuss this with you in person, but was unable to reach you. If you wish to contact me, please do so through Dr. Skirtlandt. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Aubrey Manning

“Get this to him first thing in the morning, OK? Have him sign one copy and then you hold on to it.”

“Sure ...” Hesitating, “Listen ... um ... I ... ah ...”

“What is it, Harold?”

“It's just that I feel a little ... well ... you remember back when you first told me about the Sesavah, that whole scene in your kitchen?”

“Of course.”

“For a while, I ... uh ...”

“You thought I was nuts.”

“Well, not completely—wait a minute—that's not what I mean ...”

“I understand, Harold.”

“I know, but there's something else.”

“What?”

“I was pretty worried so I talked to some people about it”

“Who?”

“Helen Shaver.”

Laughing, “In psych?”

“Yeah. And also Milt Kaminski.”

“I don't know him.”

“He's a friend ... works with Judy Lassiter.”

“Judy Lassiter. Judy Lassiter. I know that name.”

“She's ... um ... the one that ...”

“*Chaos and Psychokinesis*. It was an article in *Omni*. I remember now. She's in Physics at

Berkeley. None of the journals would publish, so she took it outside the hallowed halls.”

“She *was* in Physics at Berkeley.”

“Really! What happened?”

“The powers that be don’t take kindly to the woo woo stuff.”

“It seemed like a pretty solid paper.”

“That doesn’t matter, you know that.”

By this time I had cleared my desk and jammed what I needed into my pack.

“Listen, Harold, I’m ready to roll. You know what? It doesn’t matter you talked to a couple of people ... including Ms. *Shrinkola* ... It’s done. It’s history. Here we are now. There’s a lot to do and I’ve got to get going.”

But, there’s somebody else that ...”

“It’s OK. It’s over.”

“But ...”

“No ‘but,’ no regrets, Harold. The present, right?”

## *Chapter 16*

### *Connection*

The first “great trial and discomfort” promised to be the trip to England. I booked a flight that was scheduled to depart San Diego just after noon the next day. Up all night preparing, I barely made it to the airport in time. Of course “in time” is relative. I was there in time to wait on line for a couple of hours while all the passengers submitted to security checks.

A young man in front of me with a swarthy complexion and an engaging smile offered a unique point of view that prompted me to reconfigure my own.

“It does not need to be experienced as what appears on the surface.” His voice was steady, gentle, and tinged with an East Indian accent.

“What do you mean?” I replied.

“All of this security was once very bothersome to me. Especially since I am subject to much closer scrutiny than those with a more Caucasian appearance. It changed for me the first time I was asked to take off my shoes. Quite suddenly I saw things most differently.

“I was reminded of the tradition the Japanese and we in India share of removing our shoes before entering our homes and I thought, ‘How delightful! This is how I will be viewing this experience.’”

“How do you mean?”

“It is quite simple, really. All traditions, all rituals originally stem from some functional use. Over time it is happening that these activities become revered and take on a ritualistic value of their own. Many times they lose their original functionality, yet they are treated with great reverence.

“I have chosen to see the security checks as a ritual of our modern culture. I try to view them the way I do the Japanese Tea Ceremony. There is an array of activities that must be done a certain way and in a certain order. I am always trying to appreciate the value and meaning of this contemporary ritual.”

“But doesn’t the Tea Ceremony have a deeper meaning? Doesn’t each of the actions have a spiritual significance, the way the cup is held, how it’s turned and admired from every angle? They all symbolize something.”

“That is most correct. Please understand, I am not suggesting these things are the same ... only putting one into the context of the other so as to make it a bit more palatable, do you see?”

“It’s a game.”

“Yes, that is one way to express it. While I am viewing these things I look for symbolic spiritual interpretations.”

“You make them up.”

“Yes, that’s it, I make them up. But that does not mean they are not of value. For example, when I place the contents of my pockets in a bowl to be examined by the officer and turn over my carry-on to be X-rayed, I am relinquishing all my possessions. This symbolizes renunciation, signifying the soul’s release from attachment to material objects. Letting go of these possessions represents turning my trust to God, the Infinite Provider. When they are returned to me, I express my renewed gratitude for objects I would otherwise be taking for granted.”

I marveled at this fine young man’s uplifting inventiveness. He was about 6’2” with straight black hair, a thin moustache, and a bearing of strength, composure, and gentle confidence that spoke of a wisdom beyond his years. He wore a cream-colored sports shirt, tan casual slacks, and light tan canvas shoes.

“What a wonderful practice. I’m so glad you shared this with me and I’m very glad to meet you. My name is Aubrey Manning.”

We shook hands and he replied, “Yes, I thought I recognized you, Dr. Manning. I have followed your work for some time and am very eager to be finding out what primal cause you come up with for your CUE theory. My name is Ashvin Gandhi and I am in my third year of undergraduate engineering studies at San Diego State University. I’m very pleased to meet you.”

“Are you getting off at Chicago or going all the way to London?”

“Yes, all the way to London. I will be meeting my wife there to attend the funeral of my grandfather.”

“I’m sorry for your loss.”

“Thank you. Thank you. But he is OK, of course. It is sad only for those of us who will miss him. You know in India we say that when a child is born, everyone laughs and celebrates, yet the baby cries knowing it is incarnated again, trapped in the physical body. When the child grows old and dies, it laughs and celebrates its liberation from the physical realm, while those who remain cry and mourn its loss.”

“Mr. Gandhi, you have a very refreshing positive perspective. Speaking with you just this short time ... I can’t help but reframe how I was seeing this trip. I thought it was going to be grueling but now I’m thinking about enjoying it. Thank you.”

He acknowledged my gratitude with a *pranam*: he pressed his palms together at the level of his heart, fingers pointing up, then raised his fingertips to the center of his forehead. The meaning of this traditional Hindu gesture is “my soul bows to your soul.” I *pranamed* back.

By the time we got to the departure area we felt like old friends. The gate attendant was able to switch our seating assignments so we could sit together. As if to support my shift to a positive expectation, the plane departed right on time. We continued to casually chat until Ashvin asked a question far more loaded than he could have imagined.

“Dr. Aubrey, if I may ask, what is it that takes you to England?”

I squeezed an intense deliberation into a brief moment, diving deeply into my feelings before answering, “Actually, it has to do with the CUE theory. I have reason to believe there’s a source of information there which will lead to an answer.”

This opened the door to a frank and profoundly earnest discussion. I didn’t know why I was talking so openly about my experiences or where it would lead, only that every fiber of my being told me it felt right.

“These things you are telling me, they are not without precedent. Much of what you are saying is explained by Indian philosophy. I may be an engineer—or *almost* an engineer—but none of this is defying my ability to understand and accept. There is a much deeper science than what is practiced in the Western mainstream, one that more readily explains phenomena such as you have been describing. Spiritual science has been taught through the ages in India, originating in the Vedas, ancient Hindu scriptures.”

“You’re a Hindu, Ashvin?”

“I was raised in the Hindu tradition, but I am not exclusively identifying myself with any religion. I see too many people holding on so tightly to their religious philosophy that they have little room to respect another’s. This is very curious to me because when you carefully examine it, there is little difference and so much more in common ... even among those who consider each other mortal enemies.

“But I don’t want to get off on another topic. There’s something I must say which I’m hoping is not too forward.”

He took a deep breath, staring at me intensely.

“Dr. Aubrey, I am seeing there is a purpose to our meeting. I was feeling this in a vague fashion when I first recognized you behind me. After all you have been telling me, it is becoming more clear.

“My uncle’s place, where Kamala and I will be staying, is in Swindon, a city just ten miles to the north of Avebury. You must stay with us as you conduct your search. Uncle Prabhas will be delighted to meet you. It is no coincidence Uncle has many resources that—I daresay—will prove quite helpful. And I think it will be very good for him to have something else to focus upon other than Bapu, his father, the one who just passed away.”

“Ashvin, what an extraordinary offer. If I didn’t sense how sincere you are, I might hesitate to accept, but, yes, I would love to stay with your family. Thank you!” We pronounced to each other. “I have a feeling when this is over, I’m going to wonder how I could have done it without you.”

The last few hours of the flight we each dozed off. When we landed, after fifteen hours on the plane and an eight-hour time change, I felt amazingly rested and refreshed.

Two of Ashvin’s cousins were waiting for him and drove us to their home. There must have been forty of his family members there, gathered to honor his grandfather.

I met his uncle Prabhas, a jolly, portly man in his fifties. His short, wavy black hair and mustache were sprinkled with flecks of gray. His sparkling, dark brown eyes shone with affection for his family. Prabhas’ wife, Nirmala, seemed very quiet and reserved. Black and white hair tied back in a bun, she carried her thickset body with the ease and grace of a ballerina. Ashvin’s wife, Kamala, with long, straight, black hair, was a slender, classic Indian beauty. Tender and soft-spoken, yet she possessed the intensity of a leopard.

After introductions and some time chatting and nibbling on sweetmeats, delicious Indian confections, Ashvin took me aside, “Dr. Aubrey, we will be having our supper at six. Would you like to take the next couple of hours in the privacy of your room? I’m sure it’s a bit of an adjustment, not just traveling all this distance, but sharing a living space with all these people.”

“You know, Ashvin, that would be great. I could use a little quiet time to decompress.”

“Please come with me and I’ll show you to your room.”

I followed him upstairs to a bedchamber in the front corner of the house. It looked out to a lush green park across the street.

“This is lovely, Ashvin. Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it. With your permission, I will tell Uncle a bit of what you are doing and set a time tomorrow to discuss it. Would that be OK?”

“Yes, that would be fine. Thank you, again, Ashvin.”

“It is our honor to be of service to you, Dr. Aubrey. Kamala will knock on your door a little before six to call you for the evening meal. See you then.”

“Yes, see you then.”

He closed the door behind him. I turned around and was about to head for the balcony to enjoy the view when, not to my surprise at all, the balcony door swung open and Armaton walked in.

“Thou hast made excellent progress, dear Aubrey. Thy connection with these fine people is most auspicious.”

We bowed in our customary greeting. Armaton spoke very softly. So did I, “It’s pretty wonderful, don’t you think? What are the odds?”

“Dear child, there are no odds with Spirit. It is more an issue of magnetism, the power of



attraction in the pursuit of destinies. What's more, as the saying goes," he dipped down on one knee and thrust his arms out in a theatrical gesture, "you ain't seen nothin' yet."

"What does that mean?"

"To have foreknowledge would spoil the surprise. All will unfold with perfect timing. That said, my visit shall be brief, the point, simply, to remind you: I am here always, just behind the veil which separates the third dimensional realm from Infinitude. I am ever monitoring events. If I do not appear, know that, despite seeming calamity, all is well and thou art not in need of my direct assistance. Is that understood?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then, for a time, I shall withdraw."

He pronamed to me and dissolved as I returned the gesture. I lay down for a nap and before I knew it Kamala was tapping on my door.

Supper was very pleasant. The meal was served buffet style. Some of the family sat around a huge table in the dining room. Others gathered in the spacious parlor sitting on sofas, overstuffed chairs, and on the floor. This was the first meal everyone was present for and it was dedicated to remembering their departed Bapu, an Indian term of affection meaning father. I met more relatives including Ashvin's and Kamala's parents.

Ashvin's uncle approached me just as I picked up the last few grains of basmati rice and wiped the plate clean with my remaining piece of Naan, a flat bread flavored with fresh garlic and herbs.

"Eaten like a true Indian. This is not your first experience with our food."

"No, not at all. I've had it all my life. I love Indian cooking. And this ... this was just the best."

"You're very kind. My nephew has told me a bit of why you are here. May I have a word with you in private?"

"Of course."

"Please, come to the library."

He offered his arm, which I took, and we walked in silence. After he closed the door behind us, we sat in two large red leather chairs trimmed with brass upholstery tacks.

Smiling mischievously, he said, "If you don't mind, we will be skipping the cigars British gentlemen traditionally have in this setting. I'm no smoker."

Smiling back, "I'm no gentleman."

"Yes, yes, I see," he laughed. "Ashvin tells me you have an interest in crop circles."

"One in particular, actually ... shaped like a flower ... it was formed in Avebury ..."

"Yes, yes. Ashvin mentioned this. The date it occurred was August 17, the year before last, in a field of wheat. I am very familiar with this formation. It was reported around 10 A.M. By two that afternoon I was at the site."

Astonished, "You were there?"

"Yes, I was."

"How? Why?"

"I am a student of inexplicable phenomena. Unlike many who involve themselves in such matters, I am not interested in fantastic stories and conjecture, but, rather prefer to investigate the circumstances in a more dispassionate way."

"So you've got a pretty good idea where it was located."

"My dear Dr. Manning, I know its location *precisely*. I have aerial photographs and detailed charts with GPS coordinates."

“That’s ... fantastic!”

“It is not so fantastic for me. This is something I do often. But I take it this information is important to you.”

“It’s essential. It’s what I need to find something ... *very* important to my work.”

“Being somewhat familiar with your work, I am hardpressed to see the connection to computer simulated ecological models.”

“It’s not a direct connection, but ... I don’t mean to be vague, but it’s not easy to explain quickly.”

“Then let’s sit back and go through it in as much time as you need.”

“Ashvin said we might talk tomorrow. I don’t want to intrude on the time you need to spend with your family.”

“Not at all. It is no intrusion. Now that the meal is over, everyone from out of town will be wanting to go to their rooms, unpack, and settle in.

“What’s more—and please correct me if I am wrong—I am getting that this is a very urgent matter.”

“Actually it is.”

“Then it’s settled. Please, Dr. Manning, tell me how I can help.”

Uncle Prabhas had one of his grandchildren bring us a pot of coffee and we settled in for a conversation that lasted well into the night. I told him the whole story, ending with my need to find the *Book of Symbols*. He showed me his charts and photographs. There were shots taken at the site showing close ups of the plants.

“Notice the weave,” he commented, “The wheat was not simply laid down. Do you see how the layers are swirled in opposite directions? As is often the case, the plants were mostly undamaged and continued to grow. They were eventually harvested along with the rest of the crop.

“There was one unusual characteristic that puzzled me. The center of the formation was flattened except for five plants: four were arranged in the corners of a square, approximately two feet apart. The fifth was in the center of the square.”

As he talked, he rummaged through his papers, “Each of the corner plants leaned into and twisted about the top of the center plant forming an elongated pyramid. Yes, here it is. Do you see?”

He handed me a photograph. The other plants that had grown in between these five were flattened to the ground. In some remarkable way they remained standing and were joined at their tops.

Prabhas continued, “Until this evening I had no explanation for this.”

“And now you do?”

“Most certainly. My dear Aubrey, this is a marker.”

## *Chapter 17*

### *The Marker*

Prabhas explained that he could pinpoint the marker for me, but could not accompany me to the site.

“There are many personalities and agendas involved with the crop circles. No doubt your plan to excavate the *Book of Symbols* will cause a great deal of consternation with which I cannot be associated if I am to continue my own quiet research. I have been exceedingly careful to maintain a low profile so as to avoid the political and interpersonal intrigue—which you will soon witness—that seems to run rampant.

“Furthermore, my profession is banking, which requires me to maintain a very stable, conservative—stodgy even—reputation. I can ill afford to be publicly associated with some of the characters the crop circles attract. I would urge you to take the same caution, but I’m afraid the very nature of what you are about to do will cause a ruckus.”

I was curious, “What are the agendas? What’s the politics?”

“There are many theories concerning the cause of these formations. Many individuals are certain beyond all doubt that theirs is the only correct explanation. They can be very competitive and often malicious, which I find to be an ironic contradistinction to the beauty and spirit I sense in the crop circles.

“My recommendation is that you perform your task as quickly as possible and then get out of sight. Try to be anonymous. That is what I would suggest.

“Ashvin can take you to the site and locate the marker. You can reach it easily—it is in an open field. But when it comes to dealing with the farmer and any other individuals that may pop up, we can assist only from an invisible distance.

“But for a few necessary people, I will hold the matter in the strictest confidence. Just so you know, I will share this information with my wife. We have no secrets between us and her insight may be helpful. I would also recommend Kamala be informed. Her demeanor is mild and sweet, yet she can be cool-headed, incisive, and resolute when such qualities are most needed.”

“Whatever you say, Prabhas. I trust your judgment.”

“Good. Through an intermediary, we will set up a meeting for you with Leonard Erskine, the owner of the field, maybe in a couple of days. In the meantime I will prepare you with as much knowledge as I can convey. Tomorrow I will assemble some material for you to examine.”

“For now, I would recommend a good night’s sleep, what’s left of it. Please sleep as late as you can. You are no longer a guest, but a member of our family. You must feel free and comfortable in that way, yes?”

“Thank you, Prabhas. You’re very kind. I’m touched ... and very grateful: I *do* feel a part of your family.”

“We are all children of the same Heavenly Father, Divine Mother.”

“Yes.”

We got up from our chairs and hugged each other. Then he clasped my shoulders and held me at arm’s length, staring through tears, hesitating to speak.”

“What is it, Prabhas?”

“There is one other thing.”

“Tell me, please.”

“I know ... I can feel ... the urgency of your mission, yet, at the same time, there is a tugging at me to make a request.”

“What is it?”

“Tomorrow afternoon we are holding a memorial service for my Bapu ... and ... I would very much like for you to attend.”

“Oh, Prabhas, of course. I’m so honored that you would want me there.”

“Good! Good! It is tomorrow at two. Thank you, Aubrey. Good night, then.”

“Good night, Prabhas.”

I retired to my room and got ready for bed. After crawling under the covers, I lay awake for a short time and reviewed the amazing events that had taken place in the last two days. Drifting off to a deep sleep, my last conscious thought was, “Here I am in England ... and ... just miles away from the *Book of Symbols*.”

It was a good thing Prabhas invited me to sleep in because I was out cold until eleven. By the time I dressed and went downstairs it was almost noon. Kamala was in the kitchen preparing some food.

“Good morning, Aubrey.”

“Good morning.”

“I’m fixing Ashvin and myself omelettes and scones. Would you like to join us?”

“That sounds wonderful. Thank you.”

“There’s fresh chai. May I pour you a cup?”

“Absolutely, thank you.”

After Ashvin joined us, Kamala served the food on the kitchen table. She sat and looked at me penetratingly. “I greatly admire what you are doing. I’m not sure how I can help, but you must call upon me if ever the need arises.”

I thanked her and the three of us talked for an hour or so. Both of them plied me with questions. Ashvin noticed the time, “It’s almost 1:15. We should leave in a few minutes for the service.”

Others in the family were drifting out the door. We walked a few blocks to a tidy white building with blue trim and touches of Eastern architecture: graceful arched doorways and windows.

Ashvin explained, “This is a chapel where my aunt and uncle’s meditation group meets. Bapu was one of the founding members.”

There were several small groups of people, most of them non-Indian, looking typically British, lingering outside, talking and laughing. They all knew Ashvin and Kamala and greeted them with hugs and smiles. When I was introduced they received me with a kindheartedness that contradicted the reputation of Brits as cold and aloof.

The fragrance of sandalwood incense wafting from the chapel invited us in. It was a very cozy place with white walls and ceiling and a simple altar. Most of the 150 or so seats were filled. Folding chairs were being set up in every available spot and an adjacent anteroom.

A smiling, blonde, blue eyed, red bearded usher in a neatly pressed blue suit, white shirt, and tie escorted us up the center aisle to the third row on the left where we were seated. Some of the relatives and friends turned and smiled or waved. Others remained fixed in meditation posture: eyes closed, backs straight, hands on their laps with palms upturned. Prabhas, sitting in the front row on the right, turned and gazed into my eyes lovingly, then closed his and pronounced. I did the same.

The feeling in this place was striking. It was in the middle of the city, yet I had never felt more peace in any wilderness. There was noise from outside: cars and trucks passing, the indistinct voices of people talking, the usual city sounds, but—this may sound strange—they

were drowned out by a pervasive silence. In this place, it seemed easier to attune to silence and peace than the surrounding sound and frenzy. I closed my eyes and drank it in.

The focus of my reverie was shifted when I heard a lovely female voice addressing the throng, “Good afternoon, dear ones. Let us begin with an opening prayer.” She was from the States, appeared to be a very youthful seventyish with light gray-brown hair, and dressed in an ochre silk sari, a traditional Indian robe that gracefully draped over her body. She was a nun from the headquarters of the organization who sponsored the meditation group and was an old, dear friend of Bapu and his family.

After some opening remarks and inspirational readings, family and friends were called forward to give their eulogies. Had I not known this was a memorial service, but for a few tearful references to Bapu’s passing, I might have mistaken it for a retirement celebration or a going away party. The mood of this gathering was love, joy, and appreciation for a dear friend and family member who had enriched and blessed their lives. Though they were sad for what they considered the brief illusion of separation, they were happy for his emancipation from the physical realm, free now to roam the cosmos.

Having the benefit of my own out-of-body experience and what Auriel described in *Sacred Memories*, I knew, beyond doubt, what they were saying was true. At the moment I thought this, Prabhas turned to me and pronounced again.

After the service, he sought me out, “Aubrey, I am so pleased you have come.”

“I wouldn’t have missed it. It was so nice to see how many people love your father.”

“Yes, indeed. Thank you. Aubrey, I’ve just been told that arrangements have been made for you to meet Mr. Erskine on Tuesday at 10 A.M. Will that do?”

“Yes, that will be fine.”

“Between now and then, my wife and I and Ashvin and Kamala will meet with you to help prepare. On Monday Ashvin will accompany you to the field. He will bring instrumentation that will enable him to place a stake at the precise point of the crop circle marker.

“But for now, if you can join us, we will have a meal in honor of Bapu.”

“Yes, Prabhas, I’d love to.”

We all adjourned to a nearby Indian restaurant that had been reserved for the occasion. It was good to spend some time just enjoying the company of these wonderful people, listening to their stories, and getting completely away from the challenges that faced me. It was like they didn’t exist.

I thought of Armaton and could feel him with me. We both appreciated this opportunity for balance. The gathering broke up around seven o’clock. I was in bed and sound asleep by 8:30.

I spent all day Sunday and Monday morning learning more about crop circles and some of the people involved. Ashvin and I went over pictures and charts.

After lunch on Monday, Ashvin and Kamala took me to a rental agency where I picked up the car I would need to use for my appointment the next day. I drove us to the site so I could familiarize myself with the car, the route, and driving on the left side of the road.

As we approached I heard a familiar tone, a deep drone, not a physical sound. It was something I had experienced within, many times in very special places or when I was particularly peaceful. After a brief time with Armaton I learned to access this inner sound at will.

Kamala spoke, “I am hearing the Om. It is getting very loud.”

“You hear it, too?” I asked.

“Yes. There is a very special vibration here today. I have not sensed it here before. It is as if this place is extending a cosmic greeting to you, Aubrey.”

I parked the car and we walked through the plowed field as Ashvin monitored a GPS unit. “We’re almost there,” he said.

He didn’t need to tell me. The tone and the vibration I was sensing were so strong, I was almost reeling.

“Ashvin, please ... give me the stake.”

He reached into his bag of surveying instruments, took out the stake and placed it in my right hand. My body then set in motion outside my conscious control, as if drawn by a magnet. I moved forward about ten yards, then a few yards to the left, then a little to the right, then back again. My right arm swung up and then back and forth a few times and then my hand plunged down to the ground and planted the stake.

Ashvin stared, open-mouthed, “That would seem to render this equipment a bit superfluous!”

I staggered back into Kamala’s arms and she steadied me. My body quivered with energy. After a moment I regained more normal body function, “That was trippy.”

Ashvin answered, “You should have seen it from here.”

Kamala was all business, “Ashvin, quickly, before we are noticed, verify the position of the stake.”

In a few minutes he shook his head incredulously, “It is in precisely the same place where the center stalk of the marker had been.”

“Then we are complete,” Kamala replied. “Let’s go.”

## *Chapter 18*

### *A Precarious Balance*

As I drove up to the Erskine farm the next morning, an array of feelings tempted me: excitement, anxiety, exhilaration, fear, anticipation, doubt. I held them all in check by doing what Armaton had urged: focus on the present moment and practice the presence of Love. I had been prepared for this. All I had to do was take one step at a time, remain calm and my intuition would guide me, expressing through my feelings. Admittedly easier said than done.

I had been instructed to meet Mr. Erskine at the main house. As I approached, several dogs inside started to bark frantically; the deep, throaty barking of very large dogs. I heard the agitated scraping of their claws on the floor and the hefty solid wood front door, which shuddered each time one of them lunged at it. The clamor escalated as the door opened a crack, revealing a wiry gray-haired man in soiled clothing: a blue and white plaid flannel shirt and work jeans.

He hollered, "Bloody hell! You've gone and set them off."

The man backed out, squeezing through the barely open doorway, kicking at the air to keep the dogs at bay. They looked like Rottweilers and did all they could to press past him. The toe of his Wellington boot clipped one of them under the chin, causing it to yelp and the others to bark more ferociously. "Blast!" he yelled, slamming the door behind him, "Blasted dogs!"

Concentrated on his clothing, he brushed off his shirt and bent over to pat down his pant legs releasing small clouds of acrid dust the whole time. From ten feet away I was impressed by the potent odor of manure that reeked from him.

"I've just come in from the dairies up north." He straightened up and turned his attention toward me. "Ods bodkins! You're a looker aren't you, pet! They said a professor would be coming to call. Now that wouldn't be you, dearie, would it?"

"Yes, it would."

"Beauty and brains! Beauty and brains! Devastating combo! And you're name would be ...? They didn't say."

"If it's all the same to you, I'd prefer to keep that private."

"Ah, well, it's not quite the same. Now I won't know whose name to scream out in the middle of the night." He laughed himself into a wheezing cough. "Do we have some business or did you come just to see me?" That set him off again. "Can't rightly say who's more interested, me or me missus." He nodded in the direction of an upstairs window. As I looked up, a drape pulled to the side quickly closed. "Watches me like a hawk, that one."

"I'd like to perform a small excavation in your field."

"Likewise, I'm sure! Cor blimey! That's a good one! Nudge, nudge."

I pressed on, "Sir, I'd like to dig in your field to see if I can find an artifact that might be helpful to my research."

"Oh, darling, I *want* you to dig in my field ... and I have *quite* an artifact for you to find." This nearly convulsed him. Mr. Erskine was revealing an immense creative capacity to turn the most innocuous remark into a double-entendre. Fortunately, Prabhas had warned me about this and suggested a more potent distraction.

I shifted gears, "I'd be very happy to pay you and when I'm done, I'll return everything back to the way it was."

"Pay me, would you? How much?" Now we seemed to be on the same track.

"Well, I don't know. I'm only digging a hole."

"Depends what's in it, now, don't it?"

“Well, if it’s what I think it is, it’s not really ... I mean it’s not gold or anything like that.”

“Make me an offer, then.”

“Would twenty-five pounds be ...?”

“A hundred ... in cash ... payable in nothing bigger than tenners.”

“A hundred pounds! Isn’t that a little ...?”

“Small potatoes! *I’m* no professor, pet, but I know there’s more to it than you’re telling me. I saw you yesterday. The missus spotted you ... sniffin’ around out in my field. It’s about the circles, isn’t it? Well, people pay a good penny to see ‘em. That’s income for me. Who’s to say your digging won’t make ‘em stop. A hundred quid. That’s it, I say.”

This wasn’t something I was going to barter, so I agreed, “Alright, a hundred pounds.” His hand shot out and grabbed mine to shake the agreement into force before I could have a chance to recant.

“Lovely-jubbly! Now, would you be needing anything else, sweet-pea? Would you like to hire some diggers?”

“Yes, I would. Two should be enough.”

“I’ll take care of that, no problem. Men with strong backs and know-how. If one gent I have in mind is available, you’ll have at your disposal a grave digger with twenty years experience.”

I supposed that was a good thing.

He continued, “Ten pounds the day for each digger, all payable to me with an extra pound each to cover ... administrative expenses.”

We shook hands on that as well.

“And when, Miss Professor, would you like to ‘perform your excavation?’”

He couldn’t resist a snicker.

I needed to book my return flight to the States and coordinate my activities with Ashvin’s family. I felt strongly that later was better than sooner, to make sure all my bases were covered. “Next Monday, would that be OK?”

“Monday would be just ducky, say 8 A.M.?”

“Yes, eight o’clock would be fine.”

I made a motion to shake his hand again and bid him farewell when he interrupted, “There would be the matter of the down payment.”

“Of course. How much do you need?”

“Fifty would do nicely.”

I had just enough with me. After he was paid he took the initiative to shake hands and we parted. He stared at me, as only a lascivious old man can, while I walked to the car. My consolation was noticing the upstairs drape was parted again, which meant he would probably encounter some consequences.

The ensuing week flew by. I made copies of *Sacred Memories* and gave them to Prabhas, Nirmala, Ashvin, and Kamala. They were all astounded, but it seemed only natural to do this. While I studied crop circles, they read and reread the book, often together and aloud.

On Sunday night, the five of us gathered in their home chapel. Prabhas led us in a prayer, “Heavenly Father, Divine Mother, saints and sages of all religions, we bow in reverence to Thee. As we join now in silent meditation, bless us with the feeling of Thy Love. Bless us with attunement to Thy guidance and presence within each one of us. Bless our dear Aubrey as she performs her most sacred duty. Guard and protect her. Envelop her in Thy Love. Om. Shanti. Amen.”

During this prayer, a glow surrounded each of us. As we meditated I felt the connection



between us deepen beyond the capacity of the senses to discern and the intellect to comprehend. The glow and interconnectedness spread to the rest of the family in their home, then to the people in homes nearby, then through the neighborhood, across the country, the continent, and around the planet. What united us was the innate spark of love within all. Within all, no exceptions, regardless of behavior or past history. A quality otherwise difficult or impossible to sense or accept. A quality, when attuned to, that would lead each of us to our highest destinies and render us immune to the deceit of the Sesavah.

Though he wasn't visible to me, I could feel Armaton's presence, just as tangibly as the others in the room. We luxuriated in this blissful state for what seemed both an eternity and just a brief moment. In the end we pronamed to the pictures of several saints on the altar and to each other, then left the room in silence to retire for the night.

My sleep was deep, dreamless, and profoundly renewing. I awoke the next morning at five and prepared for the day. As I showered and groomed my body, I felt I was performing a ceremony, the ritual preparation for a great event. Indeed, this was so.

My four close companions greeted me in the kitchen with smiles, hugs, and a wonderful breakfast of homemade granola with yogurt and fruit and a steaming cup of fresh ground coffee. We spoke only sparsely; our cherished friendship communicated amply.

At 7:15 we pronamed in parting and I headed out to the car. The traffic was light and I reached the Erskine farm by 7:40. As I drove up to the house, I wondered about the small crowd gathered there, about twenty people, and concluded they were probably a farm crew waiting for an assignment from Mr. Erskine.

I took my gloves and an archaeological tool kit from the car. From the crowd, I heard comments like, "That's her. She's the one. Right, I've seen 'er before."

Mr. Erskine squeezed his way out the front door past his dogs, no doubt alerted by his ever-present sentry behind the drapes in the upstairs window. He greeted me, "Professor Manning, good to see you. We've quite a turnout here to find out what the famous dishy professor has to do with the circles." As he passed through the group, he poked his elbow into the side of several men, saying, "Told you it was her. Me missus don't miss a trick."

One of them was holding an old tabloid and exchanging quick glances between it and me. "I'll be buggered, Leonard. It's her all right."

There were several men with shovels. Mr. Erskine pulled me over to the side and, speaking very softly, explained, "Couldn't keep 'em away. Had to hire six diggers, pet. Couldn't turn *any* of 'em away."

He stared at me expectantly, until I figured out what he wanted and reached for my money. He confirmed the amount, "That'll be sixty-six for the labor along with your balance of fifty. Comes to one sixteen." I handed it over. "Thank you, pet."

"Who are the rest of the people here, Mr. Erskine?"

"Well, they're part of the regulars, the ones that have a do over the circles. They'll be ... watching over things."

"Mr. Erskine, I wanted privacy. My business here is with you only. I want you to send the others away."

"But that won't do, pet. They won't leave. This is their business, too, the way *they* see it: what you're going to do. I won't give 'em the heave-ho. You'll be gone soon. I have to *live* with most of 'em. The cat's out of the bag. This'll just have to be the way it is."

Arguing and protesting wasn't going to get me anywhere so I'd just have to make the best of it. After a long pause I conceded reluctantly, "OK, well, let's get started."

He called the crowd to attention, “Awright, then. Let’s begin. The professor here will lead the way and show you where to dig.”

I started toward the place where the stake had been placed but I was hardly leading the way. The crowd quickly surrounded me and bombarded me with questions. “What are you digging for?”

“An artifact.”

“What kind of artifact?”

“It’s ... um ... well, it’s not much really ...”

“How do we know what we’re looking for, dearie, unless you tell us? Besides, we’ll see it eventually.”

Holding back information wasn’t going to work. Being a bit more disclosing yet as discreet as possible seemed to be the best way to handle this. I quieted them down, “Alright! Alright! Let me explain. I’m looking for something that I have good reason to believe was buried here the early part of the seventh century. It’s a book.”

Several exclaimed at the same time, “A book?” They continued, addressing each other. For a moment they didn’t care if I responded or not.

“What kind of a book? ... Weren’t many monasteries in those days if at all.”

“Where did the book come from? Who would have written it?”

“Even if it was protected, the parchment would be bloody well rotted by now.”

Their attention was redirected toward me when one of them with a booming voice asked, “Why would a high tech eco warrior be interested in an old book?” They fell silent and waited for my answer.

“The book contains information ... prophecies ... that I think will give me some clues to advance my work. I think the book may provide insights that can help resolve some of the difficult situations the world faces today. That’s why I’ve come here. That’s why I want to excavate this field.”

I made my way past the edge of the crowd and walked briskly towards the stake. They followed, babbling to each other.

Approaching it, the same thing happened as the first time I was there: I felt lightheaded and heard the deep drone. My body quivered in a way that seemed to be resonant with a very potent force. As before, I felt euphoric.

But there was something else present this time, a contrasting force. The two hung in a precarious balance. I came to this perception just as I arrived at the stake. Instantaneously, the world around me changed. The warm, cheery tones of morning light shifted to a dismal, eerie blue tinge. I no longer saw colors. Everything and everyone was in black, white, and shades of blue-gray. After about ten seconds, in a quick burst, everything returned to normal. Then back again to the blue-gray world. With increasing rapidity, they strobed back and forth. I was seeing alternating flashes of the physical and astral realms.

It didn’t take long for me to realize whose influence was behind the shadowy, grim astral ambiance. This was confirmed when an amorphous translucent form appeared, towering over me. It took the shape of the beast who had manifested in my kitchen.

“Good morning, little Aubrey. It’s such a cliché, but ... we meet again.”

When it spoke, as I gave it my attention, the astral realm dominated my vision, but I could still discern the physical in abbreviated alternate strobes, although the voices of the crowd were so muted I could barely hear them. To verify that I was in control of my perception, I shifted my attention to the crowd. As anticipated, they became the primary focus. I checked to see if anyone

had noticed the Sesavah. All seemed completely oblivious.

“They don’t know about me, little Aubrey. They don’t see any of this and they can’t hear me, but ... they *will* listen.” It cackled wildly. “You’ve come for your little prize, dearie, but I don’t know that they’re going to let you have it.”

With a quick swoosh and a resounding thump, the beast and its somber world evaporated, leaving me to tend to the crowd whose agitated voices burst into my ears. They were getting contentious with each other.

A portly blonde haired man with a bushy mustache asked Mr. Erskine, “It’s here she wants to dig, is it, Leonard?”

He replied, “Well, *I* don’t flippin’ know, Sam.”

Sam redirected his question to me, “It’s here you want to dig, is it?”

“Yes, where the stake is.”

“Do you know what’s happened here ... at this very spot?”

I didn’t know how to answer.

Sam continued, “I’ve studied this place. Been here fifty times. Maybe more. This was the exact center of the August 17 formation two years ago. Had a pyramid formed of five wheat stalks right about where you’ve placed your stake. Very unusual. Never been seen before or since. Now you’re not going to try and tell us this is a coincidence, are you?” He didn’t give me a chance to answer. “This is about the formations and before any of these blokes turns one shovelful, I want to know what you’re up to, madam.”

Some in the crowd grumbled their agreement. Sam concluded, “This has something to do with the circles. You owe us an explanation and I, for one, want to hear it.” There was louder grumbled agreement.

Others tried to hush the group, urging, “Give ‘er a chance, lads. Let ‘er talk.”

There was no way I wanted to reveal any more, but now it seemed unavoidable. “What’s behind this is a bit fantastic and I wouldn’t expect most people to accept it without a lot of evidence and convincing from me. But if you’re into the crop circles—and they’re a bit fantastic—maybe you’ll take what I have to say to heart.”

They quieted down and listened. “Less than two weeks ago, I saw a picture of the August 17 crop circle for the first time in a magazine. Its design was identical to a sketch in my possession that was made a very long time ago. I can’t get into all the details—I just don’t have the time—but I became convinced that this crop circle marks the location of a book that was reported to have been buried in the year 626. This is according to information that accompanied the sketch.

“I had been studying my source material intensively for months. When I discovered this crop circle, I made arrangements to come here as soon as possible. I’ve been examining detailed material on it since I arrived.”

A short, thin man with jet black hair and a tenuous comb-over slicked down flat and parted crookedly on the side of his head rasped in a thin, high voice, “So that would make her an expert, eh lads?” Grumbling. “How long have you been at the circles, Sam?”

“Eight years, Robert.”

“And you, Tom?”

“Eleven years.”

Sam continued, “So, Professor Manning, you’ve been at it now for some few *months* studying Lord knows what ... and a matter of *days* on the circles ... and you presume to come here and tear up a field like no one ever has ... because you think there’s a book here ... a *book!* ... that even if it *was*, wouldn’t be worth a toss because by now it would have disintegrated.”

Part of the crowd murmured, “That’s right, Sam. Give it to ‘er,”

Others counter-murmured, “But she’s a *scientist*. Maybe she *does* know something. Maybe it’ll help.”

As they continued, the now split group became more agitated, countering or bolstering each other’s responses.

“She’s up to no good.”

“We don’t know that.”

“Who does she think she *is*?”

“But maybe she can get us in the papers, get word out about the circles”

“She’s no scientist, just a shagadelic tree hugger with credentials.”

With a shrill thunder-like crackle, the blue-gray parallel reality strobed into my vision again. The two worlds, astral and physical, were superimposed on each other. The Sesavah announced its reappearance with a hideous, thundering roar.

## *Chapter 19*

### *Battle*

The crowd was completely unaware of the Sesavah's presence or the astral exchange that took place between it and me. Their perception was confined to the physical realm. I was only vaguely aware of them. Again, their voices were muted, as if they were behind a wall.

The beast cackled and cooed, "It's come to this, has it now, little dearie. You've come for a book. *I* know about a book. Pretty pictures. No words. What do *you* know about it, my little pudding?"

It seemed prepared for a verbal joust of wills, ready to cajole or intimidate me into revealing what it wanted to know. My immediate inclination was to go to battle. Then I sensed a different tack and heard confirmation from a voice within that I couldn't distinguish was Armaton's or my own, "It is time to face the Sesavah with Truth. There is no need to withhold. Tell it the truth. Fear fears Truth. Truth does not fear fear."

I asked it teasingly, "So, you want to know about the book?"

It reared up, dwarfing me, and roared with the rage of ancient burning curiosity, "*Tell me!*"

"It is the *Book of Symbols*. It contains the history and mysteries of the Society of Folk ..."

The beast growled its derision, "The Society of Folk? You believe that hocus-pocus? I thought you were a scientist."

Behind this facade I sensed its fear and pressed on. "The Symbols have the capacity to reveal Truth; to guide mankind to a higher consciousness; to reveal to each individual his innate capacities, his highest self, and his greatest destiny. They have the power to inspire wisdom and healing, to show us our greatest potential and help us achieve it."

Through huge gritted pointy teeth, it snarled, "And you, a scientist, you believe this?"

"It's the truth."

"*The truth!*" it bellowed, "*The truth!* What about reality? There is no healing, only death. Disease, injury, violence, and death—that's your destiny, you and the rest of the miserable human scum. Does anyone escape? Never! Wisdom? Hah! The common man is incapable of wisdom. How wise are *these* fools," nodding toward the throng in the field, "stumbling over each other for the glory of being right? You're all the same. You'll *kill* each other for the glory of being right or because you think your fantasy of some god is superior to someone else's. You're all mine! *I* rule this domain. There were *never* any Folk ... only fools who *believed* in Folk. Where are they now? They met their destiny alright ... they're all dead and buried."

Unflinching, I rejoined, "You are the proof to your own lies."

It raged and snorted hot, putrid breaths, "Am I, now? How so?"

"The only power you have is to deceive. What you say applies only when people believe you, when they succumb to fear. Those who don't ... you can't touch them."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Well, what if I choose to prove my power by taking your flimsy, insignificant life?"

The click of its teeth snapping together viciously resounded as it repeatedly bit at the air over my head, closer and closer to me. With a final violent lunge downward, it opened its huge jaws and brought them down over my body enveloping it all the way to my feet. With me standing inside its huge mouth, it growled ferociously.

Over the din I shouted, "You can't."

The growling ceased with an inquisitive, "Eh?"

I repeated, "You can't. Because I refuse to cooperate."

Roaring again in outrage, it opened its snout wider and began to snap it shut. I could feel a wind caused by the compression of the air. Its jaws closed around me with a terrible, earsplitting crack.

In a flash, the scene shifted. The beast no longer had me in its mouth, but stood facing me from several yards away and said, "A skirmish lost does not a war make. Even this *battle* is not yet over. I need not fight you directly, when I can defeat you through *them*," nodding again to the crowd.

Immediately, the clamor and spectacle of their arguing became vivid to me again. The physical and astral strobed alternately in such a way that I saw both realities concurrently.

The beast pulled back to the rear of the group. As it had done in our first encounter, it sprouted tentacles, each of which terminated in a grotesque head. They swirled around the people, licking them. No one was aware.

The Sesavah spoke to me, "See how I play with them? They don't even know I'm here. Puppets, they are."

The group was split into two factions. One was vehemently opposed to the excavation; the other was willing to consider it. True to its nature, the Sesavah promoted conflict, working each individual against all the rest, even those who shared the same opinion. Its strategy was to divide, conquer, and prevent me from recovering the *Book of Symbols*.

"What does *she* know, coming here out of nowhere?"

"Well, she *is* a scientist. Maybe she's on to something."

"She's a bloody interloper, she is."

"He's got a point there."

"Up-to-no-good interloper."

"But there's opportunity here, don't you see? She attracts the press."

"Attract them, she will, and then she'll claim the circles for her own."

"What if there's something *to* this book she's looking for? What if it tells us more about the circles?"

Robert, the man with the comb-over, was the first to lose his temper. "And you, Edward, what if your arse was candy, you sodding fool?"

I saw the astral complement to his behavior. Robert's anger radiated an attractive force that drew the Sesavah into him. One of the tentacles penetrated his spine at the base and marauded its way up to his head, overlaying its appearance onto his. Robert's countenance turned pale. On the astral level, his face became disfigured by an eruption of inflamed pustules. As the words passed in sound from Robert's lips, a blast of small, black, horrid projectiles shot from his mouth.

At the same time, a sunlike glow formed in the distance and I heard a familiar drone, a chorus of voices sounding a dense chordal harmony. Instantaneously, the glow and the drone were upon us. The Golden Warrior Guardians broke their tight formation and launched into the fray. An astral battle had begun.

The projectiles spread apart. One grew into a barbed dart and aimed directly at Edward, the man who Robert insulted. The others morphed into two-inch spinning circular blades, like boot spurs, and hurtled every which way toward the crowd.

A cadre of Warriors formed a defensive perimeter around me. Others were drawn to those individuals who remained calm. The Golden Guards fended off the blades with their shields. The people who were agitated repelled the Warriors, who still tried to protect them by attempting to deflect the blades. The battle seethed.

Edward reacted to Robert's offense with fury. This sent out a powerful wave of energy, which not only repelled Guardians who were attempting to protect him, but magnetically attracted the barb, accelerating its momentum. It struck him in the solar plexus. Once the head was embedded, the tail of the dart flattened and grew thin spikes, which glowed red-hot as they spread over his abdomen, searing it. Edward's conscious physical experience was a stabbing pain in his intestines and stomach and the rise of stinging acid bile up his esophagus. Feeling Robert had "done this to him" made Edward even more furious.

Invited by Edward's rage, the Sesavah entered and consumed him, fanning the flames of his wrath, goading him to retaliate, "Up your bum, you ugly bald-headed troll. I'll kick the stuffing out of you."

This released another fusillade of projectiles. The main one, another dart, was aimed at Robert. The rest, more whirling spurs, disbursed throughout the crowd, more of whom were becoming agitated, thus more susceptible to being struck. The Warrior Guardians fought fiercely, speeding to and fro, deflecting and absorbing spurs with their shields.

More people became agitated, which impeded the Warriors' efforts and attracted the gyrating barbs into themselves. From my perspective, I was able to see precise, minuscule details and intuitively understand subtle implications of what was happening. The spurs struck with sickening thuds and lodged deep within the astral bodies of their prey inflicting huge open wounds. In each instance, the blade was attracted to a weak part of the astral body and exacerbated existing active or dormant maladies. Energy blockages formed that, unless cleared, would inevitably cause physical symptoms, if not immediately, then hours, days, or even months later.

Robert and his Sesavan entity escalated the battle. He shouted, "You will, will you?" as he charged forward and shoved Edward, who lost his balance and stumbled back. Several of the men derisively taunted them, "Go to it, boys!" The Guardians shielding them were repelled by their callous glee. Seizing the opening the Sesavan tentacles charged into them. Several other people shrank back in fear. They, too, were perforated by the beast.

The situation cascaded out of control, as just about everyone joined the fray: yelling, posturing, and drawing Sesavan tentacles into themselves with their untoward emotions. The beast revelled in the bedlam and its ability to possess and influence more and more people. In between its maliciously gleeful cackles and roars, it screamed at me, "Disease, injury, violence, death: destiny for these pissants. They're all mine. You get nothing from them. No help, no book. That's it! Go away!"

Two men and a woman had been noticeably quiescent since my arrival, standing slightly apart from the crowd the whole time, silently observing all that transpired. They were unruffled, unscathed, and protected by a phalanx of Golden Warriors. No longer willing to remain aloof, the three, along with the astral protectors outside their perception, stepped in between the scrappers and separated them.

One of the three addressed the crowd in stentorian tones, "*All of you. Quiet!* I can scarcely believe what I'm seeing." This shocked everyone, including the Sesavah, into silence.

He continued, "Edward, Robert, if you could look in a mirror right now, you'd be even more embarrassed for yourselves than I am. There'll be no brawling and no more bickering. Is that *clear?*"

Overcome by the strength of this man's character, the two combatants reluctantly nodded, followed by the rest of the antagonists and agitators who sputtered their assent, "Awright, Ralph, fair do."

Ralph raised a challenge, “Surely we can extend Dr. Manning a bit more courtesy than we’ve shown thus far, can we not?”

The Sesavah witnessed this intrusion upon its activities with great consternation. It pressed to continue the disruption and spoke through one of its “puppets” who complained, “Why should we let her twine on, Ralph? It’s just rubbish, this talk of a book.” Several others muttered in agreement.

Ralph glared at them. Apparently the respect they all had for him was powerful. So was he. Everyone fell silent. Speaking very softly, he replied, “If I understand correctly, I don’t think Dr. Manning especially cares to say another word.” He looked to me and I nodded my confirmation. “What she does want is to probe the soil where she’s indicated to see if it will yield the artifact she’s searching for.”

We exchanged thin smiles of mutual understanding and respect. The Sesavah grumbled and growled, protesting the erosion of its control. As the crowd calmed under Ralph’s influence, it was forced to withdraw its penetration of all but a few individuals who remained ensnared through their lingering anger and resentment.

Ralph went on, “No one here knows whether or not we’ll find even a decent fishing worm, much less a fourteen hundred year old book. What say we give it a whirl and see what turns up?”

Many nodded and buzzed their concurrence.

To two of the diggers, Ralph suggested, “Why don’t you gents begin and relieve each other in pairs?” They expressed their compliance by pressing their shovels into the ground.

The crowd split up along the lines of their agreement. Each group stayed to itself and its members grumbled together reinforcing their position. There were those who felt it was a desecration to tear up the field where a crop circle had appeared, especially in search of something so spurious. Others felt that if there was the slightest chance something could be found, they wanted to look, with the intention of conducting a careful examination of whatever turned up. Their scrutiny would take as long as necessary and *they* would decide if and when anything got turned over to me.

One way or the other, this was trouble. Although the Sesavah’s prior tactic had been thwarted by Ralph’s intervention, it sensed my present concern, “No matter what happens here, little Aubrey, you lose. Either the digging will stop or, if they actually find this book of rot, you’ll never get your hands on it.”

The outcome was in the future. All I knew at the moment was that a hole was being dug and that was progress. What would be would be. I wasn’t in control.

A couple of hours passed. The hole was now deeper than the height of the diggers and about eight feet in diameter. With the passage of time, impatience and irritation set in, solidifying the Sesavah’s hold on the people it still influenced and allowing it to reestablish a grip on others. The two factions, who had stayed apart up to this point, began to jeer each other.

“So, do you twits still think there’s a book to be found?”

“Bugger off, naysayers.”

“How much longer are we going to arse about?”

“Bog off! As long as it takes.”

“Sod it! It’s over!”

“Like hell it is!”

The belligerence was escalating again, allowing the Sesavah to fortify its position. The Warrior Guardians could do nothing to prevent it from possessing anyone whose mindset was sufficiently negative. Frustration contributed to a growing frenzy. Tempers flared. The fracas



quickly involved all the opposing disputants. It was too much for Ralph and his two calm companions to counter and things rapidly got out of hand.

The Sesavah now had more control of the crowd's hysteria than before. It revelled in this victory, snarling in triumph. A scuffle broke out. Fists flew between the opposing sides. So did astral darts, each hitting its mark. The air was dark with hurtling blades. All the Golden Warriors could do was form a protective ring around Ralph, his two companions, and me. It was out of control, complete pandemonium.

Over the din of battle, a voice bellowed from inside the hole, "Ruddy hell! We've hit rock bottom."

A few of the combatants heard this news and reacted.

"Bugger me! What's that? What did he say?"

"They've struck the bloody bottom."

"That's it?"

A wave of realization spread through the brawlers. Their argument was resolved by this irrefutable conclusion: there was no book. Abruptly, they stopped fighting and rushed to the rim of the hole and demanded to hear more from the diggers, who explained, "We've hit solid rock, all across the bottom. There's no book to be found here; at least not any more, if there ever was one."

The shock that surged through the crowd surprised me. Apparently more of them thought something would be found than their protestations had indicated. My own reaction was anomalous. The key element of this mission had just been proven nonexistent. All that I had devoted myself to, all the changes that had taken place in my thinking and my life were predicated on the existence, more so, the recovery of the *Book of Symbols*. This outcome was never considered or foreseen. What puzzled me the most was how little upset I was. The word, "temperance," flashed across my mind, but it hardly seemed a sufficient explanation.

There was no opportunity to ponder this because the crowd was immediately upon me. The opponents to the digging shouted variations of "I told you so!" to their adversaries, who, in turn, barraged me with various renditions of "How dare you?"

The Sesavah roared with delight and, in celebration, cajoled its hosts to hurl more invective darts and blades, inflicting additional astral gashes. Again, everyone was yelling; tempers were flaring. This time their wrath was directed primarily at me. Ralph and the gentleman who accompanied him, concerned for my safety, stepped in front of me to shield me from the mob. By this time, however, their influence had eroded past the point where they were able to calm things down. Realizing this, both men felt a twinge of fear, evident in their faces and the way they recoiled.

For the first time, Ralph and his companion showed weakness, an opportunity the Sesavah seized. Under its influence, the crowd pressed forward, threatening the two men, who tried to back away, but bumped into me. Reflexively, they raised their arms in front of their faces to shield against the blows they felt were imminent. This submissive defensive behavior further emboldened their assailants. As the pair's anxiety heightened, the Sesavah set upon them easily. I could feel its intense pleasure as it surged up their spines, ravaging them and climaxing their terror.

Up against the Sesavah one on one, I felt up to the fight. But this situation was very different and embodied its threat to defeat me, not directly, but "through them." This was not a circumstance that the power of thought seemed adequate to resolve successfully, materially, in time. Yet, I still experienced the grace of fearlessness.

Suddenly I was engulfed in a bubble of silence and heard Armaton comment, “For this, thou hast been trained. All thine experiences have led to this moment, which shall lead to yet others, in which the muscle of fearlessness has been strengthened to a capacity more than adequate to resist the temptation of the Sesavah to terror and disappointment that would otherwise tear thee down. There is much personal victory crowned in this moment, dear Aubrey. Thou hast come such a long way in thine unfoldment. Now behold the magnificence of that which surrounds thee. See how events unfold, outside thy control, yet synchronous with thy most lofty desires and inclinations ... with thy destiny. Behold the majesty!”

The clamor of the fray burst back into my awareness. Calmly, I surveyed the attacking mob, wondering where I would see the majesty. Then I heard a shrill scream. Then another ... and another. Others heard, too. We looked around to see who it was and where it was coming from. The crowd, now distracted and curious, began to shush itself.

As the noise quieted, we were able to decipher the screams. “Come here! Come here! I found something! There’s something here! Over here!” But there was no one to be seen,

A clump of soil flew out of the hole. “Over here! Over *here!*”

It took a moment to register what was happening. When it did, the mob dropped everything and rushed to the hole. A woman, Ralph’s companion, was on her knees at the bottom, gently stroking a spot on the ground in front of her.

“Lily, what is it? What do you have down there?” The throng gushed with chatter, but their curiosity and wonder disciplined them to stillness.

Lily answered, out of breath with excitement, “While all of you ... were bugging about, I found ... some tools ... and ... well ... I just scraped and brushed the ... bottom and ... I found this.”

The crowd went wild, each shouting a demand to find out what it was. Again, they quieted themselves down. Although the Sesavah still had a hold on them, it was unable to overcome their interest and concentration enough to distract and manipulate them. It growled in frustration and fear of losing its grip.

From her crouching position in the hole, Lily called over her shoulder to us above, “I can’t tell for sure. It’s very odd, but it *does* look like the spine of a book.”

Another wave of commotion, then quiet. She continued to work with a brush and scraping tool.

“Very odd. Very odd. The spine of the ‘book,’ if that’s what it is, appears to be made out of a hard white stone, like travertine ... no, more like alabaster. It’s flush with the surface stone around it ... like it was inlaid ... .. Hell’s bells!”

There were outcries from above, “What is it?”

“There’s a depression to either side. Along the middle of the right edge there’s a slot, about three inches long and maybe three quarters of an inch wide ... and then opposite it, at the center of the left side is a round hole, maybe three quarters of an inch in diameter. Give me a moment ...” She paused and worked with the tools. “ ... I’d say they’re a couple inches deep.”

She started tapping what appeared to be a chisel with a hammer. After a dozen blows she exclaimed, “Well strike me pink!”

Clamor: “What is it? What do you see, Lily?”

“It’s not what I’m seeing, it’s just that ... this thing won’t budge. It’s like it’s fused to the rock around it ... and the weird thing is ... I can’t get a chip off anything. It’s like all the rock is ... impenetrable!”

“Aw, bilge, Lily. You just don’t have the blinkin’ strength. Let a man have a go.”

Lily came up the ladder that had been set in the hole. One of the diggers went down to replace her. He tapped around the edges of the alabaster inlay, lightly and carefully at first, then with vehemence.

“Ruddy Nora! She just won’t give. Lily was right. My tool is just bouncing off. I can’t even make a scratch. Peculiar!”

From above, “Stop piddling about. Put some shoulder into it.”

“I have, you bugger. If you’re so keen on it, *you* come down.”

“That I’ll do ... and I’ve got half a mind to give you a dry slap.”

The rising air of contention roused the Sesavah out of the doldrums it had settled into. Now that something had been found, it needed to shift its tactics again. It refocused on gaining possession of the Book and keeping it out of my hands.

I was already stymied. No one there considered or would allow me to be involved. All I could do was observe and wait for an opportunity.

To stir things up, the Sesavah had the men challenge and insult each other’s masculinity. This easily lathered them up into another frenzy. Several jumped into the hole. Each tried to shove his way close enough to the Book to try to chip it out. None of them made any progress, which infuriated them and attracted the derision of the others. The beast worked their emotions to its best advantage.

In a mania of competition, each man attempted to dislodge the Book. They ran off to get more formidable tools: pry bars, sledgehammers, pick axes. All their efforts failed. Hours passed. They exhausted themselves physically and mentally.

As the sun was beginning to set, they gave up. Most of them were lying on the ground, feeling impotent and beaten. The Sesavah tried to stir them to no avail. They just didn’t have anything left.

It planted one seed thought that took root in Robert. “I’ve got it!” he blurted suddenly, “Spiffing, absolutely spiffing!”

The throng rallied and gathered around him as he revealed his plan in a single word, “Explosives!”

Mr. Erskine was on him in an instant, “You’ll do no such thing on my land, you grebby toad.”

It was the perfect opportunity for everyone to vent their immense frustrations and compensate for the erosion of their virility. They split into two rowdy camps and battled each other for supremacy.

I heard Armaton utter a familiar phrase, “Now, beloved. *Now!*”

Unnoticed by anyone, I walked to the hole and climbed down the ladder. When I reached the bottom, I turned toward the *Book of Symbols* and pronounced in respect and gratitude for its presence in this world. At once, the most exquisite silence imploded onto the field and everyone there. A warm shaft of white light rose up my spine. It was the embodiment of pure Love. When it reached the top of my head, it released shimmering golden sparks that spurted out of me. They rose several hundred feet then reversed their course, plummeting down in the direction of the crowd.

Gaining speed they separated, each one assuming its own trajectory. With tremendous force they struck and penetrated each individual at the back of the neck. In that instant, a shaft of white light rose up everyone else’s spine, feeling slightly warm to them, but searingly hot to the Sesavah. Screaming in torturous pain, it was expelled from all those it had invaded.

Freed from the influence of the beast and still in an envelope of silence, everyone slowly

edged forward to have a better view of what I was going to do.

Very deliberately, I moved forward and knelt before the Book. As I did, the way to recover it became very clear. It was so simple and pure hearted, I let out a gentle laugh of appreciation.

The groove and the hole on opposite sides of the Book's spine had an obvious purpose. In total surrender and calmness, I slid the fingers of my right hand into the slot and my thumb into the hole. A primordial rumble shook the ground and resonated through everyone present. It was an awe inspiring, mighty tone.

Tenderly, I clasped the *Book of Symbols*. Above the sound and pulsation of the tremors, I heard a distinct clank and felt a single jolt that reminded me of a tumbler releasing the bolt of a lock. The *Book of Symbols* had just been released from the protective hold Mother Earth kept on it for centuries. I felt the gentle upward thrust of the Book as it was discharged from its former berth into my custody.

For a moment, I clutched it reverently to my bosom, then tucked it under my left arm, rose to my feet, and climbed up the ladder. By the time I reached the surface the rumble had ceased. The abiding silence was stunningly sublime. Everyone else there was frozen in place, wide-eyed and gap-jawed. The Sesavah was incapacitated. I wended my way through the crowd, crossed the field, got in the car, and drove away. A final glance revealed that, still, no one in the field had moved.

## *Chapter 20*

### *Book of Symbols*

“‘Tis a magnificent advent, that this singular Book of such tremendous power and depth should now be available to mankind through thee. Even buried and unknown all these centuries, its mere presence in this realm has borne good tidings, so mighty is its potential and essence.”

Master Armaton had materialized in the passenger seat beside me and was holding the *Book of Symbols* in front of him with both hands, looking at it devotedly. Seeing him after all the ordeals I had been through prompted a powerful emotional release. I could hardly contain my joy and excitement.

“Temperance, dear Aubrey. At the moment, thy present task—driving this vehicle—requires it.” I managed to quell the storm of my exuberance, but the feelings remained. “There, that is much better. For a moment it seemed thy head might burst.”

“It is *so* good to see you, dear Master Armaton. I’ve missed you.”

“But I was ever with thee.”

“I know, I felt it. But to have you *here* ... that’s what I mean.”

“I do understand. In thy present state, there is a greater appreciation—a preference—for the Spirit to be cloaked with physical form: tangibility. A time is coming when this preference shall melt away and thou wilt realize and abide in the essence of the All That Is, understanding that the difference between Spirit and body is essentially a matter of perception. All in good time. For the now, let us celebrate our possession of the Prize and thy continuing dominion over the wiliness of the Sesavah.”

“I understand it, Master Armaton. I understand its weakness. That’s why I was able to stand up to it. I knew it couldn’t hurt me unless I let it. But I was surprised by its strength ... the power it had to attack me through those people, how it was able to get ahold of them and manipulate them against me.”

“That is its purpose and talent: setting all against each other. When Love is obscured, fear rules, and the Sesavah controls.”

“To tell you the truth, I was pretty baffled when things shifted that way. I really didn’t know what to do when that crowd started to attack me. I seem to be able to handle myself now in the thought sphere, but this was a direct *physical* threat, right there, coming straight at me.”

“An excellent point is in the making. What actions did you take, confronted with this threat?”

“Well, *none*, really. I didn’t know *what* to do. Whacking somebody upside the head isn’t really me—not to mention how outnumbered I was—especially when Ralph and his friend were neutralized.”

“So, what did you *do*?”

“Like I said: *nothing*! I didn’t really ...”

“Aubrey, what did you *do*? I am not asking what physical actions you took. What went on in your mind? In your feelings?”

“Well, nothing. I pretty much just held my ground.”

“There it is! And it’s hardly nothing. It’s everything!”

“What do you mean?”

“When the crowd pressed to attack, when Ralph and his companion were lost, were you afraid?”

“No, that’s the funny thing, it was like I should have been afraid, but I wasn’t.”

“And that was a crowning victory: for thyself and the objectives of this mission. It earmarked a thought pattern, now established as habit, in reverse of present day human nature as it is commonly perceived and practiced: responding to threat or attack with fear ... and preemptive or counterattack, the proverbial eye for an eye.”

“Well, an attack was pretty much out of the question, considering the odds.”

“True. Consider this, however: what if thou wert against only the spindly Robert? Wouldst thou have ‘whacked him upside the head?’”

“No, of course not.”

“By thy nature, thou art peaceable. By thy training, which involved determined, oft-repeated efforts to choose courage and calmness when tempted to fear, today thou hast demonstrated the human capacity to adapt ancient, deeply embedded behavior patterns in revolutionary ways.

“As a matter of habit, expressing thine own altered human nature, today thou hast automatically responded to fearsome danger and provocation with temperance. This presages the imminent Great Shift, prophesied in the *Book of Symbols*, when the clash between the consciousness of Love and the consciousness of fear on this planet shall come to a head. The natural flow of fearlessness throughout the confrontations of this day establishes a new baseline of consciousness for thee.”

“I felt a difference. There was no question about it. But things were happening too fast for me to get a handle on it. Now that I’ve had a chance to think and talk with you, I understand what happened. What you’re saying makes a lot of sense to me.”

“Immerse thyself fully in this elevated consciousness. It shall provide necessary fortification for the challenges and battles towards which we are presently hurtling.”

“I understand. I get the feeling today was just the tip of the iceberg.”

“That would be a fair assessment.”

“So be it.”

“Take note of one misperception: that the threat of the crowd—in tangible, physical manifestation—was one that the power of thought was inadequate to resolve successfully in time as thou hadst presumed. The outcome served proof to the contrary.

“During the course of this threat, it was apparent to me that you remained steady. You were calm and, though concerned, unruffled.”

“Yes, I pretty much held my ground.”

“You were in your truth.”

“Yes.”

“You did not know how it could happen, but, beneath the surface of your thinking, of your conscious awareness, you *knew* that the outcome would be favorable.”

“If you want to put it that way ... I guess that’s true.”

“Thy reaction was similar when told the *Book of Symbols* was not to be found.”

“Yes. Not finding it didn’t make any sense to me, so I didn’t really believe it wasn’t there ... no matter what they all said.”

“Remember this, dear Aubrey. No matter what, in the face of seemingly impossible odds and insurmountable tangible physical threat, hold fast to thy truth, to the truth of this sacred mission, to the consciousness of Love and—as thou hast already tasted—there shalt be a majesty to behold.”

“Now I get the feeling you’ve just described the bottom of the iceberg. It sounds heavy,”

“Does that come as a surprise?”

“I guess not. There’s still a lot to do and a lot of opportunity for the Sesavah to attack.”

“The surprise shall be in the way it attacks, at unexpected times, from unanticipated directions.”

“I can’t imagine what, but is there anything I should be doing to get ready?”

“This battle is not to be won by strategies and preemptive maneuvers, but by the determination and ability to remain absolutely steadfast in Love, thy truth, and the sanctity of this mission. For that, thou art already prepared.

“This is an endeavor that, fraught with difficulty, is nonetheless graced with joy and realization, as thou hast already experienced. The *Book of Symbols* has even more—ininitely more—to offer. Relax and enjoy the process. Do not anticipate the appearance of demons and unsavory events, for by so doing, thou wilt fall victim to the negative wanderings of thine own imagination. Dost thou remember, on the first evening I came to thee, when thou experienced terror in the empty darkness?”

“Yes,” I answered with a laugh, “My imagination ran away with me. I was terrified just by the *thought* of what might be there in the dark.”

“And dost thou recall my admonition?”

“No matter what happens, no battle will be essentially different from that one. No enemy will be essentially different and no tactic on my part will be more powerful. That all battles will be fought and won in the theater of my mind.”

“Excellent. Remember this as events unfold. There is no situation to which it shall not apply.”

“Yes, sir.”

“We’ll be in North Wroughton in a few minutes. That will be as far as I go with thee. Do you have any questions?”

Laughing my reply, “If I have one, I have a bejillion, so, no. I understand this is something that will unfold before me and I’ll know what to do as we go along.”

“Excellent. My love and presence are always with thee.”

“I know. I love you, too.”

With that he was gone and I continued north on the A4361 into Swindon. In a short time I arrived at the Gandhi’s home, parked the car, and turned off the engine. Now that it was quiet, I was better able to hear something that I thought I had heard intermittently ever since leaving Avebury. It was music, barely audible, hauntingly beautiful, what seemed a celestial orchestra and chorus.

As I had done several times while driving, I checked to see if the radio was on. Of course it wasn’t, since the ignition was off. In the midst of puzzlement, my eyes fell upon the *Book of Symbols* on the passenger seat to the left of me. As I stared at it, the music became slightly louder and I could hear a delicate shimmering sound like crystal wind chimes. It was music unlike anything I had ever heard before. There were no musical phrases, per se, no distinct melody lines, but the most marvelous blending of sounds, seemingly random, yet completely harmonious, forming a lush tapestry of voices, tones, and instruments, some unrecognizable to me.

Although it was silly, I wondered if the sound would keep me awake at night or, worse, give me away as I imagined hiding with the Book from whatever danger lurked in my future. Instantly the music stopped. Just as I craved hearing it again and wondered if I had turned it off for good, the lovely, gentle, and mysterious sound resumed.

I laughed in delight as I played with turning it on and off with my thoughts. I laughed even harder sensing Armaton, with his arms crossed in front of his chest, shaking his head back and

forth in mock criticism like, “This Book contains the history and mysteries of the Society of Folk. It has been brought across time and multiple dimensions, been buried for fourteen hundred years, holds the key to the survival of Mother Earth’s inhabitants, and ... you’re *playing* with it. That’s perfect! The Folk and our Queen share in thine innocent, lighthearted delight.”

Interrupting the fun I was having, I placed the *Book of Symbols* in my brief case, left the car, and let myself into the Gandhi home. There was a special meditation at the chapel this evening in honor of Prabhas’ father so no one was home. I went up to my room, closed the door, placed the Book on the writing table, and sat down.

True to Armaton’s description, the *Book of Symbols*’ cover and pages are milky white, somewhat translucent, and seem convincingly made of alabaster. Yet, the cover, about an eighth of an inch thick, bends like an equivalent thickness of hard leather and the pages are pliable and soft to the touch.

There are no written words whatsoever. A Symbol was on what I took to be the front cover. The back was blank.

In the privacy and stillness of my room, not only could I hear the music more clearly, but it was also possible to see subtle discharges of multicolored light coming from the Book. They danced like flames synchronously with the music.

A word formed in my mind, “greetings,” and I felt an urge to write it down. As I placed a pencil to the page, I felt a momentum to write more and the inclination to a second word, a third, and a fourth, all of which turned into a phrase that led to more and more again. The following was written in one uninterrupted flow and has not been edited with the exception of one comma (noted with an asterisk \*), which was added for clarity.

Greetings, dear Aubrey,

This is an occasion of unique distinction, the equivalent of letting the Genie out of the bottle. However, in this case the Genie is an amalgam of you and we, literally an expression of the All that Is.

In the realm of time, this is a moment long awaited. In our realm, beyond time, it is part of a recirculating continuum—its anticipation and realization happening in simultaneity.

There is much to do, much to remember, but for this occasion we offer a simple welcome: to thee,\* to all Mankind, to all creatures and creations on Mother Earth. We share with you all and always our Love Divine and Supreme, that you would taste it and learn or remember to nourish thyself in its Omnipresence within and about Thee All.

Thy fear is an illusion. Thy Omnipotent Love is the all encompassing reality. To dive and delve in it is the most practical thing you can do, as impractical as that may seem to some. Love is the all encompassing reality. Believe, remember, trust, proceed ... All of you do this in remembrance of Who Thou really art.

This is a beginning and an end. Both are at hand. The time for fear is spent. The time for Love is upon thee. Take care to choose, in each of thy thoughts, as best can, the Living and not the dead, that thou wouldst survive and thrive in a Reality that supports and nurtures thee.



In supreme irony, many fear Love; fear that it will lead them to disadvantage, that the trust it bears will subject them to thievery and loss. Such is not Love, but attachment. Love is no such thing, is not an emotion, but a vibration, a power—ever available and accessible, the ultimate comfort and security. It runs deep—behind and beneath all creation. Through attunement with its vibration *All* may be accessed and drawn to thee with the simplicity and joy of a child playing with magnets.

No fear, only fun ... Divine fun ... in joyous expectation of all that fills and completes the full measure of thy Divine Identity.

Love. Love Love. Be in Love now and always.

After putting down my pencil, I read and reread these words and marveled at the density of their wisdom, moved to tears by the depth of Love they expressed and inspired. I found that while reading, several understandings and ideas flowed to me, some in tandem, some not directly related to the content. A channel seemed to have opened that linked my conscious mind to a wider band of comprehension, a universal intelligence that was the source of the purest and most concentrated creativity.

An orientation, of sorts, had begun, instructed by the Book itself, in particular the Symbol on its cover into which I gazed. The *Book of Symbols* is written in the geodimensional language of the Folk. The Symbols are holographic in nature and encompass unlimited, multiple layers of information, all existence, all time, all space, and all dimensions. Each has a particular focus or theme. Concentrating, or as some might term it, meditating on a Symbol accesses a conduit to the infinite pool of knowledge, and, like an oracle, provides vast information and insight. Each Symbol has the power to inspire healing as well as intuitive perception.

The “history and mysteries” Armaton had mentioned refers to the limitless information that can be accessed through the *Book of Symbols* on characters and events throughout the existence of Mother Earth and the Folk realm. It offers insights and scientific and spiritual principles which explain all aspects of life and Creation.

Since the Book is a construct of Folk space beyond linear time in the eleventh dimension, it offers perspectives without regard to our categorizations of past, present, and future. We distinguish history and prophecy, seeing them as separate and distinct, whereas they experience continuity. Folk prophecy is, of necessity, fluid since events adjust to the way people involved think and act as time passes. This is unremarkable and unquestioned in the eleventh dimensional Folk realm, anomalous and confusing in our linear third dimensional realm. I can’t offer any more on this than “It’s just one of those things.”

After what may have been a couple of hours of musing and meditation, I felt the prompt to write again and this is what came:

This has been a most extraordinary day. Take what has been given and experienced and, for a time, let it go. Enjoy thy slumber now. With the dawn, a new day with new beginnings. Peace unto thee. Peaceable slumber.

This brought my attention to just how much my body craved sleep. I was ready for bed in the blink of an eye and sound asleep before I had the chance to absorb and ponder what appeared to have just happened. Did the *Book of Symbols* just invite me to hit the hay?

## *Chapter 21*

### *Waiting in Prey*

The next morning I woke up just before six, refreshed after a deep, dreamless sleep. Apparently the *Book of Symbols* hadn't made enough of a racket to keep me up. In fact it was completely still until I turned my thoughts to it and even then the music was barely audible.

As eager as I was to study the Book, there was no ignoring how famished I was. Just as I thought how ridiculous it would be to let eating supersede, I felt Master Armaton's influence and heard the word "balance" in my mind.

"Alright, alright," I thought and headed downstairs for some food, treading as lightly as I could on each step so I wouldn't wake anyone. As I approached the kitchen I could hear soft voices and the unmistakable sounds of food preparation. I wondered who else was up so early.

It turned out to be everyone: Prabhas, Nirmala, Ashvin, and Kamala. As I pushed open the swinging door and entered the room, they burst into chatter, calling out to me and rushing to greet me with loving hugs.

"Aubrey! We could hardly wait to see you. We're like children on Christmas morning—we couldn't sleep. Are you OK? What happened? Did you have any problems? ..." They pummeled me with questions, avoiding the all-important one. They fell silent in unison as I answered it.

"I have the *Book of Symbols*."

Each of them gasped, maybe in awe, maybe in wonder that It really *did* exist. As convinced as I was that It would be found, I had to admit the Book's existence, especially my possession of It, was taking some getting used to.

After we stared at each other for a moment, Prabhas broke the silence, "Let us all sit to breakfast. Aubrey, please, tell us of your experience and afterwards could we ... would it be possible ...?"

"Of course, Prabhas, yes. We'll all look at it together."

"Excellent!" They exchanged excited, smiling glances. We sat down to eat and I told them everything that had happened. Fortunately the meal ended before the story did, or we would have had a lot of leftovers. When I finished they were dumbstruck.

This time Kamala spoke first, "There is no cause for wonder, not really. We know the power of God. We should not be so startled when our own lives are directly and tangibly touched. Are we not children of the Infinite?"

Prabhas replied, "This is true, dear one, but still...!" His wide-eyed look of amazement captured everyone's feelings. Looking at him, Kamala burst into a contagious laugh that admitted she, too, had to make a concerted effort to live up to her words.

"Well, shall we?" I invited.

They followed me up the stairs and convened in a small parlor down the hall from my room while I went to get the Book. When I joined them, I saw that they had placed two chairs facing each other to either side of a coffee table. Ashvin, Kamala, and Prabhas sat on a sofa behind it. Nirmala was in the chair to my right. I took the remaining chair and placed the Book on the table.

One by one we picked It up, each examining the Book in a way unique to that individual. Prabhas closed his eyes and held It to his forehead. Nirmala caressed the Book, gently turning pages and stroking several Symbols as she contemplated Them, all the while softly murmuring devotions. Ashvin held It with a firm grip and gazed penetratingly at the Symbols he was drawn to. Kamala, unlike the others, studied each Symbol, in order from front to back, briefly, but

carefully and methodically.

The Book, silent up to this point, began to throb with energy and emitted a synchronously undulating deep, rich palette of tones just as Kamala was handing It to me. Her wide-eyed astonished look told me she felt and heard it, too. A glint of brilliant white light formed on the cover's Symbol. After Kamala let go and I placed the Book on the coffee table, the light rose above It and formed a small sphere enveloped in a luminescent swirling cloud. As the sphere grew we were able to discern vague shapes on the surface. When it was several feet in diameter, the cloud thinned and the shapes became recognizable. This was Mother Earth.

The instant She revealed Her identity, the sphere burst in a flash of innumerable minuscule lights. As they brushed past us, I felt a cool misty breeze graze my skin, each particle of moisture infusing me with a rapturous feeling of love and connection to all.

At once, the deep tone modulated into a whoosh and the particles of light were sucked back into the Book with a concluding thump.

We sat, speechless, immersed in the afterglow for several minutes until Nirmala sighed, "Oh, my!" to which we all responded with soft, euphoric laughter.

Prabhas noted reverently, "This was a baptism."

"Complete with holy water!" Ashvin added. "We are all joined in a communion of purpose."

"And destiny," Armaton continued. His body condensed in front of four pairs of awestruck eyes. He sat, legs crossed under him in lotus posture, in front of the table and across from the sofa. He was sitting at the same height as the rest of us with one notable difference. He was not in a chair, but suspended in the air above the floor.

To introduce him seemed a bit mundane in the face of such a dramatic display, yet I felt I should. "Friends, this is ..."

They proved my gesture unnecessary as each exclaimed his name and rushed to bow before him, as is the Indian custom in the presence of a holy man.

Armaton stopped them, "No! No! No! Please, dear friends. I would bow to you every bit as much as you would bow to me ... but there isn't that much room on the floor and I'm sure we would bump heads."

He gently nudged Nirmala back into her chair and the others followed suit.

"I respect and honor thy customs, but there is a superseding issue. We are all Souls, all of the same Divine Essence. We must think and act as peers, clearly see each other as the brothers and sisters we truly are. This is essential to our mission.

"Are ye adjusted to my precipitous and rather climactic arrival?"

"Dear sir, we are still reeling a bit," Prabhas replied, "but the shock of it is mostly over." The rest of his family nodded their confirmation.

"Good. Good. I am not prone to such sensational displays of phenomena." He gestured to the space beneath his levitating body. "But there is purpose to my pretentiousness: to confront ye with the possibilities many believe in, yet find difficult to accept as an integral part of their lives. I wish to accentuate the distinction between believing in God and trusting in God.

"Belief involves accepting divine principles. Trust is acting and depending on them, integrating their truth into one's life. It is the difference between theory and practice, meekness and fearlessness, safety and boldness.

"Prabhas was correct. This has been a baptism, marking thine acceptance of a sacred mission and dedication to it. Ye have linked thyself with Aubrey and the Folk in the deliverance of Mother Earth and her inhabitants. Thy capacity to adjust and adapt to extraordinary circumstances proves thy suitability for this venture.

“Ye must be equally prepared to take decisive action ... to trust in Divine guidance and protection and act on These despite the outward appearance of danger.”

Prabhas replied, “We are well prepared for this, Armatonji. My father, who recently passed, has infused our family with the courage of our convictions. He endured British billy clubs and jail cells on many occasions in the quest for India’s sovereignty. He was a disciple of the great Mohandas Gandhi and fought tyranny and hatred with Love, their only antidote. He was not afraid to face danger for a righteous cause and, praise God, we share his dedication.”

“Well, that is precisely the antidote ye shall require to face the dangers which lie ahead.”

Kamala passionately shot back, “We are prepared and committed.” Then, realizing that tradition called for Prabhas to speak for their family, she winced and gestured apologetically to him.

No offense was taken. Prabhas was beaming with pride for her bold assertiveness, “When words are truth, it matters not who speaks them, dear one.” He put his arm around her for a reassuring hug. She smiled back appreciatively.

Armaton nodded his assent and resumed, “There is a final point to be stressed. To trust in God is to know that thy life is completely in the hands of the Divine, no matter what. It is living God’s truth, knowing ye will always be shown the way. It is boldly going forth whether or not the way is familiar and comfortable or unknown, fraught with travails, unanticipated disappointments, and apparent desolation. It is feeling and acting with Divine comfort and confidence in all situations.”

In parting, Armaton pronounced to each of us and announced, “It has been a joy to meet ye. Now I shall take my leave.” His body scrolled up like a window shade and disappeared.

Ashvin remarked, “Don’t anyone act too astounded or he’ll return and call the whole thing off.”

“What are we to do next?” Nirmala asked.

I replied, “We have three days before I leave. I think you all should spend as much time with the *Book of Symbols* as you can.”

“Agreed,” Prabhas confirmed. “We would do best to remain at home during this time. Can you all arrange this?”

Everyone nodded, “Yes.”

I remembered, “The only thing I have to do is take back the rental car. As long as I’m not going anywhere, I’d just as soon take it back right away.”

Ashvin offered, “Kami and I will go with you and give you a ride back, OK?”

She and I nodded our agreement. The three of us got up, left the Book with Prabhas and Nirmala, and drove to the rental agency. While I settled up my account, one of the agents pulled Ashvin aside and engaged him in what seemed to be a very serious, hushed conversation. The agent looked worried and the whole time cast furtive glances in every direction.

Once we were back in the family car I asked Ashvin, “What was that all about?”

“I’m not sure, really. That was Aasim. He’s an old friend. Our families knew each other back home. He said that two days after you rented the car, two men came in asking questions about you.”

“About *me*? What were they asking?”

“Where you were staying, what you were doing, how long you planned to keep the car. They asked him to repeat as much of the conversation he had with you as he could remember.”

“Why? Who were they?”

“They presented credentials from Scotland Yard, but Aasim thought they behaved more like

spooks.”

“I’m sorry. Spooks?”

“British Intelligence.”

“What would British Intelligence want with me? And how would they know ...”

“Aasim said they probably ran your credit card and the rental agency showed up.”

“What did he tell them?”

“He knew you were our friend so he said as little as possible. He told them what they already knew, that you’d rented a car and not much else. To throw them off he said you were staying at the Swindon Marriott and that he didn’t remember much of your conversation because he was so ... er ... um ... taken with your appearance. They seemed to go for it and told him under no circumstances was he to mention their inquiry to anyone else.”

“What does this mean?”

“I don’t know, Aubrey.”

I thought about it for a moment and noticed myself getting caught up in wild speculation and anxiety. Then I remembered Armaton’s advice, which I shared with my companions.

“When I was on my way back from Avebury, Armaton came to me in the car ...”

Ashvin interrupted, “In the car? While you were driving?”

“Yeah, he does that. Anyway, one of the things he reminded me of was not to speculate about ‘unsavory events’ or I would fall victim to the ‘negative wanderings’ of my imagination. He told me to ‘relax and enjoy the process’ ... and that’s all I really want to do ... it’s all I *can* do. Whatever’s going on, it’s just not going to help for me to get caught up in wildly guessing about it, so until I know more or something else happens, I just *have* to let it go.”

And they did, too.

The next three days went by very quickly. My friends and I shared some very intense personal experiences—with each other and the *Book of Symbols*. Before I knew it, a taxi was at the door and I was saying good by to four people who had become very close to me.

“Aubrey, my daughter, you are now ever in my heart,” Prabhas hugged me tightly.

Then Nirmala, “Go with God, child.”

And Ashvin, “We’ll see you back in San Diego in a few days.”

With fire in her eyes Kamala stared at me. Then, as we embraced, she whispered in my ear with equal intensity, “We are with you, Aubrey. No matter *what*.”

On the way to the airport I thought about the life I was returning to for the first time since I had left. It seemed like another world in another time. I wondered how I would be able to settle back into my former routine after all that had taken place. I sensed how torn I would feel spending so much time at school away from the *Book of Symbols*.

As the cab pulled up to the departure terminal I noticed a throng of paparazzi and news media. “Well, that’s OK,” I thought, “They’re waiting for some huge superstar, so nobody’s going to be paying attention to me.”

I paid the driver and headed into the terminal with my one piece of luggage and the carryon which held the Book inside my brief case. Glancing over at all the news sharks I felt a twinge of pity for whomever they were waiting in prey, grateful that the attention I was accustomed to attracting was so modest in comparison.

One of the reporters yelled, “There she is!” and pointed to someone behind me.

Giving in to my curiosity, I looked to see who it was, admittedly a little awestruck in anticipation of what celebrity I was about to encounter. There was no one I recognized. Then the realization hit me, too late. By the time I turned back around, they were all on me, shouting,

“Aubrey!” interspersed with a barrage of questions.

“Are you going to fight it?”

“Where have you been?”

“What are you going to do next?”

“Can you come back from this?”

“What about criminal charges?”

Completely baffled, I looked on in wonder. Like the rapid discharge of flashbulbs around me, each of my interrogators momentarily took on the appearance of the Sesavah in its guise as the tall, pale man in the tux with the slicked down hair and moustache. The sleazy smile on its face said, “Gotcha!”

Out of everyone there, I seemed to know the least about what was going on. I wrestled my way through the horde to the secure area of the terminal where they couldn’t follow me. The farther away I got from them, the less stares I seemed to attract.

Because time was short, I had to go straight to the gate. Fortunately there was a newsstand along the way. Incomprehensibly, my picture was on the cover of several tabloids along with the captions, “Too Hot to Handle,” “Brainy Babe Bumped,” “Is She All There?” “Dishy Doc Disappears.”

I took a chance that there was a real news story to be found and picked up a copy of the *Times*, stuffed it under my arm, and headed for the flight gate. Once on board and settled in, I studied the front page. Nothing there. I opened the paper and when I got to page seven my eyes fell on this column headline, “Popular Scientist Sacked.” In smaller type below, “Walks Out During Fire Investigation.”

San Diego, California, USA Environmental scientist Aubrey Manning was fired from her post as Director of Computational Sciences at the University of California Supercomputer Center here yesterday. Dr. Manning is under investigation for her role in a fire two months ago which threatened the facility and destroyed sensitive government data.

Seventeen days ago Manning left the campus for lunch and never returned. Her prior behaviour was described as unstable.

According to George Scribner, Director of the Supercomputer Center, “One of her staff people came to me several months ago. He expressed concern for Dr. Manning after she complained of recurring nightmares and hallucinations. In light of this warning, I closely monitored her activities. If it hadn’t been for this scrutiny, we might not have discovered she had anything to do with the fire. We all find it tragic and hard to believe, but the evidence speaks for itself.”

Manning, 32, made her name as a graduate student with the publication of a paper criticizing the work of post WWII mathematician, Kalman von Hass. She went on to achieve international recognition for her groundbreaking environmental research. Following the publication of two best selling books, Manning became a popular media figure.

Authorities stated criminal charges are pending the conclusion of their investigation.

## *Chapter 22*

### *Overcome*

Sickening waves of tension and nausea heaved through my body. Immense grief, outrage, shock, and heartache competed for supremacy in overwhelming me. The anguish of this colossal treachery was excruciating. I never thought George was capable of such corruption, though I realized now his recent behavior had tipped his hand.

How could Harold have betrayed me? How could everything have collapsed?

The foundation of my beliefs, the principles I lived by, had been undermined. My life crumbled into meaninglessness. I stared blankly towards the seatback in front of me, my mind racing and getting nowhere. I was vaguely aware that my seatmate had tried to start conversations, that the flight attendant had spoken to me several times, but I was incapacitated in a fog of isolated despondency.

How could this happen? Everything I had worked for was gone. My purpose was shattered. I had lost the only thing I ever wanted to do ... the only thing I knew how to do.

I was disconsolate for several hours. Inwardly, I called out to Armaton repeatedly. Unable to see him or hear him, I couldn't feel him either. Overcome with despair, doubt then attacked me, "I wonder if I can even trust him ... and where is God in all this?"

These abysmal thoughts helped me recognize what was afoot. I had enough presence of mind to realize that doubting God was a premise I would not accept. This turned my attention to Armaton's final words at the Gandhi's about trust. He said we are always shown the way ... no matter how bad things look. It's one thing to believe this, to talk about it and nod your head up and down in agreement, but the difference between theory and practice is to trust it, to walk the talk, and live it.

With the beginning of a shift in attitude and the calmness it was instilling, the lump that I felt in my throat since the reporters came at me got extremely uncomfortable. Now it extended down to the pit of my stomach and pressed sickeningly against me. I doubled over, gagging, my body convulsing uncontrollably.

My seatmate, a proper gray-haired British gentleman, exclaimed, "Hello!" and swiftly retrieved an airsickness bag from the seat pouch, tried to hand it to me, and began briskly rubbing my spine up and down.

With a final lurch of dry heaves, I felt the lump pass out of me and the cloud of hopelessness lift. As these were cast away, I recognized the unmistakable putrid essence of the Sesavah, who had attacked and consumed me in the first instant I reacted with shock to the media swarm. It so completely dominated me that I couldn't sense its presence, thinking its thoughts to be my own.

Understanding this stunned me. This was what it's like to come up against the Sesavah in ignorance. There is no defense because there's no perception of attack, of encroaching dark influence. I had been fully identified with it. Now I knew firsthand what it was like for Robert, Edward, and the other men in the field, not to mention the rest of the planet's population. It was chilling to see how susceptible I had been. I wondered how often this might have happened to me in the past without my knowing it.

"There now!" my companion consoled as the convulsions stilled. "Is it better, child?" he asked, gently patting my back.

"Yes, much," I managed a wan smile.

"Well, you've got more color to you now than you've had since we took off ... and you've managed to utter a word. Two, in fact!"

“I’m sorry, it’s just that ...”

“No need for apologies, darling. You owe me no explanation. If it’s a little conversation you’d like, then I have it. Otherwise, I honor your privacy.”

Clean shaven, brawny, with a healthy ruddy complexion, he was dressed in a three piece tan and brown herringbone tweed suit with a wide brown silk tie and matching handkerchief neatly tucked into his breast pocket. He even had a pocket watch and chain. There was a strength and stability to him, a kind, soothing gentleness that salved my distress.

“Yes, a conversation. OK. What shall we talk about?”

“Dear God, woman! That’s no way to start. Entirely too self-conscious. Look ... um ... awright then ... First of all, my name is Alfred T. Roman.” He extended his hand.

“Aubrey Manning.” We shook.

“Pleased to be with you, Ms. Manning.

I nodded, “Mr. Roman.”

For the rest of the trip we engaged in small talk, nothing of great consequence: flowers, gardening, French impressionists. He regaled me with renditions of Monty Python sketches and seemed to know all the dialogue, word for word. It seemed even funnier than the original, a long time favorite of mine. Our conversation occupied me and calmness prevailed.

When the plane dropped altitude for the approach to LAX I felt a spasm of anxiety. Instantly Mr. Roman put his hand on my shoulder and said, “All is well and wonderful, dear Aubrey.”

With a start, I snapped my head around to face him as he continued, “I have thee as thou hast me. Now and always.”

I gasped to recognize what he had concealed from me.

“Though I am ever with thee in Spirit, I could not leave thee alone without my comfort in the physical, knowing the great pain thou wouldst endure. Yet it was also imperative for thee to work out this challenge on thine own. With this masquerade I was able to be right at thy side and at the same time afford thee a sovereign solution.

“I hope thou wilt agree in retrospect, once thou cast out the Sesavah ‘twas best for thee to remain aloof from this onerous trial for a time. Had I revealed myself to thee then, we would have spent the rest of the flight immersed in a discussion of the very situation from which distance and recovery was needed. What’s more, I do so love and enjoy Monty Python.”

I was overcome by his tenderness and care. He was with me the whole time, even as I doubted him. He held me close and my tears rolled onto his jacket.

“My child, this was a great test for me, too, and I succumbed to the temptation of my caring several times in trying to speak with thee before thou wert ready.”

“Master Armaton, what am I going to do? It’s not just that I’ve lost my job, but I needed those resources for *our* work. And they’ve destroyed my reputation so I have no way to influence anyone to believe the *Book of Symbols* ... or *any* of this.”

“Don’t be so sure thy resources are lost. There is a friend, trusted and dear, through whom thou may have access.”

“You mean Harold? But he turned on me. He went to ...”

“Do not jump to conclusions, as obvious as they might seem. Listen to him. Let him reveal his experience.

“Furthermore, thy reputation is not necessary to this mission, only thy devotion and intrepidity. Truth needs no credentials to convince.”

“But what am I going to do? Nothing is the same. Before I had some sense of where I was going. Now there’s ... nothing.”



“This nothingness is naught but a blank canvas on which there is now the opportunity to create an entirely new image, free of all past influence and associations. The changes wrought in thy life were on their way to thee regardless of thine involvement with this mission. The emptiness thou art feeling was inevitable. As events unfold, this will be made clear to thee. The gift in this situation is thy capacity to fill the void with a task far more worthy and important than that which hath been lost.”

The difference in how I felt since ridding myself of the Sesavah was immense. Although an air of unreality accompanied the drastic changes and problems I had to face, I was no longer incapacitated by its dominance. I had unintentionally provided an opening for it by immersing myself so deeply into emotions the shocking news had stirred. Now, thinking about what Armaton had just said, the lingering sensation of tragedy was accompanied by an unmistakable twinge of excitement over the opportunities of a blank canvas and the *Book of Symbols*.

He continued, “The beast cannot breach calmness, but thou hast seen how it can be invited by a turbulent mind. It cannot cause disruptions but magnifies them, often to the extent they appear beyond tolerance. If not dispelled, the Sesavah rules according to the degree by which will and awareness are withdrawn. Vigilance is essential. The best defense is prophylactic: practicing the presence of Love at all times the mind is not occupied by worthy matters.

“The devastating effect the news of thy firing would have on thee was anticipated, hence the availability of my immediate physical presence and assistance. Although other calamities of similar proportion likely shall occur, this one was considered the most formidable, requiring the greatest level of adjustment.”

“So there’s more.”

“I’m afraid so, dear Aubrey. This is just the beginning. But thou hast proven thy resilience and strength. Thy faith and trust is well developed and strong. Remain in Love. A way shall always be shown. Remember Churchill’s words, ‘Never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.’

“These words were spoken in 1941, as he, of necessity, was living them. Their power has been proven repeatedly, prior and hence, by acts of tremendous courage in the conduct of war. Great honor has been rightfully bestowed upon those who fought with valor.

“A regrettable irony is the belief that peace can be established by warfare, a belief disproved by history. *We* must live up to Churchill’s admonition and also a new standard of battle. To defeat *our* enemy, we must deploy only Love. We shall defend when necessary, but not attack. No violent tactic can achieve the victory we pursue. The peace we seek is not the absence of fighting, but the establishment of a consciousness of Love.”

“I understand and I agree, but right now, as far as tactics go, I’m stumped on how to deal with George and whoever else is involved.”

“Right *now* we are on an aeroplane and the only thing that needs dealing with is the seat belt sign. I remind thee, a way shall be shown when it is needed. In the interim, proceed with confidence, one step at a time, with attention fully in the present moment.”

The plane landed and, accompanied by Armaton, I headed for the exit, holding on tightly to my carry-on with its precious contents.

“Dear Aubrey, it is time for us to part. It would not serve our cause for me to be photographed with thee, even in this deceptive guise.”

“So there’s going to be media here, too? What am I going to do? What do I say? How do I handle them?”

“One moment, one step at a time, my dear. Do not get ahead of thyself.” With that, he tipped his tweed Sherlock Holmes hat to the flight attendant at the exit and sprinted out the door and down the ramp.

“OK,” I thought, “one thing at a time. The next thing is retrieving my luggage and going through customs.”

Just beyond the ramp I noticed a maintenance worker leaning against the wall of the passageway with his eyes locked on me. As I passed him, he peeled himself off the wall and followed. After ten paces or so, he caught up and spoke from behind me to my right.

“Aubrey, listen—don’t turn around—just keep walking and listen. There’s a boatload of reporters here waiting to ambush you. A friend sent me to help you get past them, but you’ve got to do what I say. No—don’t stop! Don’t turn around! Just keep going. I swear, I’m here to help.”

“Who are you? What do you want me to do?”

“I’m a friend. Call me Fred. Who I am isn’t important. Up ahead there’s going to be a door on the right. You stop when I tell you and rummage through your purse. I’ll go ahead and unlock it. When I nod you walk to me real fast and duck through. We’ll bypass customs and I’ll get you to a vehicle on the field side of the terminal.”

“Bypass customs? Look, ‘friend,’ I’m in enough trouble. I don’t need more.”

“Aubrey, compared to the kind of trouble you’re in, what I’m asking you to do is nothing. I know it seems screwy, but it took a lot to set this up. Look, what I’ve already done can lose me my job. Let’s make it worth it, OK?”

He certainly seemed sincere. I weighed what he was suggesting.

“There’s no more time. You’ve got to stop *here ... now!*” I stopped. As he brushed past, he said, “Watch for my nod and come quick ... *please!*”

As I fumbled through my purse I got a sense of just how different the life I was returning to was going to be from what I had anticipated in the taxi on the way to Heathrow.

Fred, just a few feet in front of me, unlocked the door and bobbed his head up and down with his eyes closed tightly like he was wishing me to him. “Well,” I thought, “I wanted to know how to deal with the media. ‘A way’ has been shown.” I darted forward and through the door with my new friend right behind.

A service van was parked right outside the door.

“Jump in!” Fred shouted above the din of a plane taking off and others idling at nearby gates.

He peeled out, hollering, “Scrunch down so nobody can see you.”

I did as he asked. We drove for about ten minutes to a quieter place.

“You can sit up now. We’re in the cargo area. The security isn’t as tight and there aren’t as many eyes around.”

“What about my luggage?”

“We’ll get it to you. Another friend is taking care of that. Can you get by without it for a day or so?”

“I guess ... Who *are* you?”

“Look, you really don’t need to know. As soon as that aircraft takes off I’m going to take you behind the blast fence and get you out of here. We’ve temporarily cracked open the perimeter. When I stop, you jump out and, quick like a bunny, run over and squeeze through. Someone will be right outside with a car waiting for you.”

The way was continuing to be shown. Fred stopped; I jumped, ran, squeezed, and, sure enough, a car was there. I got in.

“Aubrey, I swear to God, I never thought *this* would happen. I tried to tell you when you left, but you wouldn’t let me finish. I didn’t know what to do; I didn’t know what was happening. I just told him I was worried about you. I thought he would help.” Harold was on the verge of tears.

## *Chapter 23*

### *Setup*

There was a sweetness in his sadness that touched me deeply.

“I don’t care how pissed you are at me. You’ve got a right to that. I just ...” He started to cry. “I’m just so sorry. I’m so, so sorry.”

What made this all the more poignant was that I had never seen Harold express this kind of emotion the whole time I had known him. I started to cry, too. We held each other tightly and just let it all out. Unlike something the Sesavah could take advantage of, we were not overcome by our emotions, but releasing them. After a few minutes I felt a tremendous sense of relief and lightness.

When we let go of each other, Harold said, “Man, I feel a lot better, but what about you, Aubrey?”

“Yeah, me, too. Better than I have since I found out.”

“How did you find out? How much do you know?”

“There were all these reporters at the airport in London and they came at me, but I didn’t find out anything until I got away from them and picked up a copy of the newspaper. There weren’t any details, just that I’ve been fired and—how can this be, Harold?—I’m being investigated ...”

“The fire. They’re trying to pin the fire on you.”

“Who? The police? Do you know what’s going on?”

“Oh, you *bet* I do, Aubrey. I’m all over them like flies on ... um ... I know who it is and so far just a little bit of why. We have to talk.”

“OK, let’s talk.”

As Harold pulled out and wended his way towards the 405 South to San Diego, he explained what he had found out.

“It looks like a complicated mess, but when you see how all the pieces fit together, it’s pretty simple. And you’re in the middle of it. Partly because people are jealous and majorly pissed off at you, partly because you were in the wrong place at the wrong time and mostly because there’s some very heavy stuff going on that some very heavy duty people need to keep protected and hidden.”

“Besides George, who’s pissed at me?”

“His venerable holiness Dr. Gerzson Benedek von Hass.”

“Breck? He’s not pissed, he just doesn’t like me ... it’s ancient history ... not enough to make him ...”

“Just listen, OK?”

“OK.”

“Breck has somewhat ... um ... ‘expanded’ the parameters of the Directorate for the Administration of Geophysical Research, mostly the parts about administration and research.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, Breck’s doing a lot more than administrating and DAGR is doing a lot more than research. Aubrey, they’re not just into looking at stuff, they want to mess with it. Weather, oceanic flow, global heat transfer ... you name it, they think they can ...”

“Control it?”

“Uh huh.”

“That’s nuts. That’s what his father was trying to do in the ‘50’s: cause droughts in Russia

so the wheat crops would fail. He thought he had a handle on it, but he was wrong. He got so carried away with his objective, he couldn't see the science any more. If they hadn't stopped him he would have caused a catastrophe."

"Breck sees it a different way. If they hadn't stopped it, his father would have been able to prove he was a giant of science and not the failed genius he turned out to be."

"But that could never have happened. His assumptions were incomplete. He couldn't have *controlled* weather only *affected* it ... and created potentially irreversible disasters. That's why I *wrote* about it, because he wasn't about science, he was about power ... and politics."

"And because you wrote about it is partly why Breck needs to destroy you."

"No he doesn't. That was *years* ago. He's over it by now. He may still hate me, but ..."

"It's not just about feelings, Aubrey. It's about power ... and politics ... and him wanting to succeed where his father failed. As long as you're credible, his father isn't ... which impacts *his* project and *his* power. You're in the way. Plus, there's more."

"What?"

"AWARE is tied to DAGR. For all practical purposes, AWARE *is* DAGR. They forced their way into the TeraGrid because Breck needs the computing power."

"How do you know all this?"

"I have friends and I started asking."

"You have friends at the airport, too, I noticed." That made him smile. "What made you start asking?"

"When I told George I was worried about you, back when you first told me about Armaton and the Sesavah and it freaked me out—I swear, Aubrey, I honestly thought he would help, I thought he needed you too much not to want to take care of you—anyway, he got very weird ..."

"Weird how?"

"Like he had something up his sleeve. He was listening to me but at the same time he was thinking a mile a minute. He told me to keep quiet about it—I said I would—and that he would keep an eye on you and step in if anything got out of hand. Shoot, Aubrey, I knew then and there I had made a big mistake, that he was going to pull something, but I had no idea what it was.

"Since then he's been treating me like I'm on his side, like I think you're wacko and I'd help him because then he'd help me and screw yours and my friendship because my career was more important.

"I've been playing along, letting him think that, so *I* can keep an eye on *him*. Nothing else really happened until the day you left and I delivered your note. I had a couple of students with me for witnesses—I wanted to keep it low key. We went up to the sixth floor around lunchtime and, sure enough, we caught him in the front office with Tina just as he was leaving.

"I told him I had something for him from you and—oh, these are my students and they just happen to be with me. As I was introducing them, he's looking at me like they weren't even there and says, 'Skirtlandt. Come with me.'

"There wasn't anything else I could do but go. He takes me into his office, closes the door, and says, really gruff, 'Let's have it.'

"So I gave it to him, both copies, and I told him, 'One of these is for you and Aubrey wants you to sign the other and give it back to me for her records.'

After he finished reading it, he looks at me ... and I'm talking an icy cold stare ... and says, 'That won't be necessary ...' and he pauses and steps right up into my face and finishes with, '... because this never happened.' Then he says, 'That's all,' like, 'Kiss my ring and hit the road,' and turns his back on me to go and open a file drawer. So I left. I had to. I didn't know what else

to do. That's when I knew for absolutely sure he was up to no good and I started checking around."

"So George and Breck are ..."

"... in cahoots. Birds of a feather."

"This is almost too much to take in."

"I know. It's freaky ... super freaky ... but it's happening."

"So what exactly are they up to? What have they done? What are they planning to do? It sounds like somebody has to do something to stop them."

"I agree. Definitely. That's the part I'm still working on. So far, what I've been able to do is figure out some of the pieces of the puzzle, some of the players and the relationships. Don't worry, though. I have friends. Lots of 'em. But in the meantime, I think you need to lay low."

"I don't know about that, Harold. If they're investigating me about the fire I think I need to go to the police and clear things up."

Harold hesitated, looking straight ahead at the road, with a pretty somber expression.

"Aubrey ... that's not ... Nothing you can say to the police is going to do any good. It's a setup."

"Why would the police be ...?"

"This is way beyond police. They're not in on it; they're just working the case, doing what looks right. I'm telling you, Aubrey, this is heavy duty stuff being done by very heavy duty people."

"So the rumors about DAGR were ..."

"Understatements. They are hooked into the highest of the high. We're talking very serious, no fooling around power and control."

"Then that's why ..."

"What?"

"A couple of days after I rented a car in England, two British Intelligence agents showed up at the rental agency asking questions about me. They told the guy not to say anything, but ..." I smiled, "it turns out I have friends, too."

"More than thou knowest," chimed in Armaton from the back seat, looking like his old self again. Apparently Harold was becoming as accustomed as I to Armaton's sudden appearances because neither of us flinched, just greeted him as he continued.

"There are vast multitudes, kindred souls yet unknown to thee or, for that matter, each other, who share a vision, purpose, and mission. They live their lives quietly and privately in the pursuit and expression of Love. Unlike our dear, less fortunate brethren in DAGR, AWARE, and other such affiliations preoccupied with power, dominance, and competition, our friends are chiefly dedicated to service, equity, and synergy. It is to them we must appeal. In awakening and uniting them lies salvation.

"The opposition must be joined in battle. Yet, our objective is not to defeat it with force. Stable change cannot be so wrought. The enemy we face, the Sesavan hordes and those they influence and control, can only be vanquished by resistance, fearlessness, and the immutable primacy of Love.

"Ye will face remarkably fearsome circumstances; loathsome, cunning, seemingly invulnerable forces and insurmountable odds. Always remember there shall always be friends nearby.

"There shall be tremendous temptation to strike blows. It may seem nothing else makes sense. Refrain. To so proceed would, by definition, concede defeat, would constitute alignment with the Sesavah. This shall not be the first battle to be conducted thusly.

“Find solace, guidance, and inspiration in Mahatma Gandhi’s example and these words, ‘When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible but in the end, they always fall—think of it, *always*.’”

Harold and I were struck silent by the ponderous weight of all this.

I turned around toward Armaton just in time to see the twinkle develop in his eyes as he quoted a line from Monty Python, “Well, that cast rather a pall over the evening!”

Harold muttered, “He always does that. He brings you to the edge, shoves you off, then cracks a joke to reel you back in.”

“Wouldst thou prefer unadulterated, uninterrupted heaviness, my boy? There is great power in levity. To laugh in the face of fear defeats it.”

“So, do you think Harold’s right? Should I go into hiding?”

“I think that as time and events pass, the preferred path shall be eminently clear. If one thing is not yet clear, I am encouraging ye to remain ever in the present. Consider the future with detachment. Plan for it, but do not commit to action until the moment it is necessary. Prior perceptions are not always correct or complete. What’s more, circumstances often have a way of resolving without intervention.

“I am also encouraging ye to understand that all answers lie within. A delusory human frailty is the perception someone else knows better or more than ye do. If ye wouldst tarry for a moment longer in thy pondering, ye wilt find ye have the delightful gift of knowledge within ... and far fewer questions.”

Harold objected, “What about ‘There are no stupid questions?’ I’d rather ask and find out than keep quiet.”

“I am suggesting nothing otherwise. I am not intimating thy questions are ‘stupid,’ only a tad premature.”

I turned back to the issue, “So how low are you suggesting I lay, Harold?”

“Until we get a better handle on what’s going on, I think you should stay completely out of sight. I mean completely. No going out in public,” he glanced at me with concern, “and no going home.”

I let out a soft whistle that expressed my own concern, “Wow! That’s heavy.”

Armaton punctuated, “It is what it is.”

“Where would I stay?”

“Actually,” Harold answered, “I went ahead and made some arrangements. If it’s OK, I’ll take you there and you can check it out.”

“OK, but I don’t have clothing or *anything*, not even my luggage.”

“I know. Like I said, I made arrangements.” Harold had a thin smile that seemed to say, “It’s handled.” Then he turned to me and pleaded, “So, Aubrey, for criminy sakes, I’m *dying* to know.”

“What?”

“The *Book of Symbols*! You *have* it?”

“Oh! Yeah, *yeah*! I have it!” I patted the carry-on bag on the seat in between us.”

“Whoa!”

“It’s incredible, Harold. Wait ‘til you see it.”

“There’s nothing I want to do more ... except maybe eat.”

“Me, too. I’m starving. I guess I’ve recovered my appetite. Where are we? I haven’t been paying attention to the road.”

Harold pinpointed it, “We’re on the 5 South coming out of Mission Viejo.”

“Get off at Ortega Highway going west in San Juan Capistrano. It’s the second or third exit coming up. There’s a great diner—the Walnut Grove Restaurant—just a couple of blocks off the freeway right near the mission. It’s an old favorite of mine.”

During our meal and for the rest of the drive I told Harold the story of my time in England. Armaton added highlights and underscored points and principles along the way.

About twenty minutes after pulling off the freeway we headed up a steep road, thick with trees to either side, in a very remote, sparsely populated area. Harold pulled into a private drive, opened the gate with a remote, and drove up to a house that in the moonlight I could see was a Southwest adobe style. As he parked, motion lights turned on and gave me a better picture. We got out and walked to the entrance.

“Where are we?”

“Home, Aubrey ... for a while at least ... if you’re OK with it. Let me show you around.”

The oversized double front doors radiated character. Arched at the top, they were made of heavy, naturally textured timber stained a rich burnt sienna. The entryway was separated from the living room behind it by a half wall and a step down through a six foot wide opening. Interior walls were a smooth stucco texture in mauve, green, ochre, and creamy white tones and teemed with an eclectic and wonderful assortment of paintings, prints, sculpture and other wall hangings.

“This place is outstanding, Harold. Who does it belong to?”

“For now, it’s yours. Long term, it belongs to some friends, but they only come a portion of the year and they just left.”

“Your friends have exquisite taste in art and design.”

“Actually, a lot of this is their work. Here’s the office, Aubrey. I ... um ... it’s set up so you can work in here ... if you like it ... I mean you can change it or ...”

“Harold, it’s incredible ... but where did you ...? Harold that’s *my* computer ... and these are my books. How did you ...?”

“At work I told them all along I was taking care of your place, watering your plants and whatnot, and just because you were in trouble, I wasn’t going to stop. In fact George encouraged me to go and snoop around. They didn’t have it under surveillance because you were still gone, so I didn’t have to worry about being seen. Each time I went I took some of your stuff with me and stockpiled it at my place. I found out about this house a week ago and took the next three days getting it ready for you.”

He had done quite a job. My clothing, personal things, pretty much everything I would have gotten myself was there.

“Just so you know, Aubrey, there’s no land line phone and no cable. I’ve got you two new cell phones and there’s a satellite for TV and access to the web. They’re all totally secure. I beefed up your net connection so your speed and capacity should be as good as anything anywhere else.

“Also this place is rigged so it can go completely on its own. There are two wells—that’s where all the water comes from—a 30,000 gallon water storage tank, and a very impressive array of electric generation and storage equipment. The setup at People’s doesn’t even come close to this place. We’re talking net zero energy consumption. There’s also a few other doodads here and there. You’ll see.”

“What you’ve done, Harold, thank you! I can hardly believe it, and in so little time, I mean just *days*.”

“Well, I had a lot of help, actually.”



“With a great deal more to come,” Armaton added.

Feeling the exertion of the day I suggested, “There’s one more important thing, but I’m feeling like I need to crash. Harold, you still look pretty wide awake and Master Armaton, I don’t get that you ever even bother to sleep, so why don’t I take out the *Book of Symbols* and leave it with you two gentlemen?”

Harold’s eyes got as big as saucers as Armaton answered, “Excellent idea. Harold is most primed and ready to continue to the next level of his studies.”

I retrieved my brief case from the carry-on and joined them in the living room. As I opened it and removed the Book, ambrosial music softly wafted through the room and multicolored lights began to dance a few inches above the cover.

## *Chapter 24*

### *Discovery*

The next morning a bracing shower prepared me for the day. Harold had commandeered one of the dressers and half the closet in the master bedroom where I slept and dedicated them to my things. Testimony to his meticulous (and considerate) nature, my clothing was arranged in much the same way as I had it at my place.

There was a door in the bedroom that opened onto the back patio. I stepped outside, breathed deeply the brisk, sweet, country morning air, and was greeted by Armaton.

“Good morrow, Aubrey.”

“Good morning, sir.”

We walked together into the pristine woods behind the house.

After a few minutes he spoke, “Things remaining as they are, they appear a bit more manageable this morning than yesterday, yes?”

“Yes, they do. Every once in awhile, though, I get a twinge of shock at how much my life has changed. It’s like a reverse *deja vu*: the real and the surreal parts are switched. I get a brief snapshot of my life as it was—normal—before I left. Then I return to the present totally bizarre reality.”

“What thou art experiencing seems quite apropos. The degree of change and the extraordinary nature of the events thou art witnessing and experiencing require great adjustment and vast reserves of composure.”

“Tell me about it. Where’s Harold?”

“He is in one of the bed chambers absorbed in the *Book of Symbols*.”

“He didn’t sleep at all?”

“His meditations shall prove as restful as they are enlightening.”

“That’s what happened when I was with the Gandhi’s. We were up the better part of three days and we felt fine the whole time.”

“When one works in dimensions beyond the accustomed three, there is much happening and much awareness on many different levels.”

On cue to prove these points, Harold appeared, looking wide-awake and full of energy. “There’s some very cool stuff going on. I was in there behind closed doors and I *knew* you were up, Aubrey. And I knew where to go to find both of you.”

We walked together among the trees for twenty minutes, then returned to the house for breakfast.

In between bites Harold suggested, “I should contact the Gandhi’s and set up a protocol for secure communication ... and arrange to meet Ashvin and Kamala when they get back in town.”

“Of course. I’ll give you all their phone numbers and email addresses.”

We turned on the TV to check the news and saw a report of my “disappearance.” An FBI spokesperson said, “Although records indicate Dr. Manning boarded a flight from London Heathrow to LAX, there is no documentation of her arrival in Los Angeles or processing through customs. In the event Dr. Manning was, in fact, on that flight we are investigating a possible breach of security.”

The news anchor said although no charges had yet been filed regarding the fire, I was wanted by the police for questioning. She concluded with, “If Dr. Manning doesn’t come forward voluntarily, the San Diego prosecutor threatened to issue a warrant for her arrest and hold her as a material witness.”

“This is really getting out of control.” I was having a hard time dealing with being branded a fugitive. “We’d better get ahold of a good attorney *fast*.”

“I don’t know about that,” Harold disagreed, “You shouldn’t be going up against them playing their game on their turf, I don’t care who your lawyer is. Once you get into the legal system, all you’re going to be doing is defending yourself with all the cards stacked against you. You’re not going to have any time or brain cells left for anything else. If you ask me, the best thing you can do is stay out of sight, don’t get distracted, and dive into the *Book of Symbols* so you can sort out the big picture. I get the feeling if you do that first you’ll know how to deal with this other stuff.”

I looked to Armaton for confirmation. He offered only questions. “What is thy primary focus, Aubrey? What issue is of paramount importance, thy highest priority?”

Harold continued, “Think about this: if they really had something on you, do you think they’d hesitate for a second to file charges? They don’t even have enough grounds to pick you up as a material witness. It’s a bluff, just a trick to scare you into coming forward on your own. You don’t want to do that now. You don’t have anything tangible to fight them with, just your word against George ... and the other people, the puppets he’s got that are too scared not to back him up ... against you.”

“Even if you win, you lose ‘cause they’ve *already* destroyed you in the media. You can’t win this in a courtroom in a case about a machine room fire. Because that’s not what it’s about ... not for them and not for you. It’s way, way bigger than that. The only way out of this is to keep our eyes on the prize and not let the scare tactics and anything else the Sesavah throws at us divert us from what we know we’re supposed to do. I think if we just stay focused on that, everything else is going to work out, too.”

“You’re right, Harold, you’re absolutely right. And my main thing right now is the *Book of Symbols*.”

“Good. You stay focused on that. *My* main thing is figuring out what’s going on and maybe how to deal with it. Like I said, I have friends ... and they’re into all kinds of things ... all over the place.”

As soon as we finished breakfast, Harold jumped up from the table. “I’m out of here. I can get a lot done over the rest of this weekend and I want to get started now.”

“Just so you know, there’s a couple of vehicles in the garage. It’s perfectly cool to use them, but I would highly recommend you stick close to home. I’ll bring food and any supplies you need, just tell me what it is. When you call me, use only the cell number I left on the desk. It’s a new number, totally secure, and untraceable to me. I’ll keep going to your house every once in awhile ‘cause I’ve already established that pattern. So if there’s anything you need me to do there or anything you want me to sneak out, let me know.”

Harold hugged me goodbye, then Armaton, and scooted out the door.

I decided, “First I’ll do the dishes and then settle in with the *Book of Symbols*.”

“Prithee, Aubrey, allow me to perform that task. Keep thy focus sharp, thy mind clear, and thy time free. I shall remain here to stand by thy side in friendship and service. Please consider all household tasks my responsibility, unless, on occasion, it would serve thee to perform a chore as a wanted and healthy diversion.”

“Really? You mean like laundry and vacuuming and ...”

He smiled, “Thou hast already seen the quality and efficiency of my housekeeping efforts. Didst thou find my work satisfactory?”

“Ha! Absolutely. Thank you, sir.” As happy as I was to have his help, I was much happier

just knowing he would be staying here with me.

“It is my pleasure and privilege, my dear.”

I took the *Book of Symbols* to the office and, with it and a pencil and notepad, settled into a plush, very comfortable easy chair. I took a moment to focus and, when I felt the impulse, opened the Book to a place that felt “right” and concentrated on that Symbol. Similar to my experience in England, words soon formed in my mind, which I wrote as long as they continued to flow into my awareness. When they stopped, I stopped, took a break, and then resumed again, either with the same or a different symbol, chosen in a similar manner.

With this procedure, which continues to the present day, I began to compile stories and essays on many different topics: about nature, the state of the environment, human behavior, scientific principles, and Folk prophecy and history. Nothing was off limits.

The more I wrote, the easier it was to receive the Symbols’ inspiration. The key was being relaxed and calm and getting beyond the conscious, analytical mind that wanted to think about what to write and craft it. Instead, with practice, I developed the ability to let go of the accustomed need to control the process and just focus on each word as it came and keep going with the trust that one word would keep leading to another. This experience notably honed my intuition.

Compared to the way we’re all accustomed to writing, this method was utterly fantastic, yet it worked time and again as long as I got out of the way and allowed it to happen. When doubt intervened, invariably I would tense up and the flow of information stopped or went unmistakably astray. If I persevered at these times and made an effort to relax, the words would flow again, often beginning with encouragement and guidance back to the topic at hand. It was not lost on me that how this worked applied to how life can be lived, and my capacity for trust in all circumstances was considerably enhanced.

Each writing felt like another piece of the puzzle I had been putting together my whole life. I felt I was getting closer and closer to finding what I had sought for years in my work developing the CUE theory: that one primal element, the fundamental cause of ecological disruption. My hope was that once this factor was identified it would bring more reason and understanding to the bitter debates about the ecological challenges we’re facing and help temper the wild speculation of radical environmentalists and the unyielding denial of shortsighted industrialists.

The payoff for the thousands of hours I’d spent in relentless study and research was near. I could feel it coming, but not in the way I had anticipated: from utilizing the world’s most sophisticated and powerful computers and applying mathematics, statistical analysis, chemistry, biology: all the sciences I had devotedly studied.

The answer was coming from within me, the expression of an inherent knowingness available through utilizing my intuition and applying my concentration to the sublime *Book of Symbols*.

Early on Sunday morning, a week after my arrival back in the States, I received this in one of my writings:

That knowingness, dear Aubrey, is part of thine essence, indeed the essence of all thy human brothers and sisters. It is a manifestation of the omniscience inherent to each Soul and is accessed as the link between creativity and Creator is realized.

There is no barrier between man and Truth other than what *he* erects out of fear, force of habit, attachment to the past, selfishness,

and the myriad other impediments *he* creates. Quite simply, Truth *is* and is ever available to him who would turn to it.

What thou art experiencing with the *Book of Symbols* is available to all. Thou hast no unique magic. The Book is an instrument, a portal to the Infinite realm of knowledge whose passageway is to be found within each and all.

The answers ye seek are within, where they resided even before being consciously sought. When one becomes fully devoted to Truth, Truth reveals Itself.

As I wrote the last word I felt a shift in the flow and a surge of energy that stiffened my spine causing me to sit bolt upright. What followed was no longer a stream of words, but images and concepts too huge and complicated to write. I simply absorbed and processed them along with memory flashes of research and analysis I had done, discussions with colleagues, material I had studied, experiences I had had going as far back as when I was a young child. All this swirled through my mind and snapped into sharp focus in a glorious climax of inspired resolve.

The CUE factor, my alluring and elusive goal had finally been achieved. The agent common to all facets of the extensive ecological imbalance that has extinguished untold species and threatens all life is the ultimate form of pollution: toxic thought. It is the byproduct of lower consciousness that takes the form of fear, greed, hate, judgment, selfishness, doubt, worry, control, and so on and allows man to act without sense of responsibility, respect, or regard for life, out of attunement with Nature.

As the root problem was identified, the solution unfolded and I saw it to be equivalently simple, albeit formidable. Mass human consciousness must be raised—quickly—before the consequences of lower consciousness thinking and behavior overwhelm the planet. The way consciousness changes is one person at a time, one thought at a time: the ultimate cleanup.

The moment after the concept coalesced, my body relaxed and fell back into the chair and my mind raced to analyze it. I saw how this notion had been right in front of me at least since Armaton had materialized out of the dream into my room. We had been talking about it the whole time; I just never saw the connection to CUE theory. It is the influence of the Sesavah which must be overcome: that force which would divide us, have us live our lives in ignorance of our connection to each other, all life, and all things; that force which would have us focus only on immediate benefits without regard to consequences and the effect on anything but our own gain or pleasure.

As the understanding settled, however, doubt invaded: this was an absurd notion, overly simplistic. It had no practical ramifications and the solution was impossible to quantifiably validate or, for that matter, implement. As I continued in this direction of thought, my frame of mind shifted from elated anticipation to a dull lethargy. Observing this, I realized I had entered the dysfunctional domain of the Sesavah. I laughed at the irony, shook off the doubt.

For a moment I had gotten caught up in a remnant of the fervent expectation I had carried for years that the CUE factor would be isolated by computer modeling and substantiated by rigorous mathematical analysis. Instead, it was revealed by my meditations on the *Book of Symbols*. Although there was no scientific proof, once identified, the factor was obvious.

My mind was swimming in thoughts: sorting out the implications, conjuring ways to utilize this knowledge. It got to be too much. I needed to clear my head with fresh air and a walk through the woods. On the way to the patio door I passed Armaton in the kitchen cooking the

midday meal. He smiled warmly and we nodded to each other in understated acknowledgment and appreciation of my discovery.

Clad in rain gear and rubber boots, I took a long walk through a rain that modulated between light and moderate, enjoying the patter it made striking the leaves, ground, and my parka. I followed a churning creek bed underneath an unbroken canopy of oaks and sycamores, stopping occasionally to admire wild ferns, huge ochre mushrooms sprouting from felled trees, a grizzled oak impossibly growing out of a small fissure in the granite outcrop.

Such beauty, so invigorating! I got caught up in it and left all else behind. I was captivated, as always, by how much sense the forest and all the things in it made, how they all fit together and worked together so smoothly. Left to its own, each component knew how to take care of itself and each other. Each member preyed upon others, but for good reason, not in excess, or to the detriment of the whole. As life was taken, sustenance was given and returned as fertile waste, which contributed to vitalizing the soil and generating new life.

Then I stumbled upon the unique waste of a peerless creature, who, though uniquely possessed of the ability to think, was more thoughtless than the least sentient of the forest's inhabitants. This creature had neither taken nor given sustenance as evidenced by a whole rabbit carcass riddled with buckshot. This creature had preyed upon another, not for sustenance, most likely for pleasure, as perverse as that seemed to me. Its waste, several shotgun shells and an empty beer bottle twenty yards from the dead rabbit, would remain inert and lifeless, vitalize nothing, and contribute only desecration.

I wept. Not for the killing of a rabbit, but the waste of a life. There are many responsible hunters whose respect and understanding place them in balance with Nature. Not this creature. Conjecturing its opinion of my weeping made me weep the more. It would invariably wonder why I was making such a big deal over just a rabbit. And the beer bottle ... why would someone cry over a beer bottle? I was instantly transported back thirty years to the severed saplings and trash I found along the streambed near our family's cabin. The commitment and determination I felt back then to dispel the ignorance leading to such thoughtlessness was intensified by the intervening decades of my experience.

Scientific research had been the most effective way I felt I could contribute. Now, with my discovery of the CUE factor, I realized I had to go to the source of the trouble and help correct it there. I needed to reach as many people as possible, explain the problem, and encourage anyone ready to change. Delivering the message of the Folk would be the culmination of my scientific work.

With this resolve I rushed back to the house just in time to see Harold pull up. His car had barely stopped before he jumped out and raced to the front door. He seemed as eager to tell us something as I was to tell him and Armaton about *my* discovery. I rushed through the back door and we met in the kitchen. After a quick greeting, Armaton motioned for us all to sit at the table. Harold and I started and stopped talking, overlapping each other, several times.

Armaton intervened, "Perhaps it would be wise to take a moment and decide which of ye would speak first."

Again, Harold and I spoke and stopped simultaneously a few more times, now attempting to defer to each other.

Again, Armaton tried to help, "Ye might consider an alternate decision making methodology. Alphabetical order, by name?"

Harold responded, "First or last?"

"Actually it would not matter. In either case Aubrey's name comes first."

Though Armaton was only joking, Harold was serious ... and befuddled. He stammered, “OK, then, well, I guess Aubrey, you should go first.”

This had gotten too ridiculous to continue, so I took Harold up on his offer and spoke. As soon as he realized what I was telling him, his jaw dropped—this was the culmination of many years effort, for him as well as me. Every once in awhile he interrupted with shouts of “Aubrey, you’re blowing my mind” and the like.

When I finished, his excitement peaked, “Aubrey, if you’re going to do what you’re saying, you have to break through all this craziness that’s going on and get back out in public.”

“Yeah, but I don’t know how that’s going to happen, so in the meantime all I can ...”

“I do!”

“You do what?”

“Know how it’s going to happen.” Grinning from ear to ear, he pulled a zip lock bag from his brief case and slid it across the table. In it was the note I had signed notifying George I was leaving.

“What’s this going to do?”

“It’s a ‘get out of jail free’ card.”

“What do you mean?”

“Last Sunday night I went to bed thinking, ‘There’s a way out of this.’ Monday morning I woke up with the image of this note rolling around in my mind. I kept seeing myself hand it to George and him putting it in the file cabinet. Then I got the strongest urge, ‘Get it back!’ I’m thinking, ‘This is crazy!’ and all of a sudden the light bulb went on.’

“See, here’s the thing: part of the stuff they’ve got against you is that you left without notifying anybody. If I could get the note back, we would have proof you sent it and that they were lying when they said you never did. If we can prove they lied about one thing, then it’s like, ‘What else are they lying about?’ and ‘So why are they lying in the first place? What’s going on?’ It’s a house of cards. All we have to do is knock out the first one and they all fall down.”

“Aren’t you missing something?”

In a singsong voice Harold trilled back, “I don’t *think* so.”

“If all you’ve got is the note and he didn’t sign it, you can’t prove anything. All it will look like is I wrote the note after the fact.”

My words hit Harold like a lightning bolt. His body slumped and he moaned in anguish, “Geez! If only I had thought of that.” He hung his head dejectedly. Just as I was about to comfort him, he jumped up and shouted, “Except I *did*!”

He gushed on, “The thing is, we don’t *need* his signature. He *touched* it.” Armaton was beaming as Harold continued. “Once I got ahold of the note ...”

I interrupted, “How did you *get* it?” Harold dipped his head, turned it, and stared at me sideways and wide-eyed until I got it, “You have friends.”

He continued, “Once I got the note I had another ...” he paused for emphasis, “*friend* ... check it for fingerprints. Yours are on it, mine are on it, and—ta-da!—George’s are on it. That’s it! Slam dunk! George touched it! He saw it! George lied! Quod erat demonstrandum!”

“Harold! That’s incredible!”

“Ah! But that’s not *all*.”

“What do you mean?”

“We’re in a bonus situation. My friend made a very surprising—and compelling—discovery. There’s a fourth set of prints.”

## *Chapter 25*

### *Strategy*

“Alright, Harold, don’t keep us in suspense.”

He couldn’t resist playing it out, “Did they belong to Tina? ... Noooooo! George filed the note himself and he would never have wanted *her* to see it. Did they belong to my friends? Noooooo! They would never make a dumb mistake like that.

“Who could it be? Somebody George would let know about it, see it, and ... maybe ... um ... enter into a conspiracy to commit fraud over it? Who did the prints belong to? I’ll tell you who! Dr. Gerzson freakin’ Benedek von Hass, that’s who! ... Cha *Ching!*” He thrust his clenched fist up and down through the air.

Armaton declared, “What a remarkable development!”

“So what do we do now?” I wondered, “Go to the police, I suppose, and then we can ...”

Harold was shaking his head vehemently, “Wait, Aubrey. I think there’s a better strategy. I’ve been working the problem. The thing is this: say you go to the police with the note. First of all, what do you say when they ask how you got it? Even if we had a good answer, what’s that going to buy us? There’s still going to be a legal battle that’ll take most of your time and energy to fight. What we need to do is get you clear of the whole thing in one fell swoop.”

“How do we do that?”

Armaton continued to beam appreciatively as a wily smile creased Harold’s face, “We go directly to Ming and the Dark Lord Sauron ... well not *literally* directly.”

“You have a friend.”

“Actually, *you* do. A friend of a friend: one of Prabhas Gandhi’s attorneys.”

“You’ve been in touch with Prabhas? How is he? Is he OK with all this? He knows I didn’t ...”

“Prabhas and Nirmala send you their love. They know this was a setup and they’ve offered to do whatever it takes to help you—no holds barred. I don’t know if you get the whole impact of what that means. Prabhas and his family are very powerful, I mean like *world class* powerful.

“The thing of it is, with all the power this guy has, he’s still a real straight shooter. I checked him out. He seems to be a fine, fine man. Talk about friends, he’s got a gazillion ... and the ones I’ve talked to, they’d do *anything* for him.

“Also, just to let you know, I’ve been in touch with Ashvin and Kamala ... in fact I met with them a couple of times. Together we’ve been piecing out the strategy and then running it past Prabhas and the lawyer. Ashvin is very cool, by the way, and Kamala ... man, she can be *very* intense. Anyway, they say, ‘Hi.’”

“Tell them hello for me and that I want to see them soon.”

“I will. Here’s the thing: we go ahead with this and it works, you can go back to seeing *whoever* you want *whenever* and *wherever* you want.”

“You were saying something about Prabhas’s attorney.”

“Right. So here’s the way it works. The attorney calls Breck on one of his secure lines. Right away that’s going to freak him out because, well, it’s a secure line and nobody but the slugs that know him should have it ... except for the fact that ...”

“You have friends.”

“Right. The other thing is, Prabhas described this attorney as ‘compellingly efficacious,’ which is another way of saying he’s killer. I mean, like, I heard that when this guy shows up in a courtroom, you can hear the sound of the other side’s muscles tense up.



“Breck will know who he is and that something heavy is going on. The attorney will say he’s representing you in a wrongful termination suit with criminal repercussions and that physical evidence exists which implicates him.

“Then in a really nice friendly way, he’ll say how concerned he is for Breck and maybe there’s another way to settle the matter. They’ll meet, the lawyer will show him the letter and then we’ll see how it goes from there.”

“And you think Breck can ...”

“... make it all go away. He’s the one that made it happen; he can make it all go away.”

I paused for a moment to think. “Sounds like a plan, Harold. If you really think we can pull this off, then you should go ahead.”

“There’s no doubt we can pull it off. This note is a heavy-duty smoking gun. It’s a *bodacious* trump card. The thing is, do we play it now *behind* the scenes as the ‘get out of jail free’ card? That’s going to mean giving it up. Or do we save it for later and add it to whatever else we come up with, to expose them to the public?”

Without hesitation, I answered, “We use it now. I can’t do much as a fugitive. If we don’t get me out of this now, there won’t be a later to save it for.”

“Done. I’ll set it in motion tomorrow and let you know as soon as I have news.”

Armaton spoke, “The meal I have prepared is ready. Would you join us, Harold? It’s ratatouille with whole green beans and chunks of melted asiago cheese over polenta, sprinkled with a blend of grated parmesan and romano.”

“Oh, God, yes! You mean you cook?”

I answered for him, “Master Armaton is an exquisite chef and an exceptional housekeeper. He even does windows ... all of them ... at the same time.”

“What do you mean?”

“Never mind. Let’s eat. I’m starving.”

Armaton said, “The weather has cleared. I’ve dried off the patio table and chairs and recommend we dine al fresco. Prithee, light conversation only. Let us take a break from our duties and enjoy the meal, each other’s company, the caress of the breeze, and the patter of the birds.”

The meal was exceptional. We took the rest of the afternoon off and raided the household entertainment collection. We watched a DVD of *My Cousin Vinnie*, laughed our heads off, then popped the Beatles’ *Abbey Road* into the CD player, my dad’s all time favorite album. One of mine, too. This was the first time I’d heard it since I had become involved with Master Armaton and the Folk.

Growing up in the ’70’s and ’80’s lent me a somewhat caricatured image of the Sixties: flower power and all that. Listening now, again, to the seminal group of that era, I saw through the hyperbole with an intense appreciation of their and their generation’s signature message, “Love.” To my more cynical grammar and high school friends it seemed sappy: too simplistic, sentimental, and impractical to be of any use in the hard-edged, self-centered world they saw around them.

I never felt that way and now, more than ever, I saw the immense power of that message, the beauty and precision of its simple focus.

When *Abbey Road* was over, Armaton quoted the refrain from another song, “All you need is Love. Love is all you need.”

I replied, from *Abbey Road*, “And in the end, the Love you take is equal to the Love you make.”

Armaton spoke fondly, “The boys were authors to such splendid notions, attuned as they were to the inspiration of the Folk.”

Harold was incredulous, “You mean Lennon and McCartney got their stuff from the Folk?”

“And Harrison and Starr. Some of dear George’s work is especially loved by Queen Veridia. To be clear, they didn’t *get* it; it wasn’t *delivered* to them. It was *inspired* through the auspices of the Folk, those of us who act as muses.”

We talked about the Sixties for awhile longer, how that generation’s dedication to Love and penchant for rebelliousness, though at times ill-advised and misdirected, presaged the departure from the status quo and traditional thinking that would be necessary to understand and act on the message of the Folk.

Armaton noted, “Their inspiration and influence are surely with us.”

“And hopefully their involvement,” I ventured.

Harold brought our session to a close when he jumped up, raised his clenched fist as high as he could, and shouted, “Power to the people!” With a cunning grin, he ran to the front door, calling back over his shoulder, “I have places to go, people to see. I’ll call when I know something.”

The whole next week was quiet and I focused on my work with the *Book of Symbols*. On the following Wednesday morning Harold called. He was calm and pleasant, but abrupt, “Here’s the deal: we can completely clear you in the fire. They’ll suspend the proceedings to take away your tenure, so you can eventually go back to teaching, but they want you to take an extended leave of absence ... at least until the end of next term. And then ...” He stopped, reluctant to continue.

“What is it? What else?”

“I’m so sorry, Aubrey, they don’t want you back in the Computer Center. They’ll give you your life back, but not your research.”

Resigning myself to this outcome, I replied dejectedly, “It’s OK.” Pondering for a moment helped me realize and adjust to the full implications. My tone brightened. “Actually, it’s perfect. I’m so used to doing research that for a second I felt some loss. But I don’t *need* the research any more, I have the *answer*.” Laughing, “Now that I think about it, if I had to go back to the Center, I wouldn’t know what to *do* ... because it’s *done* ... *I’m* done. What I *really* need is time and that’s what they’ve given me. It’s a great solution, Harold. I can stay out of sight, right here, and keep working. Nobody’s going to be looking for me any more.”

“Not exactly nobody. You’re still a big story. There’s a paparazzi bounty on you, it’s up to five figures for photographs.”

“That won’t last. A couple of weeks, tops, and they’ll move on to something else. They’re not after news, just a spectacle. Once things quiet down, I’m not a story any more.”

“OK, then it’s settled.”

At four o’clock Harold called again, excited and out of breath, “Aubrey, turn on the TV.”

“What’s going on?”

“News conference ... Police ... George ... it’s over!”

I turned it on and heard a spokesperson for the San Diego Police Department say, “... pleased to announce that the investigation into the fire at the San Diego Supercomputer Center has been concluded and Professor Aubrey Manning has been cleared of suspicion.”

Harold shouted into the phone, “All *right*, then!”

The spokesman continued, “New evidence presented by Dr. George Scribner, director of the facility—I’m going to ask him to step up here in a minute—clearly indicates the cause was accidental and that this was not a case of arson. The evidence implicating Dr. Manning was

entirely circumstantial, so we don't have any problem with this new finding. We apologize to Dr. Manning for any inconvenience and wish her the best in the future."

Harold chimed in, "The apology, that was my idea. We just had to agree you wouldn't sue or anything."

"And now I'd like to bring up Dr. George Scribner, Director of the San Diego Supercomputer Center who will issue a brief statement."

George stepped up, smiling benignly. The camera pulled in for a tight shot of his face. Suddenly I jumped and yelled in a fit of shock at the sound of a sharp roar that blasted from the television. At the same time George's eyes grew large and turned blood-red around jet-black beady irises and his face transfigured into a Sesavan beast. It leapt out of the screen and hurtled straight at me with a deafening snarl. Just as I felt the assault of the fiend's hot, foul breath, it disintegrated with a mocking cackle.

"What happened?" cried Harold.

"Did you see that?"

"What?"

It appeared this experience was intended for me alone. "Nothing. It's OK. Let's listen."

George started his statement, "First of all, I want to thank the San Diego Police Department for their thorough investigation. I know we all sleep better at night knowing they're on the job." He turned to the spokesman and they smiled and nodded their mutual appreciation.

"I can't tell you how pleased and relieved we all are to know that Dr. Manning has been cleared and we welcome her back to our UCSD family. Her guilt was alleged in a deliberately misleading statement made by a receptionist at the Supercomputer Center who had conversed with Dr. Manning shortly before the fire started. This was simply the case of a disgruntled employee trying to make problems ... and to a great extent she succeeded!" George chortled lightly to punctuate his attempt at humor. Was everybody buying this? To me, his serene facade was as transparently insincere as a really bad salesman.

Harold yelled, "That was Belinda, the receptionist. She didn't want to do it. They *made* her."

George went on, "However, knowing Dr. Manning's character as I do, I knew she couldn't be capable of such an act so I personally conducted my own investigation and found data from our machine room monitoring and fire suppression systems which clearly indicated the source and accidental nature of the fire. The employee who made the false accusation has been dismissed. Thank you."

As George started to step away, the reporters shouted their questions at him. "Where *is* Dr. Manning? What's she going to do now?"

"We have reluctantly accepted Dr. Manning's resignation from her position as Director of Computational Sciences at the Supercomputer Center and she is taking a leave of absence from her teaching assignments for the near future. She has been understandably shaken by this terrible experience and needs some time to herself."

"Why did she leave without notice?"

"Actually, she did send a written notice indicating the need to leave immediately to pursue an essential and time critical opportunity for data acquisition. Unfortunately, it was delivered by a third party to my secretary who neglected to show it to me and then misfiled it. Fortunately it was just found and I reviewed it. Given the urgency of Dr. Manning's request, I would surely have authorized her absence had the notice come to my attention."

"What about customs? How did she sneak through?"

"Well, I don't ..."

The police spokesman stepped forward brushing George aside, “That’s a question for U.S. Customs or the F.B.I. I can tell you what I’ve been told, which is: there was a computer glitch ...” They all laughed at the mention of a computer being culpable, “... and her entry wasn’t registered but several customs agents have reported witnessing her arrival.”

One reporter didn’t seem to be buying it, “There were at least seventy-five members of the press at the airport when Dr. Manning’s flight arrived—I was one of them. First, can you tell me who leaked the details of her itinerary? Second, can you explain how none of *us* spotted her leaving?”

“The department had no advance warning of Dr. Manning’s arrival. As a matter of fact, I found out about it from you guys ... on the news after she had landed.” Turning to George, “Did your office know her flight schedule?”

George, looking very uncomfortable, shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, took a step back, and waved off the attention.

Harold piped in, “That’s the only time I’ve ever seen Ming step out of the spotlight. Whoa! Check it out! What’s that guy doing?”

A man in a dark suit with the stereotypical appearance of a secret service agent had come up and put his arm around the reporter’s shoulders, appeared to be talking genially to her, and, together, the two of them walked away, disappearing offscreen.

Alarmed, Harold said, “That’s heavy duty. The police don’t know what’s going on. They actually believe all this stuff. But it looks like Breck has people there to keep a lid on anybody asking tricky questions. Screwing with the press ... that’s very heavy. It means these guys are very serious ... and very ... I mean magnitudinously very well connected.”

The questions continued. “Can you tell us where Dr. Manning is now?”

The police spokesman answered, “She’s at an undisclosed location. Dr. Scribner?”

From the side, George leaned into the microphone, “Dr. Manning is resting comfortably ...”

“Sounds like you’re in a hospital,” Harold snorted.

“... and, after what she’s been through, she needs some ... er ... rest. All things considered, she’s doing very well. I’ve spoken with her several times and she asked me to thank all those who have been so concerned and had her in their thoughts and prayers ... and I am honored to number myself among them.”

“What a crock! I think I’m gonna hurl!” Harold yelled.

Another question, “Can you confirm reports that Dr. Manning has left the country with an unidentified companion, that she’s headed for an island getaway in the South Pacific?”

George leaned into the mic again, “No comment.”

Harold had had enough, “That’s it. It’s all downhill from here. The ministers of disinformation are in control.”

We shut our TV’s off, “So, it’s over, Harold?”

“This part is. But the enemies have declared themselves to each other. Now they know about you and you know about them. We’ve got an idea of what they’re up to and the extent of their resources ... which are, like—if you round off—unlimited. They can’t really figure out what you’re up to and that you’re resources are ...”

“Truly and literally unlimited,” Armaton joined us on the line.

“Is he there with you, Aubrey?”

“No. I think Master Armaton is in the garden.”

“That I am.”

Harold was mystified, “How can you be talking to us? There’s no *way* you can patch another phone into this line.”

“I am not using a telephonic device.”

“Oh.”

“Prithee, what are ye each considering next?”

My plans were clear, “I’m putting together papers from my *Book of Symbols* writings to send to my agent. As soon as they’re published in a few respectable magazines and journals, I’ll have a credible base to work from.”

Armaton was silent. Harold offered his plans. “I need to stay on Breck and DAGR and find out more about what they’re up to, which, I think it’s safe to say, is no good.”

I agreed, “Somebody *has* to, but I can’t get involved. I can’t get caught up in all the intrigue and the sinister plots, and the dirty dealing. I know it’s important and I want to know what happens, but I have to focus on what *I’m* doing, interpreting the Symbols, I can’t do that *and* concentrate on Breck and all the scheming and deceit. Ultimately I have to concentrate on writing and getting published.”

“I understand. It’s OK.”

Armaton broke his silence, “Do not become inextricably attached to any plan or mode of activity, lest thine attention be diverted from other opportunities which may arise. At present it appears ye are on separate paths. They may soon converge.”

## *Chapter 26*

### *Force and Manipulation*

My literary agent in New York was one of the best in the publishing industry. We had a long history together, going back to my grad school paper on Kalman von Hass. Shortly after it made such a splash he was on campus for a writers' conference and asked to see me.

When I arrived for our appointment, he stared at me intensely, long enough to make me uncomfortable and wonder about his motivation. Finally he introduced himself, "Ms. Manning, my name is Richard Conyers. As you may know, I've represented some very fine authors over the years to mainstream presses. I wanted to meet you because I'm rather impressed with the impact your paper has had on the academic community."

"Thank you."

"I've read it and, quite frankly, I think you have a lot to say, this being just the beginning. Do you think you can write for the general public? Your paper is fairly technical. Could you put it in a more accessible vocabulary?"

"Of course, but I'd rather not put any more effort into a critical piece—this one in particular for personal reasons—mostly because there are a lot more pressing things I'd like to call attention to."

He stared at me again. Just as I was ready to excuse myself in exasperation, he said, "If you're the writer I think you are, there's every chance you can be a star."

"Well, thank you again, Mr. Conyers, but I'm not really interested in being a star. I'm here to learn and do research and ask questions and get as many people as I can, to at least *think* about some of the things I care about and maybe some day somebody will come up with some answers."

"We're talking about the same objective, Ms. Manning, only from different perspectives."

Over the next few months I wrote some new pieces, which he had published in popular magazines and that's how we got started. After doing short pieces and media appearances for a few years, he encouraged me to write my first book and placed it with my publisher. It sold better than expected during the first couple of weeks after release so they ratcheted up their promotion and it did very well. As Richard Conyers predicted, I got the forum I wanted and became, as he liked to describe me, his star-scientist.

One of the privileges of success was bypassing the assessment and interminable waiting periods that most writers are subject to. In fact, with my second book, the publisher waited for me. They pressed my agent and cajoled me with periodic nudges from my editor. Most of the time, magazines approached *me* to do articles and the scientific journals were always eager to receive my papers.

In the past, this privilege never mattered that much to me, though I surely appreciated the acceptance and respect of my work it represented. Now I would *rely* on it to speed my urgent message to the public and my colleagues.

"How do you think this is going to be received?" I put out a concern to Master Armaton.

"I would propose a higher order question or two. Of what value is such conjecture? Running the gamut of possibilities, is there anything imaginable that would cause thee to consider altering thy work in any way or cause thee to question thine inspiration and experiences?"

"Of course not. It's just that ..."

"Thy present work is a departure from expectation, from the norm ..."

"From *reality* ... from the way things are and the way they've been *proven* to be. I'm

supposed to be a scientist and I'm getting into a whole 'nother realm here."

Armaton had a hearty laugh, "Dear Aubrey, thou *art* in a whole 'nother realm. Is that not what this is all about?"

His sense of the ridiculous in my concern made me laugh, in embarrassment more than amusement. "OK. I get it. I've just got a few last minute butterflies."

"Transformational butterflies. Thou art getting caught up in hoary images of the Inquisition. The truth thou bringest shalt surely be resisted ... with vehemence ... but it can no longer be so thoroughly suppressed. I remind thee again: beyond belief, *trust* in God."

That, of course, was the bottom line. The subtle, lingering tentativeness I had felt for months about publicly revealing my 'unorthodox' experiences lifted. "I'm sorry. I must have lost my mind there."

"Actually, thou wert fully in possession of it. Thinking a bit *too* much, as it were."

A few days after the press conference I had some articles ready to publish and called my agent's office. As usual, he took my call directly and greeted me exuberantly, "Aubrey, how delightful! What a relief it is to hear from you. Are you alright? I've been worried sick over you."

"Actually, I'm doing well, Richard. In the midst of all the hullabaloo, I've managed to make a lot of progress."

"You're still working, dear? I thought they ... I mean I thought you resigned your position."

"I don't need a position to do my work, Richard. Here's the thing: I've found it. I've isolated the CUE factor."

"My word! That's outstanding! How much longer will it take you to run the confirmations? Do you think we can put something out by this time next year?"

"I'm not running confirmations, Richard. Actually, I've got some preliminaries that I'd like to get out now."

"Do you really? So soon! But, darling, how do you plan to justify your findings?"

"I don't. The results are self evident."

"Are they?" He paused, then continued, sounding troubled. "Isn't that going to cause a bit of a snag? I mean, especially after all that you've been through ... don't you think you need to have all the back-up you can muster?"

Ignoring his concern. "Richard, I just emailed you the first three installments of a series I'm writing called *Known and Knowable*. There's also an introductory and summary piece that will describe my sources and the process I've used to reach my conclusions. It may seem a bit fantastic at first, but if you can get past that ... well, you'll see. I'd like you to place the series in a mainstream magazine where I can get the best exposure and get the summary to a scientific journal where I can get the most influential validation."

Less reluctantly, "Well, you're certainly enthusiastic ... and the CUE factor!" Brightening, "Alright, Aubrey. I'll look them over and see what I can do."

"Good. Thanks, Richard. Call me, will you, and let me know who you're going to send them to."

"Will do."

"Richard, I have another call on the line. I've got to go. Good to talk with you."

"Yes, good to talk with you. Bye bye, Aubrey."

I flashed to the incoming call. It was Harold, more distraught than he'd been since Armaton's calming influence and my coaching had settled him down.

"Aubrey! Geez! You have no idea what they're doing. It's *insane*! They're all over the

place. I can't believe it! Oh man!"

"Harold! Whatever it is, freaking out isn't going to help. Just try to ..."

"I'm *not* freaking out. I *am* a little animated, OK? This is big."

"What is it?"

"Breck—DAGR—they're already in gear and they're into some serious, very creepy stuff."

"Go on."

"They have a high power transmitter near the Arctic Circle. The antenna array is like twenty acres. It's directed at the ionosphere ..."

"Harold, that's common knowledge. The only news *you're* giving me is, the antenna is a lot bigger than I thought. They're using it to study solar stimulation, so they can design surveillance and communications systems that are more stable during sun storms. There's a couple of military applications, but nothing more obnoxious than ..."

"I *know* what you know, Aubrey. Do you want to know what *I* know?"

"Sorry. Go ahead."

"What you're talking about is the company line which also goes: the majority of the equipment is passive and the transmitter will be used only to create minimal excitation of the ionospheric plasma ... in small localized isolated areas ... for very brief periods of time. That's the deceit."

"Okaaay."

"Here's the reality. What they're into, among other things, is geophysical warfare. Their objective is to take the theoretical possibilities MacDonald at UCLA *talked* about decades ago and make them deadly real. The basic principle is ..."

I knew the principle, "Nonlinearity. You take advantage of environmental instabilities so that the addition of just a little bit of energy releases vastly greater amounts of energy."

"Precisely. So the bad news is: the rumors about them wanting to control weather are true. The *really* bad news is: that's just a small part of what they're up to."

This was so absurd and so patently foolhardy and dangerous that, even knowing Breck's troubling proclivities, I found it difficult to accept. "Do you have any data to support what you're saying?"

"You could say that. I mean it's not in my possession, but I ... um ... have access to it."

"Where is it? Can you show it to me?"

"Oh, sure. I'll send you the codes."

"To what?"

"DAGR's computer systems."

"Geez, Harold! You *hacked* DAGR?"

"I can't tell if you're shocked and alarmed or impressed."

"All the above. How did you ever ...?"

"I *told* you the *Book of Symbols* was sharpening my intuition. The point is, you've *got* to look at it, Aubrey. I've got a really bad feeling about this."

"*That's* not your intuition, Harold. A chimp would have the same feeling." I didn't want to get distracted, but this was too important. "OK, send me the codes. I can't believe it, now *I'm* going to hack DAGR. How long will it take them to find out what we're doing?"

Toying with me, "I can't tell you precisely."

"Best guess. Round off."

"Mmmmm ... I would have to say ... *forever*. I've taken measures." While we had been talking I was hearing the click of his keyboard. After a pause and a few more strokes he said,



“There! That’s all you need to get in whenever you want. Would you like to take a stroll together?”

“Let’s do it.”

Harold took me to some of the places he’d already been. We looked at memos, reports, personal correspondence, email, and some of their data. My original impression had been that the Arctic facility was an academic project constructed and managed by AWARE. It was touted on their website and in all their public relations as dedicated strictly to research with few military applications. The only ones mentioned were improving communications with submerged submarines and Earth Penetrating Tomography (EPT), being able to “see” great distances underground. What Harold was showing me quickly put the lie to that.

There appeared to be little they were leaving untouched. Much of what I read was somber and framed in patriotic overtones. Some had a giddy, conspiratorial tone, like kids bragging about new toys and plotting a water balloon ambush.

One report evaluated the potential of an anti-ballistic missile system that involved shooting microwaves at the ionosphere to create a huge concentration of electrons that would set off the chemical charges used to detonate nuclear warheads. Incoming bombs would thus be exploded before they reached their targets.

Another plan called for “lifting” regions of the atmosphere by heating the ionosphere. The heated portion would rise, thereby increasing drag forces at unexpected altitudes that would deflect or destroy missiles.

A technique was being developed to disseminate varying frequencies of electromagnetic waves over huge portions of the planet. This would disrupt even the most advanced missile and aircraft guidance systems. It could also be used to obliterate an enemy’s means of communication. At the same time, those with knowledge of the frequency variations could conduct their own communications. The same system had the potential to spy on and interfere with virtually all communications worldwide including transmissions of the media. The writer of the material joked that maybe this should be made the highest priority.

The transmitter array was believed to have the capability of burning holes in the ionosphere, creating a void in its layer of protection. This would let radiation that was normally blocked, strike designated targets terminating all life without damaging structures and equipment not susceptible to radiation damage. The killing potential was compared to nuclear weapons. An alternate plan called for the use of chemical agents and laser beams to destroy the ozone layer in the stratosphere over an enemy target area.

Plans were formulated to alter solar radiation and wind patterns in the upper atmosphere by manipulating particles into plumes that would act like lenses and focus sunlight on designated regions of the planet. This could be used benevolently to moderate weather conditions or belligerently, as Breck’s father had attempted, to create droughts. It was speculated that the potential existed to heat the edge of the jet stream and change its course. This would enable the orchestration of droughts and floods.

Studies showed that a relatively small amount of energy strategically applied to the Van Allen belts (regions of naturally occurring radiation around the earth) would release vast amounts of energy through the effects of resonance. This was another method proposed to control planetary weather.

A chain of memos discussed harvesting and beaming energy from the auroral electrojet (the current produced in the ionosphere by natural alterations in solar radiation) to selected areas on the planet’s surface. Its friendly application would be to generate power; its hostile application

would be to destroy enemy infrastructure.

In emails discussing even the most benevolent uses for this technology, there was an agenda of power and subjugation. The nation that had the capacity to control weather would be a dominant force to whom all others would be subservient. The motivation behind this attitude, as well as the willingness to develop offensive military capabilities, did not appear to be that of evildoers intent on despotism. They simply perceived themselves as representing the most enlightened nation and system on the planet and were utterly convinced that their way was the right way, i.e. for everyone. Accepting that as the case, they saw this technology and the supremacy it promised as a tool to achieve their vision of a better world. The end, as they saw it, was so righteous, it justified the means; whatever means were necessary.

As Harold and I discussed this, I flashed on something. “Harold, do you remember what I told you the Sesavah said when I was with all those people fighting in the crop circle field?”

“Which part?”

“Right after I told it about the *Book of Symbols*. It said they were fools, that we’re all fools willing to kill each other ‘... for the glory of being right.’”

“Geez! Yeah. ... Uh oh!” he groaned, “I’ve got a glitch. My screen is rolling.”

“So is mine.”

After a few more rolls my monitor went dark, then came back on again, like it was powering up. An image grew from a pinpoint in the center of the screen and quickly filled it. I laughed when I saw it develop into Armaton’s face staring at me.

“Do you see him, too, Harold?”

“Yeah. I still can’t get over how he does this stuff.”

Armaton spoke, “Pardon my interruption, but a comment may be in order at this time. Permit me.”

“By all means,” we replied separately, “OK, go ahead.”

“The mentality ye are discussing epitomizes a mode of thought and behavior prevalent in the old paradigm, one grounded in fear and sustained through force and manipulation. When consciousness is low, ignorance is rampant, understanding is all but naught, and it appears that force alone is capable of establishing and maintaining order. A rapidly developing higher consciousness is now burgeoning. The old paradigm is passing away as a new paradigm emerges.”

“The Great Shift.”

“Yes, Aubrey. Thou hast received some insights on this matter?”

“There’s a Symbol called the Great Shift. It’s part of Folk prophecy. I got a writing on it that I just sent to my agent. Let me read some of it.”

There is a tremendous tension between that which was and that which is to be. Man’s knowledge has kept pace with the relentless change of an evolving Creation. His consciousness has not. He has amassed great powers appropriate to a Higher Age without the temperance of spiritual maturity and understanding.

He is faced with the choice to change or perish, not as punishment by a vengeful god, but at his own hand for reason of attachment to the past and its ways born of ignorance, which he may continue to refuse to cast off. To survive and, indeed, thrive, he must see his fear for what it is. He must understand that force,

bravado, and aggression are but its cloaks; that now, to survive, he must love, not conquer.

At the core of the Great Shift in Consciousness is the emergence of unconditional Love. Love shall prevail, inspired in many as new thought patterns, through the gentle efforts of We, the Folk. In a time of great tumult on Earth, Love will spread as seeds thrown into the wind. It will fall upon the fertile mind of Man in wondrous ways to germinate what is Known and Knowable and challenge the status quo of the planet.

I spoke my understanding, “So our job is to cast our seeds of Love and *let* them sprout. *Let* change happen rather than force it to happen.”

Harold continued, “That way you create an inherently stable system that will stand on its own. Whenever you use force to get something done, you have to *keep* applying force—constantly—just to maintain.”

Armaton said, “The best of intentions, without Love, are doomed to go astray. One of the challenges to thy cleverness shall be how ye choose to deal with Dr. von Hass and his associates, that ye do not get sucked into their mindset and modus operandi. In this case, fire will not effectively fight fire. Force will not be overcome by force.

“Ye and thy contemporaries, however, have been raised in a world at a time predominated by the old paradigm. Ye have reflexes that would pluck an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth which need be circumvented by understanding and replaced with Love.”

“I understand. Let me get something else straight. Are you saying I need to get involved with stopping Breck?” I asked.

“I said nothing more than what I said. No inferences were intended. It is for thee to make that assessment for thyself, as is the case for any others who would hear of these shenanigans. Each must understand his capacity and his destiny and their alignment with such an involvement. The point I stress is: any who choose to so proceed shall be successful only by treading a path of Love, not conflict.”

“Otherwise,” Harold added, “you just become another Breck.”

“ ‘Tis an obvious conclusion. Enough said. In departing, I shall leave ye a gift.”

My screen rolled again, went dark, and powered back up. Apparently the same was happening for Harold. “Begeez Louise! Are you seeing what I’m seeing?”

It was a page in one of Breck’s personal files.

## *Chapter 27*

### *The Game*

I didn't think anything could shock and appall me more than what I'd already seen. I was wrong. Harold and I read the material on our monitors in stunned silence.

The capacity of these transmissions to affect mental and physiological processes may well constitute their most powerful application. Pulsed radio frequency radiation can be transmitted to select areas in order to impede human brain function. This can be accomplished with complete stealth on a continental scale with large populations or focused on a few square meters to target specific personnel. No effective countermeasures are known at present.

Output can be calibrated to deliver a range of effects from slight erosion of perceptive abilities to severe breakdown of cognitive faculties and disruption of neurological, glandular, organ, and cellular function.

Beyond the obvious military applications, this system has undetectable domestic possibilities. For example: control unruly crowds; disturb and confuse planning and organizational activities of political opponents; incapacitate dissidents; disburse opposing political demonstrations.

Once infrastructure is established, behavior modification can be programmed, conducted, and controlled covertly by a single individual. Equipment can be operated without cessation indefinitely, completely concealed from all other personnel at minuscule power consumption and expenditure.

“ ‘Minuscule power consumption.’ At least it's environmentally friendly,” Harold's sarcasm relieved some of our horror with nervous laughter.

“Harold, I'm having a hard time comprehending this.”

“Maybe he's got the Death Star pointed at you.”

“How can people sit around and look each other in the eye organizing this kind of madness? I just don't get it.”

“Well, go back a century and think Germany. That was pretty nuts. If you think about it, so is the idea of multiple megaton nuclear weapons. A bunch of the finest minds around pulled that one together ... and now they're all over the place. What it comes down to is: available technology in the hands of ...”

“ ... the spiritually immature. Man's knowledge outpacing his consciousness. Harold, listen, I don't think I can handle any more of this right now.”

“Me neither. My mind is addled.”

After we hung up I realized how draining this experience had been. I went to my room and lay down. In a flash I was asleep and in a vivid dream.

“This is no dream,” Armaton corrected me. “Thou art in an astral state poised to leave for the higher realm of the causal on a journey.”

“OK, where are we going?”

“We are going nowhere. *Thou* art on thy way to gather information and gain insight.”

“Really! Alone?”

“Thou art never truly alone, dear Aubrey, but from the perspective of thy question: Yes, thou wilt conduct this expedition on thine own.”

A moment’s reflection revealed my destination. “I’m going to see Breck.” Armaton nodded and I asked, “But, why?”

“The purpose shall unfold. Suffice it to say, traveling in thy thought form, neither Dr. von Hass nor any of his associates in the physical or astral realms will detect thy presence. I wish thee a fruitful journey. It begins with thine intent.”

And it did. In a flash of light I was out of my astral body and at the AWARE facility in Menlo Park, California. As I wondered why the passage was so effortless compared to my past experience with Armaton, I received the satisfaction of an answer. Since then, my consciousness had elevated as a result of intensely focused meditations inspired by reading *Sacred Memories* and studying the *Book of Symbols*. My vibratory rate was now a lot closer to the causal, so it didn’t take as much effort for me to get there.

All musing immediately ceased when my attention riveted on the scene before me. Breck was in his clandestine underground office suite at the edge of the industrial campus. In stark contrast to the ordinariness of the physical setting, I witnessed a loathsome astral sight superimposed over it.

From the physical perspective, Breck was tall, slender, ethnically handsome, with thick salt and mostly pepper medium length wavy hair parted in the middle. He wore neatly creased dark blue pinstripe trousers with matching vest over laced black wingtip shoes. Long ago he had grown accustomed to the discomfort of the stiff collar on his ever-present heavily starched long sleeve white shirt. From his neck hung one of the several dozen variously patterned power-red ties he owned. He wore no other color.

Since he was alone he afforded himself the comfort of doffing his suit jacket, which was neatly placed on a hanger suspended from a brass coat rack in a corner of the room. He was sitting at a formal burgundy stained mahogany desk with matching furnishings in a spacious well-lit white room. Breck’s posture was contorted: his upper torso twisted to the right and leaned forward to the left. It was even more noticeable when he stood up. He was deep in thought typing, while his computer serenaded him with Bobby Vinton singing “Blue Velvet.”

From my perspective of the astral, things looked quite different. A dark, rank ethereal fog hung everywhere leaving a slimy deposit of rancid dew on everything. The room looked like the inside of a cave, round shaped and rough hewn with cracks and crevasses, although it seemed to be made, not out of stone, but a reddish brown fleshy material, mottled with shades of gray, black, and a sickly yellow.

Clinging to gnarled protrusions of dripping flesh on the walls and ceiling were an assortment of hideous gargoyles. Some tore occasional bites out of their perches and chewed slowly while staring wide-eyed at the pathetic, withered human they surrounded. Others jumped up and down shrieking at him. Breck appeared emaciated and haggard. Heavy chains wrapped around his arms, legs, and chest. They were leashes, each held by one of five frightfully disfigured subdemons playing a sporadic game of tug of war.

A single gargoyle with a long bristled tail squatted on his head. Its claws pierced his scalp. The tail was wound tightly around his neck several times. The coils were fused to each other as well as his skin.

Another beast, the one I recognized from my kitchen, dwarfed the others and paced back and forth pensively, dictating to him. Breck appeared so powerful in one realm, so pitiful in the other.

The cell phone on his desk rang. In unison the demonic horde stilled and turned their gaze toward it. Breck answered with impeccable courtesy and just the hint of an accent. As he spoke, the gargoyle on his head mouthed the words with him, “Good afternoon. Dr. von Hass. How may I help you?”

“Doctor, this is George Scribner. I’m sorry to disturb you, but I needed to ...”

Breck’s tone shifted to surly. “Make your point, Scribner.”

I chuckled to myself realizing I was displaying a version of the abilities Master Armaton had demonstrated with “telephonic devices.”

“It’s about Aubrey Manning.”

“The *point*, Scribner?”

“I’m worried about her.”

Caustically, “Well, I’m sure she appreciates your caring. Are you calling to invite me to join a prayer circle?” Breck and his astral overseers enjoyed making people squirm, especially those who were already intimidated by him.

George was completely flummoxed and couldn’t reply; only stammer nervously. Before this I never realized he could be so submissive. Now I saw the intensity of fear at the root of his conniving and struggle for power and control. Ironically, it drew the Sesavah into him and made him subject to *its* control and Breck’s abuse.

Laughing derisively, “Wit was never your strong suit, Scribner. Now, tell me what’s on your mind or hang up and call back when you can.”

“I think she’s up to something. Where is she? What’s she doing? I *know* this woman. She not the kind that just shrivels up and goes away.”

“This is why you’ve interrupted me? Look, I’ll have this conversation only once. We’ve completely neutralized her. Without access to a decent machine, she has no way to work; her CUE theory is dead in the water. She’s *already* shriveled and she’s *gone* away.”

“But what if she goes somewhere else? What if somebody else hires her?”

“Read the newspaper, Scribner: ‘Professor and Department Head with history of mental instability disappears while under investigation for arson.’”

“But we cleared her of all that.”

“Keep reading: ‘No charges filed. Manning resigns department position and takes extended leave from teaching. Once popular public figure drops out of sight.’”

“So you’re saying it looks like ...”

“I’m saying she’s *finished*. I’m saying any *nitwit* would see it as a whitewash. Hire her? No school would touch her now with a ten-foot pole. Do you think that’s an accident? Do you think she and her barracuda lawyer outmaneuvered me? You’re all supposed to be so smart, but none of you *think*.

“*You* don’t have the sense to destroy a useless document that could have been used to incriminate me. And *Manning*, the girl wonder, takes off without warning and then decides to disappear. The way she plays into my hand, you’d think she was *trying* to help.”

“So you think ...”

“I think you should understand that a mind with a greater capacity than yours or Manning’s or some two bit shyster is in charge here. And when you get disturbed, just consider it another of your many flaws. Good day.”

Throughout this conversation, the large beast nodded and swayed its monstrous head as it

conducted Breck like an orchestra. The others had their eyes closed and were swaying in appreciation of the “music.” They seemed to gain vibrancy from it.

At this point I felt my purpose for being here was satisfied. I returned to my astral and physical bodies and reintegrated with them. For an hour I remained in a state of deep, dreamless, refreshing sleep.

I was awakened by a thumping noise outside that seemed vaguely familiar, yet I couldn’t place it. I went out to investigate and found the source. Armaton, dressed in a baggy, bright yellow tank top and shorts and an impressively treaded pair of sneakers was bobbing and weaving in a crouched position while he dribbled a red, white, and blue basketball. He glared in mock surliness and challenged me, “Wouldst thou care to engage in some one on one?”

“You’re on.” After a moment’s reflection, I added, “What laws are we playing by?”

“The rules, Aubrey? Standard: the ball is taken out at the top of the key, players alternate possession after every ...”

“No, I mean *laws*. Are you planning to obey standard earth gravitational laws?”

“Agreed.” He laughed and bounce-passed the ball to me. “I invite thee to take it out first.”

He was the most nimble defender I had ever played against. On offense, he was the proverbial poetry in motion with body twisting hook shots, layups, and behind the back dribbling. After trading a few baskets and blocked shots I asked him what the score was.

“Doth it matter, dear Aubrey? Is this not invigorating and enjoyable as it is? How is this activity improved by an assessment that requires gain for one and loss for another? Wouldst thou truly enjoy the experience of knowing thou hast beaten me?”

He questioned what came so automatically to me that I never *thought* to question it. “Actually, no. I wouldn’t. To tell you the truth, I’d feel kind of bad about it. I mean, I *am* a lot ... um ...”

“Younger.”

“Well, yes.”

“Mmmm. Perhaps there is a second point to be made when I have completed this one: Is it not the game which is enjoyable to thee and not so much the outcome? When overemphasis is placed on winning, is not one less prone to appreciate a splendid performance by the other side? The net pleasure, if thou wouldst pardon the pun, is thus diminished.”

I had no argument with that.

“Besides,” he continued, “there is only one situation in which the possibility exists for thee to defeat me.”

“What do you mean? How?”

“In thy dreams.” With that he batted the ball out of my hands, twirled several times as he dribbled around me, jumped up toward the basket like he had bounced off a trampoline, turned a somersault, and stuffed the ball through the hoop on his way down.”

“Hey! What about the gravity thing?”

“That, my dear, was a display of *physical* strength and agility in strict conformity to Newtonian laws of gravitational attraction as applied in a third dimensional terrestrial reference frame. It was an illustration of my second point: *how* one lives supersedes *how long* one lives.”

For the next hour he ran me ragged. We finally stopped when he reminded me, “Methinks it time for a shower in preparation for the arrival of Harold, Ashvin, and Kamala.” They were coming for dinner.

“OK. Thanks for the game.”

“I thank *thee*.”

We high-fived each other and headed into the house.

“I have a question, sir.”

“Yes?”

“Is there ever a time when you *stop* teaching?”

“Only when thou wouldst stop learning.”

It was quite a reunion when our friends arrived. We opened some Merlot and talked about everything that had happened since we’d seen each other last and what each of our perspectives was.

Ashvin expressed how happy he and Kamala were that I was going public with my writing, “This is very necessary. It is time to get the word out.”

Kamala finally got to a point she had been very eager to resolve, “But what of this news Harold mentioned to us? He was so mysterious. What have the two of you been up to?”

When I looked at Harold quizzically, he responded, “The DAGR thing. I thought we should all be together when they found out.”

We told them the details of our discoveries about DAGR’s activities and I recounted the experience of my “visit” to AWARE earlier in the day.

The tears in Kamala’s eyes punctuated her anguish, “We cannot allow this depravity to continue. We must put a stop to it. It’s all well and good to say it comes from ignorance, that we must practice compassion and bring light to darkness. The simple fact of the matter is: if this perversion is not stopped, it shall extinguish what light there is.”

“You’re right,” I agreed, “but I’m not sure about *my* involvement. I don’t know what *I* can do. What Breck said—that nobody would hire me—it’s probably true. I don’t have an academic base any more and in the media I’m just a tabloid story. I think the *only* way for me to go right now is to write and focus on getting some articles published; then try to reestablish some credibility and reach out to the public. The CUE factor is about people, getting them to understand, to look at how they think, and *do* something.”

A debate continued for the rest of the evening. Armaton moderated, admonishing us to “Consider and plan for possibilities, but do not overload the process with speculation.”

One point had our unanimous agreement: before we could do anything, including making decisions, we needed more information. How far along was DAGR in implementing their plans? What was the nature of their experiments? What were the results? What *else* might they be into? Harold would handle it with help from all the Gandhi’s, Prabhas and Nirmala included.

Ashvin offered, “There is one more thing before we go.” He and Kamala exchanged a knowing glance and nod. “My aunt has been very busy.” He reached into his briefcase and pulled out a two-inch thick binder. “Uncle had it flown out to us this morning so we would have it in time to give to you.”

“What is it?”

He answered while handing it to me, “It is a typed transcription of *Sacred Memories*. We have it on disk as well.”

Kamala added, “Auntie was an editor for a very large publisher in her youth. We think you will approve of the format. If you do, then it is ready to publish whenever you wish.”

“Kamala, Ashvin, I’m stunned!” I poured over the manuscript. “It’s wonderful! Publish! You know, I never even thought about that.” As with the original, each quatrain was numbered and, as Auriel had done in calligraphy, each character’s spoken words were printed in a unique font style. Other details were carefully attended to.

Ashvin pointed out, “There’s another way Aunt Nirmala is thinking about formatting it. She



says most people nowadays might have a hard time getting into reading an epic poem. So she would like to reconfigure the text into prose form ... into paragraphs. If you approve, she will get to it right away.”

“You all are *way* ahead of me on this. Off the top, I really don’t think the *form* matters. It’s the words. As Master Armaton said in the foreword, Aerial’s words are even more than their *meaning*, they’re infused with Love.”

We all hugged and thanked each other for a splendid evening. Harold was the only one who didn’t already have a copy of *Sacred Memories*, so as everyone was leaving I gave him the manuscript.

The rest of the week I remained in quiet seclusion studying the *Book of Symbols* and writing. By Friday it was time to come up for some air so I decided to call my agent. His return call was overdue and I was curious to see what was happening.

At 11 AM, 2 PM New York time, I spoke with Evelyn, his assistant. “Mr. Conyers is out to lunch, Dr. Manning.”

“Oh. I thought he was usually back by this time on Fridays.” Evelyn was silent. “Well, would you please ask him to call me when he gets back in?”

“Certainly.”

“When do you expect him?”

Long pause. “He didn’t give me a time, Dr. Manning. I will see to it that he gets your message and calls back as soon as he can.”

“OK, thanks, Evelyn.”

After hanging up I thought, “That felt a little strange,” then let it go.

I worked in the garden for a little while, then had lunch, checking the clock repeatedly and doing the conversion to New York time. By 1:30 I had waited long enough and called him again.

Evelyn informed me, “I gave him your message, Dr. Manning, but he had to go straight into a meeting with an editor working with one of our other clients.”

That made no sense. Richard would never schedule an editing meeting for that late on a Friday afternoon. I learned long ago that New York agents and publishers don’t get much done from June through August, late November through early January, and never on late Friday afternoons.

Suspicious, “When will he be out of his meeting?”

“I really can’t say, Dr. Manning. Maybe you should try him next week.”

“Next week? What do you mean, next week? When next week?”

“I really can’t say. It doesn’t look like he has any openings. His door is closed so I can’t break in on him.”

“Well, it’s very important that I speak with him, Evelyn.”

“I understand, Dr. Manning. I’m leaving now so all I can do is leave a note for him and hope that he sees it.”

“Well, please do that, Evelyn. Thank you.”

I found Master Armaton in the billiard room eyeing up a shot. “Wouldst thou care to join me in a game of eight ball?”

“Richard Conyers seems to be dodging my calls.”

Armaton pulled back the stick and thrust it forward, sending the cue careening into the nine ball, which hit the far cushion and banked back into the left corner pocket. “And this causes thee some concern.”

“Yes, it does.”

“How does this concern serve thee?”

“Well ...”

“If it does not serve thee, why give it harbor?”

I caught myself. “You’re right. There’s nothing I can do about it now. The earliest I can do *anything* is Monday, so, between now and then, it doesn’t exist.” I smiled, “Rack ‘em up.”

Monday morning came quickly enough. I was up and on my way to the phone by six. Now that the time had come to deal with the situation, “it doesn’t exist” no longer applied.

My phone rang. It was Armaton. “May I suggest another pithy phrase?”

I laughed, partly because I knew he wasn’t using a telephone. “Sure!”

“In my estimation, a most appropriate replacement would be, ‘It is what it is.’ Bear this in mind, knowing that whatever is, is simply the next step in the unfoldment of this task and thy life’s journey.”

“Right. Thanks.”

“I shall put thee through to Mr. Conyer’s agency.”

Armaton’s voice was replaced by the rapid tones of a speed dial followed by Evelyn, “Richard Conyers and Associates.”

“Hello, Evelyn. This is Aubrey Manning. I’d like to speak with ...”

“My word! Hasn’t he gotten back to you yet? Let me see what I can do.”

After several minutes a stranger came on the line picking up the thread of the conversation he had previously left, “We’re looking at a release date within three months of the final ...”

“Excuse me, but I think you’re on the wrong line.”

“What? Oh. OK, please hold.”

There was a click, then silence and thirty seconds later, “If you’d like to make a call, please hang up and dial again. If you need help, please hang up and dial your operator.”

I redialed and reached a voice mail. After several more attempts over the next fifteen minutes, Evelyn finally picked up again, “Richard Conyers and Associates.”

“Hi, Evelyn, it’s Aubrey.”

“Oh, Dr. Manning. I *wondered* what happened to you. I had him and now he’s gone. Can you try back, ummm, let me see ... Is Thursday morning good for you?”

“Thursday? I expected Richard to get back to me no later than *last* Thursday. I need to speak with him.”

“He’s doing the NYU writers’ conference this week which means he’s more out of the office than in.” While she paused I heard papers being shuffled. “Let’s do this, let me try to have him call you this time tomorrow.”

I agreed.

Tuesday morning came quickly enough. With no call by nine o’clock, it took all I had to keep from getting livid. If he *was* there, pretty soon he’d be gone to lunch.

Finally, the phone rang. It was Armaton, “Another pithy phrase comes to mind.”

“And that would be?”

“The game is afoot.”

## *Chapter 28*

### *Hurdles*

“Shall I put thee through to New York?”

“Please.”

Evelyn answered, “Richard Conyers and Associates.”

“Evelyn, this is Aubrey Manning. Please get Richard for me.”

“Oh, Dr. Manning, I’m so sorry. You seem to be having such bad luck. He’s in a story meeting right now and he doesn’t like me to ...”

“Evelyn, please let him know I’m on the line.”

With forced resignation, “Yes, Dr. Manning.”

After several minutes, she came back. “I’ve spoken with him, Dr. Manning, and he told me to tell you he received your material.”

“And?”

“That was it. Would you like to try back ...?”

“Evelyn, please tell Richard I need to speak with him directly ... *now*.”

After several more minutes he came on the line greeting me with the same melodious voice I was accustomed to. It used to sound warmhearted to me. Now I wondered what it concealed.

“Hello, Aubrey, I’m so pleased to hear from you. What can I do for you?”

“Well, for starters, Richard, you can ...”

He had cupped the phone, albeit incompletely and I could hear his muffled voice talking to someone in his office, “No, No, No. It can’t be on the seventeenth. That’s when they’re going on their cruise. Make it the following week.” His conversational partner said something unintelligible to me, then Richard replied, “No, it’ll be OK. It’s only for the weekend.” Another unintelligible comment was followed by Richard’s raucous laughter.

He uncupped the phone and I heard his voice at its normal volume. “I’m sorry, Aubrey. Dick Elderbee is here and he insists on breaking me up.” To Dick, with great joviality, “Yes, you do!” and back to me, “Now, what was it you were saying?”

“Richard, I need to know what’s happening with the material I sent you.”

“Yes, I received it. Uhhh ...” struggling to remember, “... *Knowing and Knowingness*. As a matter of fact I read it the very same evening. You’re quite right, it’s very unusual material.” Laughing, “I’m beginning to think you bumped your head while you were among the missing.”

As accustomed as Richard was to having others laugh and respond otherwise appropriately to his comments and antics, this was not one of those times and I was not one of those people. During the pause in which I was considering my response, I heard him whispering to someone on the other end.

I raised my voice to a volume he had never heard from me before, “*Richard! I don’t care what is going on over there, I want your complete attention and I want it now!*”

There were a few more murmurs, then some rustling and the sound of a door opening and closing. Richard came back on the line speaking softly, but unable to fully disguise his seething anger. “Aubrey, after what I’ve just done for you, not to mention all the years we’ve known each other, I am very disappointed you could be so callously vituperative.”

“What have you just done for me, Richard?”

“I’ve saved you from the next level down in your spiral to disaster.”

“What does that mean?”

“I’ve shown your current work to no one. It would ruin you. Your articles express

sentimentality, not science. You assume the reader will accept wild assertions without proof or any shred of substantiation because—in your estimation—it makes *sense* and—granted, I’m oversimplifying—it will make everything better. Do you hear yourself, Aubrey? Beings of light and multidimensional excursions. You’re in the wrong genre. This is science *fiction* ... and barely plausible at that.

“No one is going to buy this, Aubrey. It’s so utterly fantastic, I struggle to find the words to describe how consummately ... *preposterous* it ... What’s happened to you, Aubrey? You’re more than a client to me; you’re a dear friend. I don’t know what to do for you. I’m thoroughly perplexed and when I put this in the context of your outrageous ... uh ... misadventures of late, I’m very worried. Help me to understand.”

“You say you read the material.”

“Yes I did. All of it.”

“OK, forget for a moment you’re a literary agent. As a human being, how do you respond to what I’ve written?”

“That’s not the point ... and that’s not what I get *paid* for.”

“I understand. All I’m asking is that you set it aside, just for a moment.”

“I *can’t* set it aside. And it doesn’t *matter* what I think as an individual. This is business. Even if I thought your articles would set the world on fire, I wouldn’t know what to *do* with them. How do I sell them? Who would buy them?”

There was a fear in Richard I had never noticed before. Part of his reputation and mystique was a devil-may-care attitude about his clients and a willingness and ability to get very daring work published. But, understandably, he was self-assured and willing to wield his power only so far outside the range of his familiarity and comfort.

It was a terrible disappointment that he couldn’t fathom what had become the defining essence of my work and my identity. It made me sad that he couldn’t reach beyond his sense of “reality” to share in the wonder and inspiration of the Folk.

His reaction also created a major stumbling block. Literary agents are expeditors. Because publishers receive a tremendous volume of material, it can take months for them to get to a writer’s submission. What’s more, their focus is primarily on throwing out trash rather than digging for treasure. When a literary agent sends them something, it goes to the top of the pile since they assume it wouldn’t have been sent if it didn’t have merit. When a top agent like Richard submits work, he presents it as treasure and, after enough schmoozing, it gets carefully considered.

Even though I was an established author with two successful books under her belt, I still needed Richard’s involvement, especially after my “outrageous misadventures.”

There was only one thing I could think to do. “Alright, Richard. I understand how you feel. But that doesn’t alter how important this is to me. I’ve *got* to get this work out. *I’ll* figure out what publishers I think are right. Later today I’m going to fax a formal request instructing you to send the articles to them. Is that OK?”

Sullen, “Very well.”

This was a fine point I picked up from one of the books Richard had written on the publishing industry. He described an incident when he and a client disagreed about how to handle a project. When the writer gave him specific instructions, Richard wrote that he felt obliged to comply. The objective of this anecdote wasn’t to empower writers, but to illustrate the point that the agent always knows best, which the outcome in this story served to prove. I was more interested in the premise and hoped he would follow its precedent.

“Thank you, Richard.” I made one last plea, “Look, even though you think it’s a bad idea, if you’d consider helping me figure out who to send them to, I would really appreciate it. If you think of anyone, please email me.”

Very sullen, “Is that all?”

“Yes, Richard, that’s all. Thank you.”

“Good day, then.”

It would have been much better to have Richard’s understanding and enthusiastic support, but as long as he did what I asked, that would be enough. And perhaps he would have a change of heart. This wasn’t the first time I had blown his mind. When I first proposed the CUE theory, he became very apprehensive, afraid that it was “far too ambitious and difficult to sell.” I convinced him then to move forward and it turned out very well for both of us. Now, despite his initial opposition, I was hopeful he might come around.

Just before noon I was at my computer transcribing a Symbol interpretation when I heard the “dong” of an incoming email. It was from Richard. My heart leaped. Maybe he was going to help after all. This is what it said:

Dear Dr. Manning:

You seem to be under the mistaken impression that I, and my agency, have a contract in force with you at this time and are obligated to carry out instructions dictated by you. That is not the case. We represented you on the publication of your last book according to a contract that was drawn up for that project alone on a one time basis. We have given you feedback on subsequent work because you took the trouble of sending it to us, but we have not decided, nor did we at any time intend to take you and your current project on.

I’m sorry if our communication has given you a false impression. I wish you good luck with your project in the future.

Sincerely yours,  
Richard Conyers

I was stunned. I reread his note again and again in uncomprehending disbelief. My perception of our relationship completely contradicted the possibility that he would *ever* drop me as a client, especially in such an abrupt and brutally cold way. It was true—our contract covered only my last book because there were some legal complexities that were unique to that project. We never got around to drawing up another. It didn’t seem that important to me because we had such a long relationship and Richard so frequently professed to be my dear friend.

The phone rang. It was Harold. “I’ve got some news.”

In a confused, trancelike voice I answered, “Um ... So ... do I.”

“You sound upset. What happened?”

“Richard dropped me.”

“Who? Richard Conyers? What do you mean?”

I read the email. Several times Harold sputtered his outrage. At the end, he exploded, “That

rat breeding sleazoid moron! The miserable slimebucket scurvy skunk lowlife maggot toad weasel pig monkey ...!”

Harold’s tirade was interrupted by a loud, frantic clanging on the line, like the bell that’s rung at a prizefight. A few seconds after he stopped, it stopped.

“Cease!” Armaton commanded, “A few deep breaths, both of ye.”

He inhaled and exhaled slowly and deeply, loud enough for us to hear and follow along. “Is this event so uniquely tragic that it merits an exception to the necessity for temperance? Dost ye think that at this time, after all the efforts and progress made by thy growing band, after all that has taken place over millennia here and in realms beyond, that a successful outcome is dependent upon a New York literary agent?”

“Dear Richard’s involvement has provided him with a potential to learn much about fear and the limitations it imposes upon one’s ability to discern and pursue lofty possibilities. It shall also have been an instrument to teach ye, among other things, there is more than one way to skin a cat, if ye will pardon a gruesome human cliché. Continue thy discourse and ye will find Harold’s news most synchronistic.”

A single clang of the bell was Armaton’s signal for Harold and me to resume our conversation.

“What news, Harold?”

“Well, the Gandhi’s and I have been talking and emailing ever since they got back from England. Kamala came up with this idea for packaging and presenting your writing and any other material about the Folk. And it’s something we can do ourselves.”

“Yes?”

In anticipation of what Harold was about to say, I felt a surge of power and had a mental impression of an eagle taking off from the top of a huge tree.

“What do you think about having a website?”

I let the concept sink in. “That sounds like a great idea!”

“All right, then! Let me conference Kamala in. She wanted to tell you about it last week when they were over, but it looked like you had everything handled with that scuzzbucket ... um ... with Richard ... so she didn’t think it was cool.”

Harold put me on hold and called her.

“Aubrey, how good to speak with you. Harold says you approve of the idea.”

“It’s excellent. I think we should get started right away.”

“Praise God, we were hoping you would feel that way. Um ... actually, we were *planning* on it.” She laughed nervously.

“How do you mean?”

“Well, we’ve already made a little progress.”

“Really? How far have you gotten?”

“We’ve all been working on it. Auntie Nirmala came up with the name. She formed an attraction to one of the Symbols and often pictures it mentally. One day while meditating on it, she heard words in her mind. She wrote them down. It was a very beautiful writing, really. When it concluded, she was prompted to sign it ‘*The Folk of Yore*.’”

A chill ran up my spine and my skin tingled, “Oh, my!”

“Was that a happy ‘Oh my,’ Aubrey?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Ah, good. Auntie was—well, we *all* were—concerned we had gone too far without consulting you. But I told her it could easily be changed.”

“What could be changed?”

“The name of the website, the URL. It’s thefolkofyore.com.”

I laughed with delight, “You mean you’ve got it set up already?”

Harold gushed, “That’s the news I was calling about. It’s up!”

“Is that OK, Aubrey?” Kamala asked with uncharacteristic timidity.

“Well, sure! Let me take a look.” I pulled it up on my computer. “Kamala, it’s beautiful. Did you do the design?”

“Yes, and Ashvin did the programming.”

“How did you find the time?” Kamala was taking a very heavy course load in graphic design at Palomar College, a junior college in North San Diego County that has an excellent computer graphics department.

“Actually, I made it a class project. I started right after we returned from England. At first, it was just for the class, but as time passed, I began to feel strongly that it might actually have some usefulness.”

“Kamala, it’s got images of the Symbols! How did you do that?”

“I rendered them. There are only a few right now because I’ve only had so much time to devote to this.”

“But how did you render them? They’re perfect replications.”

“I am capable of eidetic imagery—I have a photographic memory.”

“Really! This is wonderful.”

“If you click on the links, you’ll get an idea how your writing can be presented, how the site is organized.”

“I see.”

“You should know about something which occurred that I did not anticipate.”

“What’s that?”

“I made every effort to be discreet while working on this, yet about ten students saw my renderings of the Symbols.”

“That’s OK. Eventually we’ll want *everyone* to see them.”

“Yes, I understand. But here is my point: though I said nothing about the Symbols, all but two of the students were utterly *captivated* by them. So was my professor. Each has a vague, yet intense feeling that they have great significance. They have asked me for copies to study.”

“Far out!” Harold burst in. “Kamala didn’t tell me that. It’s like that scene in *Close Encounters* where Roy Neary keeps poking his pile of mashed potatoes saying, ‘This *means* something.’”

Silent for several minutes, Armaton spoke out, “Take note of this phenomenon. It is a herald, the genesis of what is to come. Desire for the Love and eternal verities the Folk gently bring to Earth is potent in much of the populace. Where such yearning is not cognized, it lies right beneath the surface. Just the hint of higher consciousness which Kamala unobtrusively presented, has magnetically drawn attention and stirred fervor.

“In keeping with the gentleness of our message, there is no need to aggressively *sell* what ye have aptly named *The Folk of Yore*, thy writings and such. To be clear, by selling I mean using persuasive techniques to *maneuver* people into becoming involved with a product or service or philosophy. It shall more than suffice to simply present it as truthfully, completely, and widely as possible.

“A common practice in marketing goods and services is to create and capitalize on fear, fight competition, and sacrifice honesty, sincerity, loyalty, quality, and benevolence for sales and

stock valuations.

“A similar mindset is prevalent in leaders and followers of religions who feel it is a duty to convert others to their own purportedly God-given superior teachings. Invariably, their ardor is infected by ego and carried to excess, ironically providing domicile for the Sesavah.

“When self-righteousness and the need to persuade predominate, the absurd notion is promulgated that only those who follow one particular religion have been hand picked by God and only they will ‘go to heaven’ or be ‘saved’ or some such nonsense. The great Divine Masters, when they are not weeping for the pain and turmoil such ignorance inflicts, laugh riotously at the absurdity of such an egocentrically contrived notion, the ultimate oxymoron: that the Infinite would express Itself in a way that only a portion—a *small* portion at that—of Its creation would be favored over the rest.

“This is the thinking and methodology of the old paradigm. To those of developed or blossoming higher consciousness intrinsic to the new paradigm, such use of force and manipulation, even in subtle ways, is easily discerned, distasteful, and ever diminishingly viable. To promote our cause we need not resort to persuasive maneuvering nor limit ourselves to conventional channels.

“So, you see, the loss of a New York literary agent is no loss at all. His thinking is yet lodged in the old paradigm and inappropriate to this mission. Understand: ye may soon encounter additional similar hurdles. Trust that they are not obstacles, simply course corrections. Rise above them.

“In keeping with the essence of this work, be gentle with its presentation and expansion. Zig Ziglar, Tom Hopkins, and the other great Sales Masters notwithstanding, refrain from manipulative technique. Thy task is to present, to introduce. Without force, *allow* the magnetism to activate, then behold the majesty.”

Master Armaton departed from the conversation in a flourish of rapturous, celestial bells, which gradually diminished in number and faded out.

Harold spoke first, “So I guess we’re on the right track.”

The rest of the time on the phone we brought Kamala up to speed regarding Richard, then discussed objectives, logistics, what should go on the website, how we should promote it, and so forth.

In conclusion, I suggested, “Even though we don’t have Richard, it’s not like I’m an unknown entity. I’ll contact a few publishers myself and see what happens.”

Kamala voiced her agreement, “That seems wise, Aubrey: exploring all avenues.”

Harold chipped in, “What do we have to lose?”

Over the next few days I talked to three magazine editors I had worked with before. To my relief, they were willing to deal with me directly. Encouraged, I spoke with Meg Lassiter, the editor at my book publisher. She agreed to take a look at the articles as the basis for my next book. Since no one else mentioned Richard, I decided not to, at least until they had a chance to review my material. On Friday, I emailed the four pieces to all of them, then let the whole thing go and returned to the seclusion of my writing.

The following Thursday afternoon Harold called sounding very tentative and nervous, “Um ... Aubrey ... I ... um ... You should ... um ... I’m sending you a link that you should ... um ...”

“Harold, what is it?”

“Well, it’s just that ... you should ... um ... You’ve got to look at this link.”

It was to the website of a supermarket tabloid. I had a very bad feeling that was confirmed when I got to the site. Below a gallery of celebrity snapshots with the headline “CAN YOU



PICK OUT WHO'S GAY?" was another section with a very unflattering picture of me and the words "CELEBRITY SCOOP" on an angle across the top left corner. Beneath the photograph was the caption, "MYSTERIOUS MANNING - BRAINY BABE BONKERS?" I clicked on the photo and got to a page with the heading "SIZZLING SCANDALS" and this article:

Scientist-turned-fugitive-turned-hermit Aubrey Manning doesn't believe in little green men, she's into the little shiny variety. After dropping out of sight during an arson investigation, the one time environmental maven has dropped back in. This time she's telling a very bizarre tale about visiting other worlds in other dimensions where the little men live. Now that she's "back," Manning has answers to all the world's problems.

No wonder she's taking a leave of absence. It's time to take your medicine now, Aubrey. And stay away from the heavy machinery.

## *Chapter 29*

### *The Schism*

By the next day the story hit the mainstream newspapers, broadcast news, and late night talk show monologues. After what I'd already been through, the rejection of my work and even the betrayal of having it leaked and ridiculed didn't bother or surprise me that much. Apparently this was one of the "hurdles" Armaton referred to and the course correction was evident: the website was the way to go. In fact, it was the only way to go.

I was very grateful for my friends' help, talent, and initiative. Since the story first broke, we had been discussing the situation. Prabhas and Nirmala called. This was the first time I had spoken with them since I left their home.

"Aubrey, Aubrey, dear child," Nirmala's voice quaked with consoling and reassuring laughter, "Do not take this too seriously. You're not the first and, I daresay, you shan't be the last to be taunted as crazy by a world that's a lot crazier than it thinks you are."

Prabhas was also lighthearted, "This is why I am so thankful I get to stay in the background. So I trust it is becoming more clear, the path you are *not* to take?"

"Yes," I replied in kind, "It's not a subtle discrimination."

"Indeed. Nirmala and I have been talking and we are wanting to support your efforts however we can. What are your plans ... or is it too soon to ask this of you?"

"No, actually I've been talking with the others and we have a pretty good idea of what needs to be done. Let me see if I can get Harold to join us."

I dialed out and reached him right away.

"Hi Aubrey. What's up?"

"Hi, Harold. I've got Prabhas and Nirmala on the line. I'm going to click you in."

"OK."

"Prabhas, Nirmala, Here's Harold."

"Hello, Harold. Good to speak with you again," they both chimed in.

"Hi, yeah! Same here."

"Harold, I was just about to tell Prabhas and Nirmala what we've been talking about and I wanted them to have your perspective."

"Sure."

I set the stage, "There are two things we have to resolve. The main one, of course, is how to get out the message of the Folk. Then we have to figure out what to do about DAGR."

Harold amended, "But not necessarily in that order."

"Harold thinks DAGR poses an immediate threat."

"I have a bad feeling they can do some serious damage way before they're fully operational."

Prabhas concurred, "I'm very much inclined to agree. Ashvin told us you are needing more information before you can make a determination. How close are you to this, Harold?"

"We're getting there, but we're not there yet. It could take a month, maybe longer."

"Then, Aubrey, tell us of your message, have you refined it? What is it, essentially?"

I answered, "We need to make it very clear to people that the basic problem is how we think; that restoring man's balance with Mother Earth is about a lot more than recycling bottles and cans or carpooling. It's much more personal and it involves *every* individual, no exceptions. Everyone contributes either to the problem or the solution. To bring the planet into balance, each one of us needs to come into balance."

Harold elaborated, “The tricky part isn’t the message, it’s coming up with a way to get it out. We can post to the website, but I think we need to get something into print, too.”

“Perhaps ...” Prabhas pondered, “... perhaps that is where we can be of some assistance.” To Nirmala, “What do you think?”

She acknowledged, “I think so ... yes. Aubrey, what do you have ready now?”

“There are probably thirty or forty interpretations of the Symbols that are between two and ten pages long.”

“Single or double spaced?”

“Single.”

“Do any of these interpretations tell anything of your own story, your experiences?”

“No, none of them.”

“Hmmm.... Let me ask you this, do you have any notes, any record of your experiences?”

“Yes, actually, I have a pretty detailed journal. I started it when Master Armaton first showed up.”

“Wonderful! Would you be willing to let someone work with it?”

“Sure, Nirmala, but what do you mean? Work with it how?”

“The notion has been coming to me with the greatest intensity that you must tell people your own story. I cannot shake the feeling that is the best way to frame and introduce the message of the Folk.”

“My story? What happens to me is pretty inconsequential ... especially compared to the ... the ... magnificence of what’s come from the Symbols ... and Aerial. You should be talking about *Sacred Memories*, getting *Aerial’s* story out, not mine.”

“But don’t you see how your story is linked to Aerial’s? Yes, that’s it! Your story is the link to Aerial’s. His has chronicled the disappearance of the Folk. Yours shall tell of their return. You know I have seen them. Both Prabhas and I have seen them.”

“Seen ...? You mean the Folk?”

“Yes. Tell her, husband.”

“Well, it was about a fortnight ago when I felt the strongest urge to go to the forest. Most curiously, when I mentioned this to Nirmala, she reported having the same desire. This was too fortuitous to ignore so we took to our automobile and drove down to Savernake Forest, just southeast of Marlborough. We arrived at dusk. It is a beautiful place, an ancient woodland. Some of the trees go back almost to the time of Aerial.

“After parking near the campsite we walked along one of the footpaths amongst the oak and beech trees. We were all alone and the silence was stunning. In the evening fog I noticed something rather unusual. Some of the particles of mist appeared to glow with a brilliant white light. Thinking it to be a problem with my vision, I began to vigorously rub my eyes.”

Nirmala broke in, “When Prabhas did this, I immediately knew what was happening and told him, ‘It is no trick. I see them, too!’ We looked at each other, then again at the tiny lights and both of us broke into a joyous laughter, realizing what we were witnessing.

“The experience continued. As the mist touched the trees and the shrubs, their leaves emitted the same tiny glints of light, then their branches and trunks. The lights also settled into the soil as well as rocks and boulders. We also heard a soft humming sound that reminded us of the tones we heard coming from the *Book of Symbols*.”

“Um, excuse me,” Harold interrupted, “but I can’t hold this in any longer. The same thing is happening to me right now. I mean I’m not in a forest, and it’s broad daylight, but I’m looking out the window and there are these very little, very bright lights all over the place. Not on the

buildings or the cars but like Nirmala said, in the trees and the grass. This is wild!”

I told them, “Master Armaton showed me the Folk the night he came out of my dream. Since then I’ve been able to see them whenever I tune in.”

Armaton joined us, “The Folk visit this planet every day. They did not leave in Aural’s time; more precisely they disappeared from sight. That is to say, after Aural no one remained with a consciousness high enough to perceive them. It was imperative for him to document their presence for a future time when mass consciousness would again rise.

“Contrary to the limited perspective and understanding of the anthropological establishment, mankind in this present day is not the product of a linear evolution. Consciousness rises and falls—on this planet—in cycles with a duration of ...”

Prabhas and Nirmala exclaimed in unison, “24,000 years!”

Armaton continued the sentence, “... according to Folk perspective ...”

The Gandhi’s finished it, “... and saints of India.”

Armaton went on, “This is exemplified in the architecture of the Great Plane of Knowledge. Each pairing of white and black stripes represents a complete cycle. The increasing and decreasing ratio of white to black represents the rise and fall of consciousness between peaks of wisdom and bliss to troughs of abject ignorance and misery.”

Nirmala corroborated, “The rishis, illumined sages of ancient India, said essentially the same thing. They talked of equinoctial cycles separated into segments called yugas that represented the levels of mass consciousness. In the lowest, called Kali Yuga, mankind has no understanding outside gross materialism and is restricted to the confines of three dimensions. Above that is Dwapara Yuga, wherein man is capable of understanding electricity and atomic energy and gains dominion over space through the development of electronic communications, aircraft, and so on. The next age is Treta Yuga in which time is conquered through the attainment of telepathic abilities. In the highest, Satya Yuga, mankind is free of third dimensional limitations and identified with the Divine.”

Prabhas added, “So mass consciousness will rise as the ages ascend from Kali to Satya and fall again with the descent back to Kali. Up and down and up and down and so on and so forth. Enlightened individuals are to be found in every age. In the Kali Yuga there are few. Their number increases as the ages ascend. In Satya they predominate.

“Many other cultures have their own version of this concept. You will see this with the Mayans. In ancient Greece, Plato spoke of ‘the Great Year,’ which was his term for the complete cycle. He, too, broke it down into ages, the commonly known iron, bronze, silver, and golden ages which correspond to kali, dwapara, treta, and satya.”

Armaton resumed, “So the point of this is, given we are on the ascending side of the cycle, there is no vibrational capacity for anything but a rise in mass consciousness. Do not, however, allow this inevitability to delude ye into a false sense of security with respect to the outcome of our mission.

“The Dark Age from which we have just emerged has been the lowest ebb in consciousness mankind has experienced ...”

“Yes! Yes!” Prabhas couldn’t contain himself. “According to Hindu scriptures, there is a greater universal cycle; it is called a Day of Creation and is said to be 4,300,560,000 years in length. And they agree with what you have just said, Master Armaton. This past Kali Yuga has taken place in the Kali Yuga of the larger universal cycle. It was, indeed, the lowest of the low.”

“Hence,” Armaton continued, “the challenge of the day and the reason Queen Veridia asked Aural to write *Sacred Memories*. It would not normally be necessary to intervene in an

evolutionary process that would, quite naturally and in its own time, result in the reawakening of man to the loving daily presence of the Folk.

“However, with the consciousness having steeped so low, advantage was given to the Sesavah. It thrived on the abundant ignorance and wretchedness and accumulated sufficient power, utilized with great success, to forestall humanity’s spiritual development. The sole, fiendish objective is to preserve its dominion.

“The Sesavah was not capable or desirous of limiting intellectual development. Thus, man’s burgeoning intelligence has enabled him to flourish. Since his technological prowess has been unchecked by an appropriate level of spiritual maturity, he has become powerful enough to constitute a danger—to himself and every other living entity on the planet.

“The grave dangers created by man’s ignorance, arrogance, and aggression give rise to great fears which further energize the Sesavah.

“Were we, the Folk, not to actively intervene, our prophecy indicated the virtually insurmountable probability of dire cataclysms with the potential to exterminate all but the simplest and most hardy life forms. As it is, we are in a sprint to the finish line. As Aubrey has realized with her discovery of the CUE factor, mankind is in a race to elevate consciousness in time to avert self-destruction and achieve a way to flourish more in balance and harmony with Mother Earth

“The irony, not lost on we who have given birth to this mission, is that fearlessness in the face of seemingly gruesome danger is essential to survival. That is why Aerial wrote *Sacred Memories*, why the *Book of Symbols* was brought into physical manifestation, why untold legions of Golden Warrior Guardians are at the ready, why countless Giftbearers continue, each and every day, to deliver their precious Jewels, why ye have been called to this sacred mission, and why it shall be described in Aubrey’s next book, so titled, in which the story shall be told of events transpiring in her life since my reappearance some six months ago.

“All these actions are in the interest of promoting and expanding Love, for Love is the only antidote to fear. It is the progenitor of elevated consciousness, the predominant and driving force of the Great Shift into a new paradigm.”

Harold pointed out, “Aerial wrote about that.”

“Yes.” I looked it up. “There’s a part in Chapter 17 where he mentions a ‘dangerous dichotomy.’ Then he says:

Indeed! One’s reverence for Life  
Proclaims a loving consciousness.  
No greater Gift can one retain,  
Is more elusive if once lost.

Retained or lost depends upon  
The choices born of one’s free will:  
If held in Peace by Love ... retained,  
If flooded forth from fear ... is lost.

According to the prophecy  
Within Our Symbol, ‘The Great Shift,’  
This schism shall be prevalent  
When ‘Sacred Mem’ries’ issues forth.

Scenarios will manifest  
 Directly from mass consciousness  
 And prove to be, prepond'rantly,  
 Benign or very 'dangerous.'

Which way will all the choices tilt?  
 We do not know, beyond this truth:  
 A 'Shift' will touch all of Mankind  
 Effecting massive change and growth."

Armaton acknowledged, "The schism is clearly prevalent; at its extremes, Dr. von Hass's group and ye. They pursue a course of force and control, expressing and anchoring fear and subjugation. Ye pursue a course of power and inspiration, expressing and anchoring Love and freedom.

"*Sacred Memories* is issuing forth, beginning with ye. This marks not only the culmination of the schism, but also the return of the Folk; that is to say, their reappearance. There are many people now with—or close to—the level of consciousness necessary to perceive them. Our mission is to catalyze the process of recognition by issuing the clarion call of their presence to all.

"If Mankind is to be saved, if any individual is to truly achieve heaven, it shall only occur through Love; through living and acting in Love, not out of a blind or studied adherence to any dogma or philosophy. It is a matter of vibratory rate, not obedience: only Love, pure Love, wherein *all* are embraced as brothers and sisters.

"To place oneself in Its power is the simplest, most difficult matter. Simple, because, at the heart of it, man's very essence is Love. Difficult, because to identify with this Essence, man must overcome the influence of the Sesavah and generation upon generation of delusion: identifying with flesh and mind as his essence.

"Ye and the many who shall grasp our message hold hope and the future in thy hands. We, the Folk, and thy beloved Mother Earth are greatly heartened by thy capacity to understand and act with calm determination. Such is thine expression of the Love within. Ye convey many blessings and are much blessed."

With that said, Armaton withdrew.

After a few seconds Harold whispered, "Whew! Heavy."

Prabhas, ever the pragmatic businessman, moved us forward, "There is much to do. Nirmala and I have discussed the situation at length and I am very much in agreement with her conviction regarding the necessity to put together your story, Aubrey, and issue it to the public.

"If you are in agreement we shall gather the resources to do this."

"To do what, exactly?"

Nirmala answered, "Why, to put out your next book, child."

"No one will publish me. And how will I have the time to work on a book and keep interpreting the Symbols? I can't let up on that, it's too ..."

"With help, my dear, with help," Prabhas assured. "And perhaps we might consider independently publishing."

"But to do that will take ..."

"Money and resources, what Nirmala and I have in great abundance. Just the contracts we

have recently closed will easily fund this project. For the time being, Aubrey, you continue to focus on the Symbols. We'll come up with something that will work for you. Leave it to us. Will you go along with this?"

"How can I say anything but 'Yes?'"

"Excellent. Harold, are you game?"

"Sure thing."

Nirmala pressed on, "In what form is your journal, Aubrey?"

"What literary form?"

"No, dear. Is it handwritten or ..."

"No—I get it—no, it's all on my computer."

"Superb! Would you send me the file?"

"Of course. I'll do it as soon as we hang up."

"Thank you, dear."

"Aubrey," Prabhas assured, "once you send us the file, you put it out of your mind and keep on with what you are doing."

"I will, Prabhas."

He brought the conversation to a close, "Harold?"

"Yes?"

"Nirmala and I shall be in close communication with you, Ashvin, and Kamala. We are before a great challenge, yet I am certain we will find many tricks up our sleeves, eh?"

"Right on!"

## *Chapter 30*

### *A Truly Superb Mentor*

The next month and a half I was unswervingly focused on the *Book of Symbols*. My contact with the others was minimal. They discussed nothing with me, yet I had the feeling a lot was happening.

One day Kamala emailed, prompting me to check out our website. When I brought it up, my jaw dropped. There was what appeared to be a duotone photograph of the Folk, glowing in a grove of trees and from the brush on a distant ridge and several boulders in the foreground.

I was on the phone like a shot. “Kamala, how did you do it? The photograph! It *is* a photograph, isn’t it?”

“Yes, Aubrey, it is. There are more, but we’ve only posted the one so far. What do you think?”

“I don’t have the words—It’s extraordinary ... but how ...?”

“Shortly after hearing that Harold and my aunt and uncle were seeing the Folk, Ashvin and I began to see them, too. Once that happened, we made a determined effort to produce their image on film. After experimentation, meditation, and extensive guidance from Master Armaton, we were led to the process which produced the results you are now seeing.”

“I’m flabbergasted! Tell me more. How do you do it? What kind of film do you use?”

“Normal photographic film or we use a digital camera, nothing special. To put it in Harold’s appreciative words, Ashvin ‘did a major tweak’ on my graphics software and developed specialized filters. The combination of the processing and the intuitive perception of the artist doing the rendering produces the images ... but that’s actually not the best news.”

“It gets better?”

“Do you remember when I told you about my classmates’ reactions to the Symbols?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Well, something even more wonderful is happening with *these* images. Some of the friends I have shown them to report that *they* are now seeing ‘the Lights.’”

“You mean on their own.”

“Yes, exactly. They say it’s a matter of concentration and calmness and that it is a profoundly moving experience. One of them wrote a note and asked me to read it to you.”

“Really!”

“Here it is. This is from Bethany:

Dr. Manning,

There’s been a lot of controversy around you and a lot of people think you’ve lost it, but I know better.

There was something so familiar about the pictures Kami showed me, but I didn’t know what it was until I started seeing those lights for myself. I had completely forgotten that I used to see them a lot when I was really young. I told my parents, but they said it was just my imagination. When I got a little older I stopped seeing them.

The other thing I forgot was how good it felt when I saw them, like everything wasn’t just OK, but it was always OK.

So I just want to tell you that I know you’re not crazy, no



matter what anybody says—No! That didn't come out right. You know what I mean. I can tell there's something very good going on with you and I want to thank you for all the trouble you've been going through and let you know that I want to learn more about this so keep up the good work.

Sincerely,  
Bethany Pierce

“And that is what my friend, Bethany, had to say. Master Armaton was quite pleased when I showed the note to him.”

“When did you get a chance to do that?”

“The other day when she gave it to me.”

“You came here? Why didn't you call me? I would have loved to have seen you.”

“I didn't go to your place, Aubrey.”

“Then how did you see Armaton?”

“Aubrey, he's been here the last three weeks. I thought you knew. Where did you think he was?”

“Actually, Kami, he's been here with me the whole time,” I smiled and waited for her to grasp what had been happening.

“You mean ...”

“Yes, Kami. Both places. Same time. Laws of Physics—out the window.”

A few days later I called Harold to see how he was doing.

“Hey, Aubrey! Thanks for calling. Man it's been *intense* here, but we're putting together a lot of pieces and sorting out just how far along in the game his lowness Breck von Hass is.”

“That's great, Harold.”

“Hey, are you sure you're OK with Armaton being over here all the time? I mean I thought he was supposed to be helping you and ... you know.”

“I have news for you, Harold.”

“What?”

“He *has* been here ... the whole time.”

“No kidding! Really!”

“Uh huh. And what's more, he's been with Kamala and Ashvin helping them, too.”

“Far out!”

“I don't think that's the end of it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Let's talk to the other Gandhi's. It's not too late to call.”

Prabhas picked up, “Aubrey! Harold! So good to hear from you. Let me get my wife on the line.”

Nirmala joined us, “Hello, you two. How are you?”

“We're fine, Nirmala,” I replied. “Say, is Armaton there?”

“Yes. He's been our constant companion and guide since our last phone conversation together. We could never have accomplished what we've done without his help. Thank you so much for sparing him, Aubrey. Did you want to speak with him?”

“Actually, Nirmala, I haven't spared him. He's been with me the whole time, just like always.”

“No!” Nirmala and Prabhas chimed in together.

“Yes. And he’s also been with Harold helping him ... and also with Ashvin and Kamala helping them ... nonstop ... the whole time.”

“My goodness!”

“Actually,” Armaton declared, “*all* of your goodnesses have been involved. And now it’s time for us all to have a nice chat together. One moment, please, whilst I tend to a telephonic duty.”

Kamala came on the line, “Hello, everyone.”

And then Ashvin, “Hi!”

Armaton acted as the moderator, “This has been a time of intense busyness and excellent progress. As ye know, Aubrey continues to work with the *Book of Symbols* and Ashvin and Kamala have created photographic likenesses of the Folk, which ye all have seen on thefolkofyore.com.

“The new information to be shared, the reason we are gathered together, is from the elder Gandhi’s and Harold. Nirmala? Prabhas? Wouldst ye care to begin?”

“Of course, Armatonji,” Nirmala responded. “Thank you. As you all know, Aubrey transmitted her journal to us a few weeks ago. We had already been in touch with a writing and editing team who are very talented and successful as well as dear friends of ours.

“They are a married couple we have known since working together on a project many years ago. We spoke by phone shortly after you returned to the States, Aubrey. Knowing and trusting them as we do, Prabhas and I told of our experiences with you and Master Armaton. We were enthralled by their response.

“They said that for months they had been having the same dreams together. Each night a man chatted with them and took them to fantastic places, all the while portending they were being prepared for—and these were their exact words—‘a sacred mission.’ They were certain what we had been telling them had to do with this and insisted on helping in any way they could.”

“But, woman!” Prabhas could hardly contain himself, “You are skipping the most fantastic part!”

“Perhaps, my dear husband, I was saving it for you to tell.”

“Yes! Well, then! This is the thing. When I asked them what the man in their dreams looked like, their description fit Master Armaton to a ‘T.’”

“Perhaps it will not surprise ye to learn I have been physically present with them, as well as the rest of ye, helping with their portion of the task.”

“Man!” Harold interjected, “You get around.”

“More precisely, dear Harold, I AM around.”

“What is *their* portion? What are *they* doing?” My curiosity was brimming.

“What they *do*, child!” Nirmala replied, “Writing ... turning your journal into a book. They are quite tuned in to you, Aubrey. We have been reading chapters as they go along and it is just like hearing you tell the story.”

Prabhas added, “The dialogue seems utterly genuine. There are parts that describe conversations in which we were involved, so we recall what occurred. They have been recreated so accurately, it’s like they were there at the time taking notes.”

“That is not altogether removed from the truth,” Armaton pointed out. “The writers, with my tutoring, have learned to access the Great Plane of Knowledge and can thusly witness all events mentioned in Aubrey’s journal, affording them the ability to accurately transcribe conversations and describe circumstances. They are quite talented in weaving everything together and

integrating the story with Aubrey's commentary from her journal."

"Who are they? Can you tell me more about them?" I wanted to get a better idea of the people who were so close—yet unknown—to me.

Prabhas answered, "One of the conditions of their involvement was anonymity. They do not wish to be known to anyone but Nirmala, Master Armaton, and myself. We have tried to persuade them otherwise, but they just won't budge on this ... at least for now."

"They don't even want *me* to know?"

"It's not that they don't want anyone to know. They simply prefer to remain in the background and not distract attention from the story and the message it's intended to communicate."

I thought for a moment. "Are they famous? Is that why?"

Prabhas was resolute, "Aubrey, I have vowed to give no information and answer no probing questions. Please do not press me on this."

"Well, how far along are they? Can I see what they've done?"

"They are almost caught up to the present day. We'll email you the manuscript."

"Thank you, Prabhas."

Harold had a request, "Could you send it to the rest of us, too?"

"Certainly. Oh! One more thing, Aubrey. Would you send your latest journal entries to us so we can pass them along to the writers?"

"Of course."

"And in future, please update us weekly or more frequently if necessary so the book can be kept current."

"Yes, I'll be happy to do that."

Armaton introduced the next topic, "Let us move to a most critical issue. Harold?"

"Thank you, sir. Well, I've been working with some of *my* friends who *also* want to be anonymous, but for slightly different reasons. If the wrong people found out what they were doing, it ... well, it would be a very bad thing.

"We've been investigating Breck and his gang. Master Armaton helped us get access to *impossible* information. It's not like he gave us a back door key, though. He just kept asking us questions, really deep, really, really good questions. With him guiding us, we realized we knew a lot more and we could accomplish a lot more than we would have thought in our wildest dreams."

Prabhas commented, "The earmark of a truly superb mentor."

"I'll say," Harold agreed. "Anyway, we managed to find out a lot of what DAGR and AWARE are up to: the research they're doing, the conclusions they've come to so far, and the basis for them. Our team has tapped into their simulations and we're finding some buggy assumptions and parameters that could lead to some unexpected problems ... maybe really bad problems.

"A lot of the equipment we found out about isn't built yet or it isn't fully functioning. But enough is operational right now to do some major damage. The thing that surprised me was they've been monkeying around with some of this stuff for a long time.

"I'm going to email each of you a general report. Aubrey, there's some stuff I need to check out with you in detail right away. If I'm nearly as right as I think I am, there's some very serious business going to happen, maybe soon."

"OK, Harold. Come over as soon as you can. I'm ready for a break."

"This isn't exactly going to be like stopping for a cup of coffee, Aubrey."

“I know. Just come when you can.”

“OK. As soon as Aubrey and I go over this stuff, we’ll get back to the rest of you.”

Everyone concurred. With that, the conversation ended.

That evening Harold came over after work. After greeting me, he turned to Armaton, stared, and said, “So, you’re here and I just left you back at my place. If *I’m* not there, are *you* still there?”

Armaton stared back. He seemed to be thinking harder than I’d ever seen before. Finally, he leaned forward and whispered, “Does it really matter?” as he broke into a nonchalant grin and slapped Harold on the back.

We went into the office and Harold showed me some hard copy of data he had removed from DAGR’s files. I poured over it while Harold sat quietly with his eyes closed. He opened them the moment I reached an inescapable and alarming conclusion.

“So you see it, too,” he said.

“They’re making a lot of the same mistakes Kalman von Hass made.”

“Well, Breck *is* the head honcho. Like father, like son. A chip off the old block. The apple doesn’t fall far ...”

“OK! Harold! Give me some quiet. I need to think.” After a moment, “They’re so focused on their objectives that it blinds them to what they don’t want to see. They’re only looking at what they want to accomplish and ignoring the more widespread ramifications. It’s just what his father did.

“The thing is, I can see it, I can argue it, but I can’t *show* it. Not without access to a machine a little bigger than the one here on my desk.”

“Would the TeraGrid help?”

“You can get me in?”

“Yep. I had that worked out weeks ago.”

“It’s going to take a lot, Harold. After we adjust the parameters we have to rerun Breck’s models. Then we need to get corroboration of...”

“It’s all set up, Aubrey. I’ve had some very frank and super confidential talks with the others on the Grid: Michaelson, Tippett, Geminiani, and Holtzman. I told them enough to get them to help, but not enough to tip them off that we’ve been hacking DAGR.

“They know you want to run some heavy duty simulations and have them validate the results. What they don’t know is that the models are DAGR’s. The cool part is, we don’t even have to upload anything because it’s already on the TeraGrid. DAGR’s been running them through AWARE’s account.

“So here’s what you do. I’m giving you Michaelson’s and all the rest of those guys’ access codes and mine, too, and you divide your machine time among the five of us. That’ll keep anybody’s account from logging so much extra time it raises a red flag. When you’re ready, we’ll turn it over to the other four.”

“OK.” I paused in appreciation. “Harold, you are amazing.”

For the next month I spent most of my time in a world I thought I had left behind. If the subject of my work weren’t so dreadful I would have thoroughly enjoyed myself. However, as each day passed I couldn’t avoid seeing I was that much closer to confirming a horrific possibility.

One bright patch was reading the book the mysterious writers had compiled for me. It was put together just as if I had done it myself. The Gandhi’s claims were true. Conversations were precisely recounted to augment what I had written in my journal. I had only a few minor

suggestions for revisions and noticed that my own writing was only sparsely edited. There had been quite a meeting of the minds, if not the bodies.

In the midst of my reimmersion in mathematical modeling, there was another conference call that yielded the most astonishing proposal. Prabhas and Nirmala gathered the group together to discuss their plan for publishing *Sacred Mission*.

“Greetings to all of you,” Prabhas began. “We are calling you together to introduce an idea which we believe shall accomplish many objectives.”

Nirmala took over, “Aubrey, the idea came from something you recounted to us of your last telephone conversation with Richard Conyers. Do you remember what he said about the articles you submitted to him?”

I laughed, “A writer doesn’t easily forget the extremes of criticism, the good *or* the bad. Which part did you have in mind?”

“When he was commenting on your writing about the Folk and ...”

“And my multidimensional ‘excursions.’ His exact words were, ‘You’re in the wrong genre. This is science *fiction* ... and barely plausible at that.’”

“And there you have it!” Nirmala exclaimed, more vociferously than I thought she had it in her to be.

“Have what?”

“The manner in which we can have *Sacred Mission* published and reach an initial readership that is significant.”

“I’m sorry. I’m an environmental scientist, not a rocket scientist. What are you talking about?”

“The greatest problem with getting your story published is that no one will believe it. What if you don’t label it as true, as nonfiction?”

“You mean present it as if it were ... science *fiction*?”

“Precisely! Yes!”

“Nirmala, forgive me, but that’s ... please forgive me ... that’s insane!”

“No need for forgiveness, Aubrey. Your shock is understandable. If it is insane, though, it is insane like a fox.”

“You know how much I respect you, Nirmala, but ...”

Kamala interrupted, “Aubrey! Do not reject what seems a preposterous notion without at least listening to the thoughts behind it first.”

Harold chimed in, “It’s about as over the top as you can get, but I’ll tell you, there’s something about this that’s very intriguing.”

The others murmured in favor of hearing more.

“OK, Nirmala,” I conceded, “You’re on.”

She resumed, “The first point, of course, is overcoming the damage to your credibility and the barriers that has placed in reaching a readership. If people who read your books before no longer want to, does it not make sense to seek others who may?”

“But *fiction*, Nirmala,” I protested.

“No, Aubrey. It’s OK. It’s *very* OK.” Harold was getting excited. “Whether it’s true or not, it’s a great story. It’s like I was telling you that day in the car with Armaton, after we left People’s: those dreams I was having—they were like the *best* science fiction ... that turned out to be real ... but if you’d have tried to tell me it was real from the beginning, I wouldn’t have believed it ... and I probably wouldn’t have been able to handle it ... like when you first told me about Armaton and the Sesavah.”

“This is making a great deal of sense to me, too, Aubrey,” Ashvin reinforced Harold’s argument. “I’m a member of several science fiction and fantasy web rings and I can easily see them enjoying this simply as a story. And if they liked it enough, the word would get around. As soon as we hang up, I will look into ...”

“Nephew! Nephew! You are putting a cart not yet built in front of the horse. We have yet to convince the primary decision maker.”

“On the surface, what you’re all saying sounds OK,” I took exception, “but there’s something about it that just doesn’t seem right.”

“Hear me out, Aubrey,” Nirmala pressed on. “We have talked about a gentle approach, avoiding the common practice of trying to aggressively persuade people to accept our point of view. What could be less manipulative than releasing the story which frames our message as a work of fiction?”

“Doing so puts the information out in the public and allows the readers to glean the truth—without coercion—by simply exposing them to it.”

“Right on!” Harold shouted. “Nobody with a white shirt and tie comes to the door and says ‘Believe this! It’s good for you.’ ... all the while thinking ‘or else you fry in hell!’ You just put it out there and ...”

Armaton recapitulated a familiar phrase, “Behold the majesty.”

## *Chapter 31*

### *Mounting Evidence*

It didn't take much longer for me to realize that my only real objections were tied to a concept of "how it's *supposed* to be done." As soon as I realized that, all resistance evaporated and I began to share the excitement the others were expressing for this idea, as bizarre as it still seemed to me.

"So, you are now willing to proceed?" Nirmala wanted confirmation.

"Yes. Go ahead with it."

"The final draft is press ready. There is one last step and that is for you to proofread the text one last time. We can transmit it to you immediately."

"That's alright, Nirmala. The changes we made were minor. As far as I'm concerned, having me look it over again is just a formality."

After hearing and giving my consent to the remaining details of my friends' publishing plan, I released it to their capable hands with a rush of exhilaration, "Take it where it needs to go."

With that, we all returned to our tasks at hand. I went back to work sorting out DAGR's agenda and blunders, probing what Breck and his organizations were doing both deliberately and in ignorance. For the next five weeks I spent all my time on the investigation. I slept little, ate sporadically, and walked through the woods occasionally to stretch my legs and my mind.

Each time I set foot in the forest, the Folk and I greeted each other. They serenaded me with delicate strains of the most wondrous sound, which the term music cannot encompass. What I experienced was a blend of sound and feeling that could only result from a complete integration of source and listener. I realized I was listening not only to Them, but also to the rhapsody of my own Being, my Soul, my true identity. It was Love put to sound.

These sublime experiences offset the potential horrors I was examining, yet the contrast jarred my sensibilities. As my probe wound down, I dreaded facing the mounting evidence that a host of unprecedented global disasters was in the making. But the truth of the matter was unavoidable.

What kept me going was a hope that there was still time to stop DAGR. What kept me working around the clock was a sense there was a very slim time margin left in which to get this done.

Harold had been closely monitoring my progress. He called after we both had a chance to examine the final results and gave me his candid analysis, "Holy Geez! This is one major freak out lunatic bummer! It's like watching three year olds stick stuff in electric sockets. ... No it's not. It's worse. It's like having a preschool in an explosives factory. No, it's worse than that, too. It's like ..."

"I get it Harold. It's very bad."

"Very, very bad."

"Now what?"

"We do what we said we were going to do: we get confirmation. I'll set up a teleconference with the others on the TeraGrid. Getting them to actually go through with it will be no easy trick. That's going to mean we tell them everything."

The next day the two of us, Gareth Michaelson, Jahzara Tippett, Lazzaro Geminiani, and Eric Holtzman spoke together on the phone.

After greeting one other, I expressed my appreciation, "I want to thank all of you for helping me get onto the TeraGrid. Nothing I've done before has been this important. Without your help, I

just don't know how ... Well, I'm just very, very grateful."

Jahzara spoke in her customary soft-spoken lilt, "If it wasn't important, I knew Harold never would have asked."

"Do any of you need reassurance before we go on? Are you concerned about ... um ... well, the press coverage lately makes me look pretty weird."

"We're *all* pretty weird if you think about it," Gary laughed. "They've just made you look a little weirder ... OK, a *lot* weirder. The four of us have talked about it ... with Harold, too. However ... uh ... unconventional your beliefs may be, Aubrey, that's your business and none of my business."

"For myself, Aubrey," Jahzara added, "I've known you too long to believe such claptrap as I've seen in the papers and on the television. The overwhelming volume of it alone has made me suspicious. My only questions have to do with a curiosity about your findings."

"Same here," Gary agreed. "Harold hasn't told us much about what you've been doing, other than it has something to do with AWARE. We may not know the details of what's going on, but it seems pretty clear *something* is—the way they got railroaded onto the TeraGrid. If you can help us get to the bottom of it, then I say, let's go!"

"I appreciate how enthusiastic you are," I responded. "Hopefully you'll feel the same way after you get all the details."

That's when Harold and I told them the whole story: how Breck von Hass, DAGR, and AWARE were interrelated and what we'd learned they were up to.

"The level of detail you have is nothing less than astounding. And you can substantiate all this?" Eric seemed impressed.

"Absolutely," Harold snapped back. The moment of truth was upon us. "You can see the proof for yourselves. It's unmistakable. If you want to, I can show you now, but the way we do it will be a little ... um ... irregular."

"What does that mean, irregular?" Eric wanted to know.

"Getting this information took some ... cleverness ... persistence, too. It's not like you can just ..."

Harold was losing them by trying to avoid the uncomfortable truth. I had to interrupt, "The only way to get it was to hack DAGR."

"No way! Get out of here! That's insane!" began the chorus of reactions.

As they vented their shock, I was charged with indignation, "Hey! It bothered me, too ... at first. But think about this. The autonomy that was set up to protect the TeraGrid has been violated by these people. They're like robbers. They used AWARE to force their way in. You know as well as I do, if they wanted access they could have done it the right way. They could've easily contracted with one of us to handle the research. But they didn't. They needed to hide what they were up to.

"So, on one side of the scale: they've invaded our organization, they're using our computers, and storing their data in our bins ... for a project that has the potential to wreak irreversible worldwide devastation. On the other side, we hack them to find out what they're doing on our equipment. Is it really such a dilemma?"

After a long pause Lazzaro spoke in a grave undertone, "Show us."

The other three murmured their concurrence.

Harold took them on a tour similar to the one he had first given me, with the addition of even more revealing material gathered since then.

When it ended, Gary languished, "I had no idea it would be anything like this. I thought the



AWARE thing was just George Scribner monkeying around. I'm ... stunned."

Jahzara offered, "How can we help?"

"Harold?" I beckoned.

"Aubrey's been rerunning AWARE's simulations with a set of parameters that we think reflects reality a lot more accurately than what they've been using. I don't want to say anything about what we came up with because we'd really like all of you to work it yourselves and see how each of our independent results compares."

"How will you transfer the files to us?" Eric asked.

"I don't have to." Harold replied.

Gary and Jahzara helped each other realize, "Because it's on ..."

"... it's *already* on ..."

"... the TeraGrid."

All four agreed to work with us. After we discussed logistics they hung up, one by one. Harold and I bid each a fond and grateful farewell.

When just the two of us were left, I confided in him, "Something's up, Harold. I can feel it."

"I know. Me, too."

"You need to find out if anything's changed with DAGR."

"I'm on it."

Three days later I was distracted from my lingering sense of foreboding when I received several copies of the first edition of *Sacred Mission*. I called Nirmala to thank her and offer my congratulations for her accomplishment.

"Nirmala, it's wonderful. How did you get this done so quickly? My publisher used to take a year to get a book out."

"We were not having to juggle our efforts with seventy-five other projects in the works. Also everything was lined up and ready to go by the time you gave your final approval. Prabhas had arranged financing and the formation of a joint venture with a small publisher who is an associate of the writers and a long time admirer of yours. She became interested when we approached her and *passionate* after she read the book."

"And she's OK with the nonfiction pretending to be fiction thing?"

"Completely. The way they're handling it is by issuing a standard disclaimer: we make no claims the story is necessarily true, though the issues it deals with are."

"But, I've got to tell you something *else*, Aubrey." Nirmala was giggling with delight. "The book is already *selling!*"

"How is that possible? There's barely been time to set up distribution."

"Once Ashvin put the word out, we started getting traffic on our website right away. Its been increasing steadily. Yesterday, we got almost two hundred hits. Some of them are ordering books ... directly from us. What's more, a dear friend of ours owns a high quality print shop and is reproducing the images of the Folk. We are making them available in prints and greeting cards. It is a herald of ..."

I knew what she was going to say and we spoke it together, "... the return of the Folk."

Nirmala continued, "Ashvin, bless his heart, is taking at least the rest of the term off from school to work full time on this. He is putting as much information as he can on the website and updating it frequently. Many of his friends and fellow students are becoming involved. The same thing for Kamala. Our band is increasing, Aubrey."

"That's so good to hear. Does Harold know?"

"Ashvin's been calling him for the past few days but hasn't gotten through. We're getting a

bit concerned. Have you heard from him?”

“No, but I haven’t expected to. He’s digging deeper into DAGR’s secrets and I think it’s just very intense.” I was antsy to get back to work. “Well, thanks for the good news, Nirmala. It’s been a welcome ...”

“Please do not take your leave just yet. There’s more good news.”

“Alright!”

“Our publisher has been in talks with an online game designer who is very interested in creating something based on *The Folk of Yore*.”

“A *game*? That’s the good news? The world is on the edge of calamity and we’re going to make a *game* out of it?”

“No, no, Aubrey! You’ve gotten the wrong impression. That’s not it at all. What they want to do is recreate various life situations, personal as well as global, and put them into a game medium. In the simulation of these situations, players will be given an opportunity to make choices and see the consequences: to themselves, others, the environment and so on and so forth. Winning would be achieved by participating in successful outcomes: that which is best for the individual and for the highest common good.

“All of this is still very much in the conceptual stage, but some marvelous ideas and potentials have emerged already. The designers believe the story will appeal to a wide audience, young and old, and to many other demographic and interest groups. They are intrigued with the possibility of designing a game that would be very appealing and satisfying to the traditional game audience and also have the potential to attract and involve these other groups. They love the idea of creating a venue where people of disparate ages and backgrounds can play together, interacting and learning from each other.”

Nirmala’s voice shifted to a mirthful tone, “I trust you no longer object so vehemently.”

Laughing at myself, “Sorry for the heavy trigger finger. To tell you the truth, I’m astounded. I thought the game world was pretty much overrun with violence and sleaze.”

“That’s not the case at all. In fact these designers have been quite successful with a very popular game that promotes self empowerment and esteem. The Sesavah has had a powerful influence in media and entertainment, but its grip is surely loosening.”

“Well, it’s still got a firm grip on Breck and his people.”

“It would seem. How is that going, Aubrey? We haven’t heard anything for a while.”

“It’s going. We’ve uncovered a lot. Four of my colleagues on the TeraGrid are running independent studies that should confirm my results. Is it good when you make a lot of progress in finding out just how bad things are?”

“Do not let your weariness and the danger you must assess get you down. Be consoled in knowing your book has begun summoning the ushers of enlightenment. All our efforts will culminate in great good. What’s more, we are only one group among many active in the salvation of this planet.”

“I know.”

“There is one final thing.”

“Uh huh?”

“Prabhas and the writers and I feel very strongly *Sacred Memories* should be published now. It is the necessary companion to *Sacred Mission*. They require each other for a more thorough understanding of what is happening and how to deal with it. The message Aerial conveys from Mother Earth alone is essential.

“The readers who resonate with the truth of your message will want it—it is my feeling they

will *demand* it—immediately. Aerial’s words, so charged with Love as Master Armaton says, will help those who so desire, to transform, to uplift their thoughts and raise their consciousness. We must have it available.”

I agreed, “I read from *Sacred Memories* almost every day, especially when I’m beginning to feel troubled. It has never failed to help me redirect my thinking, to choose a more positive focus. Personally, I think *Sacred Memories* has it all. My main intention for *Sacred Mission* is that it directs people to *Sacred Memories*. If you feel now is the time, then let it be so.”

“I do, Aubrey, with every fiber of my being.”

“Thank you for being on top of this, Nirmala—you and Prabhas and the writers. And thanks for the good news and the encouraging words. I’m always recharged when we speak.”

“You’re most welcome, Aubrey. Of course you know that goes both ways.”

Several more days passed and I still hadn’t heard from Harold. Then the phone rang at three in the morning.

“Harold! Are you alright?”

“Me, personally? For now, yeah. But we’re *all* in *big* trouble.”

“Who? Us? What do you mean?”

“Us. Breck. DAGR. Everybody. They’re running one of the scenarios we looked at.”

“That’s not a bad thing. If they’re running another simulation, maybe they realize there’s a flaw.”

“No, Aubrey, you don’t get it. It’s not a simulation. They’re doing it for real.”

“What? What are they doing?”

“It’s a nightmare! They’re beaming microwave pulses to twelve discreet segments of the ionosphere. The application pattern and the power are being alternated according to a set of formulas derived by Kalman von Hass ... the ones you wrote about in grad school.”

“I remember looking at this part of DAGR’s operating plan—the formulas caught my attention. But I couldn’t figure out how they were being applied, what they were trying to accomplish.”

“It’s a weapons system.”

“And they’re going to put in into operation?”

“It’s been running for the past seven days.”

“God help us! What have they been targeting?”

“Nothing yet. They’re establishing protocols. One of the reports I found talked about testing for atmospheric sensitivities and using the data they acquire to generate weapons opportunities. I’m not sure what that means. Would you see if you can figure it out?”

“I’ll get on it right away.”

The rest of the day and into the night I wrestled with the mystery. From time to time Armaton came to my office. Sometimes he brought me food or a drink. Other times he stood in the doorway for a moment and smiled at me, then pronounced and walked away. Without speaking a word, his presence was a gentle reminder of the countless things he had told me in the past to help me remain calm, centered, and focused. I remembered this was, ultimately, about Love and Love alone. With this context I was able to work with remarkable poise, speed, and efficiency.

By two the next morning, after twenty-three hours of concentrated effort, I fully understood the situation. The last words of Col. Kurtz in the film *Apocalypse Now* flashed through my mind, “The horror. The horror.”

## *Chapter 32*

### *Spreading the Word*

Over the next four hours I put together a summary of my findings and emailed it to Harold and all the Gandhi's. I deliberated sending it to my four TeraGrid colleagues but didn't, to avoid any possibility of influencing their findings. Then I called Ashvin.

"Good morning, Aubrey," he greeted me.

"Ashvin, I've just sent you some information you've got to get on the website right away. It needs to be spread to as many people as you can as quickly as possible. I don't have time to explain now. You'll understand when you read it."

"Alright, Aubrey. I'll tend to it immediately."

Next I called Harold who answered with a groggy mumble, "Mmmwph?"

"Harold! It's very bad and getting worse. We've got to get the word out immediately."

His voice was muffled and barely understandable, "What word? Aubrey, is that you? What time is it?"

"Almost six. Harold! Are you awake?"

"Oh, yeah. Sure. I just dozed off for a couple of hours after we hung up."

"That was yesterday, Harold. You've been sleeping since we talked?"

"Um ... yeah." With a start he finally came to his senses, realizing he had slept almost twenty-seven hours. "I can't believe it. I've been out for an entire day!"

"When was the last time you slept before that?"

"I don't know. Days, I guess."

"Are you alright? Do you need time to clear your head?"

"No, I'm OK now. I was just a little fuzzy there for awhile. Could you start over again?"

"I know what they're doing, Harold."

"DAGR."

"Mmm hmm. My report is in your 'in' box. I just got off the phone with Ashvin. He's going to post it on the website and get as many people as he can to read it and spread the word. I'm going to email everybody I can think of and ask them to do the same thing."

"I'll do it, too, unless there's something else ...?"

"No, that's it."

"What should I be telling people to do, besides spreading the word?"

"I'm not sure. I just know we've got to get the information out ... now. We'll know the next step when we need it."

"OK. So you've been *up* the whole time I've been asleep?"

"Yeah."

"Then *you* need to get some rest."

"I'm alright. Maybe later."

For the rest of the day I sent one personal email after another. I didn't want to do group mailings because it felt important to appeal directly to each individual.

At seven in the evening, Armaton appeared in my doorway again. This time he motioned me toward him by flicking his pointed forefinger.

"There's a lot more I can do," I resisted.

"What is of prime importance for thee at this time is paying heed to thy physical body. Give it an opportunity to replenish. My suggestion is a warm shower, not a bath, since I believe thou wouldst quickly fall asleep only to be rudely awakened later by the discomfort of being

immersed in water chilled over the duration of thy slumber.”

“But there’s so much more ...”

“Thou hast already stretched thy capacities in the successful pursuit of an important achievement. Now it is time for renewal and respect for the balance necessary to a harmonious life. He is wise who knows relaxation is as important as endurance. He is wisest who correctly discriminates the appropriate times for each. Prepare for the morrow’s opportunities with a good night’s rest.”

I realized my need to keep working was not out of tenacity, but desperation. That was surely not the way of Love and trust.

“A *fine* discrimination, dear Aubrey. I bid thee a pleasant night’s rest.”

“Good night, Master Armaton. Thank you.”

After nine hours sleep, an early morning stroll through the woods was the perfect way to wind down my renewal. The last step was the excellent breakfast Master Armaton prepared for me: eggs scrambled with fresh green onions, minced garlic, and salsa; buttered whole wheat English muffins; and a steaming cup of chamomile tea sweetened with honey.

“A surprise may be in store for thee today: what was once shunned, now sought.”

“Meaning ...?”

“‘Tis but a hint that when recalled may put a smile on thy face and offer the assurance of a gentle confirmation.”

“Um ... OK. Thanks.”

“You are most welcome.”

The first thing I did was call Ashvin. “What was the web traffic like yesterday?”

“I don’t know. I have it set up to generate a report at 11:00. Do you want me to check now?”

“No, that’s OK. Another hour and a half isn’t going to matter. What about emails? Are there many replies to what we sent out yesterday?”

“There were twenty-two as of eight o’clock this morning.”

“Twenty-two.” I let out a breathy whistle. “That’s pretty grim. We’ve got to reach a lot more people. Would you call me as soon as you get the report?”

“Certainly. Talk to you then.”

I made my next call, “Harold, it doesn’t look good. We’ve only gotten twenty-two emails back.”

“How many hits ... Oh! We won’t know ‘til later. So what are you thinking?”

“I’m thinking we’ve got to reach a lot of people fast.”

“A lot like ... millions.”

“Uh huh.”

“You *know* there’s a way we can do that.”

“If I knew, I’d be doing it.”

“Hold a press conference.”

I laughed, “A press conference! Go *to* the people I’ve been doing everything to stay away from?”

“Not if you’re happy with twenty-two emails and anything less than a few hundred thousand hits.”

I thought, “Talk about ‘the horror!’” Then I remembered Armaton’s prediction of something “once shunned, now sought.” I was still resisting the idea, but I *did* smile.

“Just for the sake of argument, how would I pull it off?”

“Call Prabhas. He has media people all over the world that handle this kind of thing. At least

think about it.”

I couldn't help but think about it. As much as I tried to resist, it became more and more clear this was a tactical necessity, regardless of the web report results.

On the phone again, “Hello, Prabhas. Are you having dinner?”

“No, no, not yet. Nirmala is busy preparing it. How *are* you, Aubrey? The report you sent was most distressing.”

“That's what I'm calling about. We've got to get massive public exposure, make people aware of what's going on. Can you help?”

“Just tell me what you need. How do you propose to accomplish this?”

“I'm going to call a press conference.”

Prabhas laughed so hard I thought he was going to hurt himself. “What a priceless irony!” he addressed me between gleeful snorts. “I'm sorry, Aubrey, it just strikes me so ...” He broke up again.

“It's OK. I laughed, too when Harold came up with the idea ... probably not as hard as you, though. But, then again, you're not the one who has to go into the lions' den.”

“Oh, Aubrey! Isn't it a godsend to be able to laugh in the midst of all this trouble? Now, then, what would you like me to do?”

“Can you recommend someone to help make the arrangements? And keep things from getting out of control. When I issue my statement, it needs to be done in the proper setting ... not with people yelling and turning it into a circus.”

“Your request is astounding! I know just the man. He was a press secretary for the royal family; very well respected and certainly experienced in dealing with the tabloids as well as the mainstream press. What makes him especially suited for the job is his familiarity with your situation. We've had a conversation about it.”

“No kidding! He knows that you and I are ...?”

“No, that's why it's so odd. He hasn't a clue. It's quite a coincidence, though I believe there is no such thing. We had lunch together last week, no business, just as friends. He was talking about public relations and mentioned the cases he found most rewarding were those in which he'd helped shift public opinion for clients who had been undeservedly maligned in the media.

“That's when your name came up. He said he had followed your career for years and appreciated what a high profile you had attained for a scientist. Your recent bad press was most upsetting to him, particularly since his opinion was that much of it was malevolently orchestrated by a third party. He regretted not having had the opportunity to help and told me your case was especially compelling now that he had just finished reading one of your books.”

“Really! Which one?”

“*Sacred Mission.*”

“No way!”

“I believe the appropriate response is, ‘Way!’”

After a moment of sputtering in astonishment, I was able to speak coherently, “Prabhas, what are the odds this could happen? They've got to be ...”

“Inevitable, my dear. There is more going on here than what is in the control of any one or all of us.”

“Well, that's for certain.”

“A question: when do you want to hold this event?”

“As soon as possible.”

“If I'm not mistaken, we're in luck. He was leaving for the States soon after I saw him ...”

going to Detroit, I believe, tending to a trade show or some such thing. I will contact him directly and put him in touch with you.”

We discussed a few details and hung up. Within the hour my phone rang.

“Dr. Manning?”

“Yes.”

“Malcolm MacLaren. I understand I may be of some service to you.”

“Gosh! Yes. Thank you for calling.”

“It is a profound honor. I believe I have been called to your aid by a power even higher than my dear friend Prabhas.”

“Thank you. That’s very kind.”

“He gave me a brief assessment of your requirements which I would like to get to in a moment. At this point I know a great deal about you but you know nothing about me other than what accolades my friend has expressed with regard to my professional accomplishments. Suffice it to say, I do my job well.

“What I want you to know is that in reading *Sacred Mission*, I am inclined to believe it is far closer to truth than fiction. There is no doubt in my mind you are a woman of integrity. Finding out just now that Prabhas is your champion and holds you so dear is irrefutable substantiation. Furthermore, he and I share a similar understanding, having been in the same meditation circle for more decades than I wish to count.

“The point is, given my familiarity with the subtle realms beyond the physical, my knowledge of you, and the trust I place in your honesty and dedication, there is little you can say that will startle me and nothing that would dissuade me from the dedication to helping you which I now affirm.”

With the accent of a Southern belle, “Why Mr. MacLaren! I declare, you *do* know how to sweep a girl off her feet!”

“Actually, my dear, feet sweeping is the last thing on my mind. If you were twenty years older and I twenty years younger ... I’d *still* be too old for you.”

“You know, I’m sorry. What you said was so heartfelt, I should have been more ...”

“Nonsense. I agree with Master Armaton. Your irreverence is delightful. By the way, is there a chance I might meet him?”

“I’m surprised you haven’t already!”

“Not that I’m aware. In any event, I want you to feel comfortable being forthright with me, Dr. Manning. I can help you best if we have an open, clear communication.”

“OK. Let’s try it out now. Since you’ve swept me off my feet, I’m feeling like I want to call you Malcolm. May I? And, please, call me Aubrey.”

Chuckling, “Yes, of course, Aubrey. Does this mean we’ve bonded?”

“Now who’s being irreverent?”

“Yes, well! Perhaps we should be getting down to business.”

“Agreed. How soon can we do this and what else do you need from me?”

“My business here concluded yesterday. Fortunately I wasn’t able to arrange a flight back home until tomorrow morning; otherwise we’d have missed each other. Instead, now I’ll fly out to San Diego as soon as I can.

“Prabhas emailed me your report. I’ve only had a chance to skim a few parts here and there. I assume it contains the gist of what you intend to present.”

“Yes.”

“Good. I’ll study it on the plane. For now, I shan’t ask anything else of you other than a

‘Bon voyage.’ I’ll call again when I settle in and let you know where I’m staying.”

“OK. Bon voyage, then! See you soon.”

Now that that was done, I sat back and contemplated the impact stepping back into the public eye would have on my life. Within a short time I noticed my speculation was prompting doubt and stirring fear. I stopped this train of thought immediately and concentrated instead on visualizing myself at the press conference making my presentation confidently and cogently in front of the thirty or so press people I anticipated would be there.

My contemplation was interrupted by the telephone. A glance at the clock revealed it was 11:20. This had to be Ashvin.

“I’ve just gone through the report. We’ve gotten a pretty nice bump. Our maximum had been 292 hits per day. Yesterday the number was 417. The impressive thing is, most of them remained for well over an hour, not just parked, but active. I think it’s safe to say they were being attentive to the material.

“Of course, there’s no way to make a projection from these numbers. Tomorrow we’ll be in a better position to see if this was an incidental blip or an indicator.”

“Thanks, Ashvin. We’ll see what we see.”

After hanging up, I was at a loss for what to do next. I sat at my desk, stared at the computer, jumped up, looked around my office, sat down again, and repeated this cycle several times.

Finally Armaton appeared in my doorway again, “What wouldst thou do?”

“I don’t know. Something. Maybe I should read *Sacred Memories* again or work on a Symbol, call somebody. I don’t *know*.”

“Many months have passed of uninterrupted labors and challenges in the face of severe and expansive crises. Even thy meditations have had purpose attached to them. A habit has formed that refuses to release such tenacity of effort, even briefly.

“Grave, imminent danger has been revealed to thee. Yet, in this present moment, a gap exists in which there is nothing to do. It is an interlude prior to the likely unavoidable probability of ferocious, abhorrent battle upon which survival hangs in the balance with cataclysm.

“May I remind thee, in this present moment, there is *no* danger and *no* battle. In this now, the sun is shining for thee and Harold and Ashvin and Kamala. A gentle rain is falling for Prabhas, Nirmala, and the writers. Ye are all awash in the abundant blessing of Love shared with each other and we, the Folk.

“I, in all of my ‘counterparts,’ am having essentially the same conversation with each of ye simultaneously, encouraging ye to enjoy this respite. It will be good for thee to relax and by detaching thyself from the *need* to act, reinforce thy faith that the Higher Power that has called *all* of us together has each of us and the situation well in hand.”

After I pondered this for a moment, “So, what’ll it be?”

“Prithee?”

“Shooting hoops or shooting pool?”

“Why not both?”

The respite lasted the rest of the day. It concluded at a movie in the evening which Armaton coaxed and accompanied me to see. When I pulled into a parking spot I was astonished and elated to see Ashvin, Kamala, and Harold each getting out of their cars escorted by their “own” Armatons. The eight of us greeted each other jubilantly, then headed for the box office.

“Pardon me,” the four Armatons said just before consolidating into one. He then continued, “Why purchase four tickets when one will do?”

After the movie we stopped for pizza, beer, and a lot of chatter and laughs. Armaton told



stories that had us in stitches. Ashvin, with his swarthy Indian looks and accent, did a hilarious spoof of the TV show *Dallas*, playing all the parts, including an argument between J.R. and Sue Ellen.

We were all able to get away and thoroughly unwind. When we returned to our cars Armaton split into four again and rode home with each of us. After getting in, I checked for messages. There was only one.

“Hello Aubrey. This is Malcolm MacLaren. I’ve arrived in San Diego and I’m staying at the Best Western in Escondido. I’ve gone over your report thoroughly and I must say it is rather chilling. There is no question we need to act swiftly. What I have in mind would ordinarily take a month to set up properly. Let’s give ourselves until Monday, a week from tomorrow, at 10 AM to hold the press conference.

“You have my commitment to do whatever it takes to dispel this evil. All my resources are at your disposal. Having said that, I must issue a warning. Once we set this in motion, there shall be no turning back. What we are about to do will attract the unbridled fury of men who possess dreadful and deadly power, whose actions are driven by their voracity for control and justified by their absolute conviction of rectitude.” He cleared his throat, “Rummmph. Well then, I will call you tomorrow at 7 AM.”

### Chapter 33

## A Workable Strategy

At seven o'clock sharp the phone rang. I didn't need the caller ID to know who it was.

"Good morning, Malcolm."

"That it is, Aubrey. The dawn has broken in more ways than one. I've studied your report further and I'm beginning to see the glimmers of a workable strategy. The first order of business is to assess available resources. Who is working with you and what is being done?"

I gave him as thorough a description as I could off the top of my head.

"Excellent. Please email me contact information for the people you've mentioned. Do they know of my involvement?"

"Yes. I saw them last night. We were taking the night off from all this, but I felt it was important to make an exception to let them know you were helping. They're all looking forward to meeting you. Ashvin says you've met before."

"We have, almost ten years ago, was it? At his aunt and uncle's place ... he was thirteen ... just celebrated his birthday ... very pleased to be a teenager ... a most delightful young man."

"Well then, there are two immediate items on my agenda. First, you and I need to meet. We need to look each other in the eye, shake hands, and launch this effort properly. Second, it would be impossible to overstate how immensely interested I am to see the 11 AM web traffic report. I have a hunch what you've initiated on your website is going to play a decisive role in our success."

"Why don't you come over this morning? Would you like to join us for breakfast? Master Armaton is an *incredible* cook. Then we can talk to Ashvin together."

"Capital!"

"Would you like me to pick you up?"

"Thank you, no. I have a vehicle. Rented one last evening when I got in."

"Then I'll email you a map and directions. How soon can you come?"

"With your email, I'm on my way."

Within the hour Malcolm was at the gate. After buzzing it open, I went out to greet him. When he got out of the car and turned to face me, I gasped—dumbfounded—as I realized why he had sounded so familiar.

Malcolm was a dead ringer for my seatmate on the plane home from England, the man Master Armaton had disguised himself to be. The same bright blue eyes, winsome smile, clean-shaven puffy red cheeks ... right down to the three-piece herringbone tweed suit, pocket watch, and chain ... and the same voice.

He approached me with his right hand extended, gazing penetratingly into my eyes, "Dr. Manning, I presume?"

"You presume well. Hello, Malcolm. It's good to ... um ... 'meet' you."

"And I'm delighted ... but curious, too. You seem startled."

I explained the circumstances of my familiarity with him.

"Well, isn't *that* just the cat's pyjamas! Just *like* me, you say?"

"Identical."

"Well, I'll be. When can I meet him?"

"Immediately," Armaton answered as he strolled up with both arms extended. They gave each other a back slapping bear hug.

Malcolm held Armaton at arm's length and looked back and forth between us, "He doesn't

resemble me in the slightest.”

“Not now,” I replied, “but he did then.”

“Remarkable!” Malcolm let go of Armaton and unnecessarily adjusted his tie and tugged at his lapels as if to straighten them. “Well, it’s one thing to *believe* in the remarkable, quite another to confront it. Beyond the herculean challenges of this assignment, this looks like it shall prove to be a most ... uh ... *remarkable* experience.”

“Safe to say, my dear Malcolm,” Armaton slapped him on the back once more, “It has already proven so for all involved. Welcome to our band.”

“Thank you, sir. Thank you.”

“Shall we go inside?” Armaton invited. “Breakfast is just about ready.”

“It’s a beautiful home, Aubrey. This is the place Harold found for you as a ... uh ... hideout.”

“Yes. After they cleared me, I stayed on so I could work in seclusion and privacy. Only the few of us know where I am.”

“Given what we are about to do, such secrecy may prove to be invaluable.”

There were three places set at the kitchen table. Malcolm and I sat down to a couple of cups of fresh ground fragrantly steaming coffee. After a few minutes Armaton removed breakfast from the oven, served it, and joined us.

“My word!” Malcolm was fairly shouting. “This is exquisite! It’s not a soufflé ... nor is it a frittata. What is it?”

“We call it a Cheese Louise,” I answered. “Harold inadvertently came up with the name. The first time he had it he kept muttering, ‘Geez Louise!’ over and over.”

“I’m afraid,” Malcolm declared, “I’m barely paying attention to what you’re saying. All my sensory energy has been diverted to the palate.”

During breakfast we chatted casually, getting to know each other. After we finished, Malcolm and I headed for my office.”

He beckoned Master Armaton, “Won’t you be joining us?”

“‘Tisn’t necessary. If I sense I am needed I shall present myself forthwith.”

“So you’ll know ...” turning to me, “He’ll know, won’t he ... what we’re going on about!” Armaton smiled benignly and excused himself.

For the next couple of hours I filled in details Malcolm wanted to know about myself, our group, and what we had been doing. As we approached eleven o’clock, he became withdrawn. There were long pauses in our conversation when he closed his eyes and repeated, “Mmmm. Yes,” from time to time in a soft whisper.

When the phone rang, I glanced at the clock. It was 11:11. If this was Ashvin he was calling early. One way or the other, that had to mean big news.

“This is it!” Malcolm startled me as he leaped out of his reveries.

“Aubrey, it’s Ashvin ... it’s incredible! We’ve gotten 2,108 hits! Something is happening!”

“It’s called destiny, my boy! To rephrase Victor Hugo, ‘There’s nothing as powerful as a cause whose time has come.’”

“Mr. MacLaren, is that you?”

“Yes it is, son! Yes, it is! That’s a wonderful number. I’ll be just as eager for tomorrow’s, but less in suspense. If it doesn’t treble, I’ll eat Aubrey’s hat.”

“I don’t own a hat.”

“Yes, I suspected as much. I like to hedge my bets.”

After Malcolm and Ashvin took a moment to get reacquainted, we discussed a few details, then hung up and rushed to tell Armaton. We found him in the living room nestled in a plush

easy chair waiting for us. He stood up when we reached him.

“The news is as you had anticipated,” he said to Malcolm.

“Actually, it was more of a hope than an anticipation. *Tomorrow’s* news I am anticipating. But already I have sufficient encouragement to proceed with a bold plan I am eager to develop.

“Master Armaton, Aubrey, thank you so much for your warm hospitality. I must take my leave now and get to work.”

“Prithee, there are ways I may be able to expedite thine activities and provide useful information. Wouldst thou care for my assistance?”

“Oh my! That would be just the duckiest. Are you sure it’s no imposition?”

“None at all,” Armaton assured.

He took Malcolm’s arm, escorted him to the door, and looked back over his shoulder to give me a wink. From the doorway I waved as they got into the car and drove off. As they disappeared from sight Armaton joined me and remarked, “I think they should get along well, don’t you?”

Malcolm’s prediction of the next day’s web traffic was off. The number didn’t triple, it quadrupled: 8,549 hits. On Wednesday it was 49,852 and Thursday, 247,977.”

When Ashvin called in the report, he was jubilant. “I had no idea it could get this big so quickly. But Uncle must have. He’s the one who insisted we acquire servers with such enormous capacities.”

After his initial elation, Malcolm was notably calm and reserved with each subsequent day’s good news. He seemed distracted and aloof and we had only occasional contact throughout the week. I recognized that he was completely immersed in the creation of a masterpiece.

I spent my time reviewing data. Malcolm insisted that, other than documents with supporting facts and figures, I prepare nothing more detailed than an outline for the press conference.

He explained, “One of the issues under scrutiny is your character. Since it happens to be one of our greatest assets, I want you to present yourself genuinely. Reading word-for-word from a prepared statement will defeat that purpose.

“I should point out, my way runs counter to what has been established and accepted by our culture and exploited by my profession. I do so for good reason. Here—let me clarify.

“Many public figures—virtually all politicians—employ practices I abhor. They anticipate every possible question and prepare a variety of clever rejoinders, which they practice ad infinitum so their delivery will be construed as spontaneous brilliance.

“They attempt to maintain a persona of impeccability, feeling the public will accept nothing less. Since that is how the game has been played longer than anyone can recall, the naive masses continue to play along and recoil at imperfection. The public image created to complement this mindset can only be a lie: not a stable platform upon which to build a career or, in my opinion, a media campaign.

“You have no idea how much work I refuse for my unwillingness to simulate wisdom and orchestrate the appearance of sincerity. I scrutinize prospective clients very carefully and accept only those whose veracity is compelling to me. I believe truth—not what many of my colleagues euphemistically refer to as ‘information management,’—is the most compelling convincer.”

Later, after the conclusion of this conversation, Master Armaton privately commented to me with a twinkle in his eyes, “He seems aptly chosen for our mission.”

The Saturday afternoon before the press conference, Malcolm returned with Armaton still at his side. Armaton and I greeted them at the door. Seeing the Armatons together, Malcolm shook

with laughter, “I suspected as much!”

Both of us and an Armaton went out to the patio and sat down while the second and a third Armaton brought out refreshments: a platter of finger sandwiches, fresh vegetables, and olives along with glasses and a pitcher of sparkling lemonade spiced with cayenne and lightly sweetened with maple syrup.

“Why make two trips?” they pronounced, then went back into the house.

Malcolm’s wide-eyed stare revealed his astonishment, “I say, old man, you are full of tricks, aren’t you?”

“And more to come,” Armaton replied.

“Quite so! You should have seen him, Aubrey ... uh ... no doubt you did ... I mean the one with me all week. Not only was his assistance invaluable in guiding and streamlining my thought process, but he prepared the most delectable meals right there in my suite with a microwave oven and a hot plate.”

Armaton leaned toward me to stress, “I *do* use a microwave on occasion when in a pinch. A prayer before eating restores the food’s vitality.”

Malcolm looked at me quizzically, so I explained, “I got into a thing with Master Armaton a while back about not using microwaves.”

All of a sudden Malcolm shuddered and became unusually grave. “It’s all set up,” he reported.

“Why so serious, Malcolm?” I was concerned, “Is everything alright? Are you OK?”

“Yes. Yes. I’m fine. Nothing’s wrong. Everything is in place as it should be. I’m suddenly struck with awe by the magnitude of what we are engaged in. I’ve been involved with many ambitious endeavors in my day, but never one with such onerous responsibilities.”

Armaton and I exchanged a knowing glance.

“Malcolm, it’s OK. I’ve felt the same thing from time to time: ‘How can I handle the weight of the world on *my* shoulders?’ The thing is, it’s *not* on my shoulders ... or yours ... or Aerial’s—he felt it, too. You’ve even used the same word he did: onerous. Let me read you something.”

I ran into the house and returned with *Sacred Memories*.

“Is that it?” Malcolm was awestruck, “Is that the original?”

“Yes.” I turned pages until I found what I was looking for: Chapter 19, Quatrains 24 - 27.

“Aerial had been incapacitated by the overwhelming responsibility he felt for conveying Mother Earth’s message. This is what he wrote:

I also understood how I  
Had made My task more difficult  
When little was required of Me  
To help Earth help thee understand.

What had made it so onerous  
That I would stagger ‘neath its weight;  
Would come undone to think of it,  
If not for entertaining fear?

Once past its blessing in disguise,  
I saw what flaw I had assumed:  
I thought Myself responsible  
For how the future would unfold.

'Tis testimony to how bold  
And brazen is the Sesavah;  
How bold and brazen *We* must be  
To enter into fearlessness.

“It’s not up to you or me or any one person how this works out. What is up to us is what we choose to see and decide to do; that we don’t run away or try to ignore what’s happening. All we can do, all the Folk ask, is that we be involved and do what we feel is best, the best we can and let go of the outcome.”

Malcolm wiped a tear from his cheek and spoke softly, “I understand. You are reminding me of what I know to be the truth. This is a momentous experience for me. I thought I had passed my pinnacle many years ago. Nonetheless, I’ve had a nagging feeling that my purpose hadn’t been served. Until now.

“This is not only the pinnacle, but the nexus of my earthly sojourn. In bringing this press conference about, I am putting into play virtually every shred of knowledge and every resource I have acquired over the years. Truly I have done as I see best, the best I can. Now let me share with you what has been set in motion.”

I settled in for what I anticipated would be the results of a work of genius.

Malcolm began, “A confluence of events has occurred with which I had nothing to do. However, I have seen the alignment and used it to best advantage. The consequent is, the press conference will be attended by representatives of the most powerful and important media outlets on the planet. Those few whom I do not know personally, know me by reputation. Rest assured, my influence served merely to draw their interest. They have chosen to cover this event for their perceptions of its importance and newsworthiness.

“This was substantiated by the exponential growth of interest in your findings demonstrated by your website. The media people with whom I spoke simply could not ignore such compelling numbers of people, whether pro or con, hitting thefolkofyore.com. I cannot overstate the importance of the response you have already generated. It made all the difference.

“My own influence came into play in helping to elevate this from a successful media event to one of worldwide prominence. Many of the larger news organizations would initially commit only to sending stringers or some other such less than passionate response. After I presented a forceful argument, answered their questions, and addressed their concerns, they saw the value in providing a greater degree of coverage, including satellite feeds. In fact, the major networks and cable channels have made provisions to break away from their regular programming for live coverage.”

“Malcolm!” I burst out, “That’s not done! Not for anyone less than the President.”

“Well, as I always say, attachment to the past only leads to more of the same. The thing is, these people know I refuse to practice deception. They know I’d be a much wealthier man had I been willing to do so. Here is the crux of it: they are all human beings and share common concerns, if not for the ecological stability of the planet, certainly for the safety and well being of their families. If DAGR is a threat, they want to know about it and they will surely tell about it.”

## *Chapter 34*

### *At the Center*

For the next few hours, we went over details of the game plan, what Malcolm had set up, and the preparations I had made: things he had instructed me to do, others I had done on my own.

With a sigh of satisfaction, Malcolm affirmed, “Other than a few stray points that might come to mind, we are quite ready. I have taken the liberty of inviting Harold, Ashvin, and Kamala here at 10 A.M. tomorrow and I’ve asked Prabhas and Nirmala to join us by phone so we can brief everyone at the same time.”

Malcolm stayed the night in one of the guest rooms. We started the briefing at precisely ten o’clock the next morning. It lasted about two hours and was heavily punctuated by our exclamations of appreciation for his thoroughness and ingenuity.

When we were done, he brought the meeting to a close, “Now it is time to release our efforts and our fates to God’s loving hands.” With a laugh, he rephrased a famous movie line, “May the Folk be with you!”

Prabhas enjoyed the line so much he repeated it several times before he and Nirmala hung up. Beneath the remaining air of joviality was a feeling of ponderousness, knowing what was up for the next day.

Harold communicated this in his own unique way, “I know I’m here and it’s now, but I ...” (singing to the tune of Fleetwood Mac’s *Don’t Stop*), “... can’t help thinking about tomorrow.” He paused, furrowed his brow, and continued speaking, “To be honest, my face is smiling, but my stomach is churning.”

Armaton reassured, “Remaining in the present need not preclude thought of the morrow. The point is not to avoid thoughts of anticipation, but to select those which empower thee. Be eager, not anxious. Savor excitement, do not worry. Sharpen the edge of expectancy, that thy blade of action cuts well.

“Being fully present does not mean one is numb to the future, only unattached and unintimidated. What thou art feeling, Harold, is a form of stage fright, a term often misused in describing the excitation an actor feels prior to a performance. It is not fright at all, but the charging of his being such that the performance is energized and inspired.

“Feel what ye feel. Do not deny it, use it to amplify the quality of thine actions. Each of ye have roles to play; on this morrow, some more prominent than others. Play them all well, the best ye can. That is all ye shall ever be asked to do.”

The rest of the day we just hung out together. The company of these people who had become my dear friends relaxed and bolstered me. At eight o’clock Malcolm suggested we meditate together briefly. After a half hour we bid each other a good night and everyone headed for home.

Malcolm was the last to leave. “Sleep well, Aubrey. I know I will. There is too much good in our midst for either of us to do otherwise.”

He left with Armaton as Armaton and I walked them to the door.

I did sleep well and woke up at six, well rested and gripped by a solemn determination. Meditating, taking a shower, and grooming myself, I felt the same sense of ritual preparation as the morning I left to retrieve the *Book of Symbols*. After another of Master Armaton’s fine breakfasts, which we ate in silence, he and I left to meet Malcolm at his hotel. We arrived there at 8:45.

“Good morning, Aubrey. I feel silly greeting you, Master Armaton, since you’ve been here the whole time.”

“Greet him anyway,” Armaton’s voice bellowed from the other room, “He likes the attention.”

Malcolm and the Armaton in the room we were in grinned and pronounced to each other.

“Perhaps we should go now,” Malcolm suggested. Then, noticing Armaton was not heading for the door with us, he asked, “Are you not coming?”

“My physical body shall not accompany ye, but, of course, I shall be aware of the minutest details of thine activities and ever available to ye in the calmness of thy receptivity. The day is thine. Lifetimes of experience have prepared ye. Seize thy destinies.”

The press conference was being held in the Conference Center of the California Center for the Arts, just a few minutes drive from the hotel. Malcolm pulled into the almost empty lot across Escondido Boulevard from the Arts Center campus and parked next to the Sizzler.

He explained, “The Center has a secure area for celebrity parking, but that’s precisely where the paparazzi will be looking for us. By the time we’re done, this lot will be busy with the lunch crowd and we can slip back to the car without being noticed.”

We crossed the street and walked past the semicircular drive off Escondido Boulevard between the Conference Center and the main theater. Several large media trailers were parked there with huge cables trailing into the building. Another dozen smaller media vans, many with satellite booms extended on high, were scattered nearby. Their equipment hummed. Technicians scampered in and out.

There was an excitement in the air, like something big was about to happen. For a moment I got caught up in the feeling. Then with a shiver and a grin, I realized *we* were at the center of it.

Malcolm must have picked up on this. He stopped in his tracks, then turned around in a full circle to drink it all in. “Quite a buzz, isn’t it? Felt it *dozens* of times before. Never like this, though. *Awe*-inspiring. Positively awe-inspiring.”

He drifted off in thought, then broke his reverie abruptly, “Awright! Carry on, Malcolm. Here we go, Aubrey. We’ll head for the media entrance. That’s our best bet, especially when we leave. The mainstream media won’t be a bother and the paparazzi will never *dream* we’d go this way.”

After wending our way to the door, we held up the credentials hanging around our necks and were let in quickly and unceremoniously. The place was teeming with activity. We unobtrusively made our way to the front of the ballroom and surveyed it from behind a cluster of tall potted plants. A battery of cameras was set up on a platform twenty feet behind several hundred chairs. Two-thirds of them were already occupied. I asked Malcolm about the printed cards taped to the backrest of each chair.

“By insisting on seating assignments, I have been able to separate the tabloid reporters from each other to discourage a swarming mentality. What’s more, they tend to behave a bit more politely when they’re separated from the pack and in the company of the mainstream media ... but only a bit.”

We retreated to an anteroom to wait. In short order, the appointed time arrived. Malcolm smiled sweetly, gave me a hug, and went out to greet the throng.

Now alone, I seized the opportunity to calm myself by closing my eyes and concentrating on the flow of my breath, in and out. Suddenly, from the darkness of closed eyes, a flare of silver-white light flashed before and through me. My instant reflex was to open my eyes. All I could see was the light. To all else, I was blind. Instinctively, I reached out for something to hold onto.



My left hand struck the wall and brushed along its surface until I felt the doorframe and clutched it.

Two parallel and opposite thoughts crossed my mind at the same time. The third dimensional scientist in me considered the possibility I had just suffered an electrochemical anomaly, perhaps a misfiring of the optic nerve or, worse, a stroke. The other—predominant—thought laughed at the first one and elatedly waited for what was going to happen next.

I didn't wait long. The light diminished in intensity and started to shimmer. The outer edge of my peripheral vision returned. The light continued to shrink and I recovered more of my sight. The flickering slowed and coalesced into the image of a resplendent being. I knew who it was for I had written about her during one of my meditations on the City of Nine Towers Symbol:

Queen Veridia is of incomparable beauty. Her soulful glances radiate intense concentrations of Love from the heart of her Being. These are well recognized as glorious reflections of her inner beauty and spiritual stature and are cherished and known to impart wondrous blessings.

She wore a long, flowing, white and gold iridescent gown that sparkled joyfully. Her crown looked of gold, but is said to be made from something far more valuable, an ancient rarity that glows with a halo-like light. Within this mystical alloy set six different precious stones that beamed with a similar radiance of their own making. The exquisite crown was also adorned with five large plumes of long iridescent feathers. Each feather is said to have been magically created.

The different colored feathers sparkled with life-transforming light that left a stardust trail wherever the Queen went. It is considered a high honor to be touched by these lights.

She took my breath away. Her smile filled me with wonder and Love. I realized in thought, "*This* is what it's all about."

She pronamed to me and I prayerfully returned the gesture. Then she spoke in sweet melodic strains, "Dearest Soul, thou hast my Love. Thou *art* my Love. What veneration thou holdest for me is likewise held for thee. We are but two of many brethren in the All That Is."

Had I known I would encounter her, I would have prepared a million questions. Yet in her presence I had none. All that was was well and wonderful.

"Again, my Dear, as beloved Master Armaton has instructed, nothing thou wouldst experience of me is outside thine own possession."

She and my mind grew still. Her gaze consumed me for what seemed hours. Nothing else existed but her Love, my Love—entwined as One.

Then, in a chorus of ambrosian tones, her image faded. A thousand tiny stars sprayed out from her feathered crown and cascaded toward me. As each settled onto my face I felt an effervescent kiss imbued with Love.

Her final words were, "Choose thy reality. In the presence of conflicting contrast, renew thy choice."

In an instant I returned to the reality of the press conference, shaking my head vigorously to help with the adjustment. Malcolm was at the podium. His voice resounded throughout the hall.

“Ladies and gentlemen, good morning and thank you for coming.” The noisy buzz hushed to silence. “My name is Malcolm MacLaren. I recognize many of you.”

He paused and nodded to quite a few familiar faces. “For those who don’t know me, I am the media coordinator for this event, which means I’ve spoken either with you or your bosses and that’s *how* it is we’ve gathered here this morning.”

“On the agenda are issues that are critical far beyond the well being of mankind to our very survival. That is *why* we are gathered here this morning.

“The individual who will address you has been an academic and in the public eye for many years. I have followed her career from the success of her first book, never ceasing to be impressed by her forthrightness and dedication.

“Some six months ago, her impeccable reputation was assailed by what was later determined to be a false accusation. Nonetheless, the damage was done and she withdrew from one of her university positions and, not coincidentally, from public life.

“She did *not* withdraw her dedication to the well being of this planet and its peoples, nor did she cease her activities on all our behalf. I’m certain all of you are familiar with the CUE theory which she proposed several years ago.” Most of the reporters bobbed their heads up and down.

“During the time of her absence from public view, she did *not* withdraw to an ‘island getaway’ either.” Malcolm paused and glared intensely at one reporter in particular, presumably the one responsible for spreading this piece of misinformation. He squirmed in his chair.

“In fact, she was avidly carrying out her work, which resulted in her discovery of the CUE Factor.”

The crowd buzzed enthusiastically in response to this announcement. Though I had been gone—relegated to the rubbish heap of tabloid journalism—apparently my work was not forgotten.

Malcolm seemed pleased and glanced back and forth, nodding his head in acknowledgment of their response. He waited for them to quiet down on their own. “Dr. Aubrey Manning will now address you.”

The crowd of reporters was silent as I walked out to the lectern and set down my notes. When I faced the audience, one of them stood up. Then another. Then more in groups of several at a time. I was touched by what seemed a silent gesture of respect and welcome. When they were all standing I realized what was wrong.

They all looked exactly the same. Each was spindly, tall, slick-haired, and ashy complexioned, with a pencil thin moustache and dressed in a black double-breasted suit with thin gray stripes and excessively padded shoulders, black shirt, and an extra wide blood red tie. These were astral manifestations superimposed over my perspective of the actual audience, who remained seated and oblivious to what was taking place outside their conscious awareness.

They moved in lock step synchrony. With dismissive waves of their right hands, they spoke in one voice, “Good morning, little Aubrey! We meet again ... *again!* How have you been?”

I didn’t respond.

“The geriatric limey here seems to think you’ve been very busy, very productive. ... Nothing to say, dearie? That’s not polite, but no offense. I’m looking at the bright side: at least you won’t be interrupting me. What’s more, I’ve got enough to say for the both—correction—for *all* of us.” He made a sweeping gesture to the crowd of himself.

“Do you want to know what *I* think? Of course you do. I think *whatever* you’ve been up to is pointless, worthless, asinine, inane, vacuous, abject futility. You’re pissing into the ocean and you think you’re making a difference. On top of that, you’re pissing into the wind and you don’t

even know it.

“Do you think I’m going to just stand by while you muck up everything? Do you think you can fight me and win? Do you think you can overpower me, that you can drive me away? I’m everywhere. I’m in *everyone*.

“How do you think I can be here having intercourse this way with all these dolts? I’m a *part* of them. They *want* me. They *use* me. I’m their livelihood. They understand I sell their printed rags and the purple pills that keep them in caviar and the Hamptons.

“In Aerial’s time I had to do it all on my own, one miserable twit at a time. Now I have help. That’s who these boneheads are. They’re my helpers. Now I snag one and I snag millions. They don’t care. They’re oblivious. All that matters is they get what they want. That’s the way it is with all of you.”

I had heard enough. I planted my feet firmly, rested my hands on the podium and with a gentle exhale left my physical body to confront the Sesavah in the astral realm.

“So you’ve come to join me,” it taunted, “You just couldn’t stay away. I’m touched.” All the Sesavans removed handkerchieves from their back trouser pockets and dabbed at mock tears. “The last time you came to visit me here those nasty men in the spears took you away. You didn’t stay *nearly* long enough.”

My conviction was resolute, “*You* cannot win. Your time has come.”

“You’re *speaking* to me! I’m thrilled! But what kind of a way is that to greet an old friend? Shame on you, Aubrey. You’ve lost your manners.”

“Your smugness doesn’t fool me. I know it’s a sham, just like everything else about you. Your time has come. Your grip is loosening and you know it. *I* know it.”

All of its eyes narrowed and glared at me. A soft, angry growl erupted into a ferocious snarl, “We’ll see who’s grip has loosened. You try to survive the attack of these miserable vermin. They’re going to eat you *alive!*”

I laughed, “There you go again. If you were so powerful you wouldn’t need all the threats ... or the adjectives. What were they? Pointless, asinine, worthless, inane, vacuous. You’ve been working on your vocabulary since the first time I saw you.”

It gritted and bared its teeth. The rumbling gurgle of its breath intended to intimidate me.

Unruffled, I pressed on, “Not everything you said was a lie. You *are* a part of all these people ... a part of everyone. But that’s the point: you’re only a *part* ... a *diminishing* part. It’s the *other* the part I’m going after, and that’s what you’re afraid of. Because eventually the only thing that will be left for you to consume is yourself.”

“We’ll see what I can consume. It may be your life. I came close once with just a bunch of two bit fools. Think what I can do with someone who’s *really* motivated.”

I was done. “Well, thank you for the visit, but I’ve got a press conference to take care of.”

“Do you think you can get away from me so easily?” it cackled. “The last time it took an army.”

“You know how it is: things change.”

In a thought and an instant I was back in my physical body and the crowd returned to normal. As quickly and inconspicuously as they had appeared, the Sesavans disappeared. Several hundred members of the world press were sitting politely waiting for me to begin. There was no denying a part of each of them was ready to skewer me the instant they saw an opening. I was determined to reach the other part.

## *Chapter 35*

### *A Likely Outcome*

The impact Queen Veridia had had on me wasn't diminished in the slightest by the Sesavah. I had chosen my reality long ago and that choice was Love. As she counselled, in the presence of its conflicting contrast, I renewed my choice. I did so again facing this audience. Beyond personal philosophy, it was a practical choice. To proceed with Love was the only way I would be able to reach the part of them I needed to.

I closed my eyes briefly, took a deep breath, smiled, and let the words flow. "Good morning. I'm happy to see you all here. This is probably good for you, too; for a little while, at least, you won't be wondering where I am."

Even if that qualified as a joke, it was pretty lame, but a slight twitter spread through the room. It seemed to soften the mood a bit.

"Thank you very much for coming. What I have to present will be pretty simple and straightforward. But some of it will be difficult to hear and some might be difficult to believe.

"I'm not here to convince anybody of anything, just present information and let you come to your own conclusions. I *would* ask that you listen with an open mind and maybe even an open heart and decide what *you* think is true.

"So, already this is a unique experience: a scientist asking a room full of reporters to open their hearts." Laughter. "At least you're not attorneys."

More laughter.

"Or bloody, heartless press agents!" Standing off to the side on my right, Malcolm shouted loudly enough to be heard without a mic. He clutched his chest with one hand, staggered, and thrust his other arm out straight like Fred Sanford feigning "the big one."

Everyone loved it and guffaws filled the room. Malcolm had a well earned reputation for comic antics. His willingness to laugh at himself was one of the things that endeared him to the press, who appreciated his humility and gentility, knowing full well the formidable power and influence he could wield.

When they settled down I continued, "As you know, several years ago, I proposed the theory that all ecological problems could be traced to one primal cause, which I named the CUE—Cause Unto Effect—factor. I had thought the methods of analysis and mathematical modeling that led to this hypothesis would lead me further to *identify* the CUE factor. But that's not at all the way it turned out."

The crowd murmured in surprise and curiosity.

"Through a set of remarkable circumstances, I was the first to discover a book entitled *Sacred Memories*, written in the year 626 A.D. by Aerial of Darluse Wood, a parchment maker in the south of England. The book contains prophecies that are intended specifically for *this* time, the early 21st century. Although Aerial predates Nostradamus by nine centuries, his writing is far more specific, straightforward, and clear. There's no heavy symbolism subject to interpretation ... or misinterpretation.

"*Sacred Memories* is also a treatise on multidimensionality. Fourteen centuries ago Aerial anticipated present day theoretical physics. The principles he illustrates are well known today and suggest a scientific basis to his writing.

"Aerial prophesied our present day environmental problems. What's more, he pointed the way to my discovery of the CUE factor." The crowd murmured. "Aerial wrote about *another* book, the mystical *Book of Symbols*, which was briefly in his possession until it was lost, buried

in a pit near Avebury, a village in Wiltshire County. This second book contains no text, only designs that have a functional similarity to the sacred images seen in many cultures, for example Hindu and Buddhist mandalas, Native American medicine wheels, and stained glass windows in medieval cathedrals.

“The only enigmatic portion of *Sacred Memories* has to do with the precise location of the *Book of Symbols*. Fortunately I was able to decipher the enigma. When I did, I left immediately for England to excavate the Book. It is now in my possession.” Another round of murmuring began. “*That*, by the way, was the reason for my sudden departure from school.” The murmuring grew louder.

“I know you’re going to need more details, but rather than take a lot more time now, we’ll give you extensive written material at the end of the press conference. That will include an unedited transcription of *Sacred Memories*. You’ll also receive a journal of my activities since all this started, which has been compiled into a book entitled *Sacred Mission*.”

The crowd buzzed with anticipation.

“For millennia, mankind occupied a relatively innocuous position on the planet. Neither our power nor our numbers had a significant impact. That started to change a couple of hundred years ago when we learned to greatly multiply our power—and, indirectly, our impact—with technology. Now, in some respects, we vie with Nature herself.

“We may debate how *much* man has impacted planetary systems, but there’s no argument that we *can* ... and already *have*. That’s where the CUE factor comes in.

“During the time I searched for it, I was looking for an agent, something tangible, something to point at and say, ‘There! That’s it ... over there!’ and then, having found it, figure out a way to eradicate or neutralize the cause.

“When I read *Sacred Memories* and studied the *Book of Symbols*, I was prompted to look in a different direction. And that’s where I found it, the CUE Factor.”

The room was absolutely still. The reporters leaned forward, tense in anticipation of what I was about to reveal.

“We look at the air and the land and the waters and we point to the pollution out *there* and the things out *there* we think are the cause. But it’s not just out *there*. It’s in *here*,” pointing to the side of my head, “the CUE Factor, the ultimate form of pollution: toxic *thought*.”

At that, about a third of the reporters burst out in anger. A cluster of astral Sesavah, who only I could see, reappeared, stood up and glared at me. Each was superimposed over its human counterpart.

The gist of the ranting was, “What kind of flower child claptrap nonsense is that? We didn’t come here to listen to *this*. There was supposed to be a *story* here. This isn’t news, it’s sanctimonious drivel.”

Refusing to be intimidated or driven to anger myself, I understood what they wanted and realized I had to give it to them without much more delay.

I put up my hands and pleaded, “Please, bear with me. Please!” They quieted down a little. “If you’ll just be patient, I promise you, you’ll *get* your story.”

The rest of the throng calmed the noisy ones. Most of the Sesavans disappeared. A few remained standing, ready to stoke the embers of anger that remained.

“Believe me, you’ll get your story. I’m going to be telling you about operations that are active right now that pose an immediate threat to all life on this planet. I’m going to be pointing out organizations and people that have to be stopped ... but not *blamed*. That’s the point I’m trying to make first. It’s absolutely necessary to understand at the outset, the problem is not just

with them. It's with us, you and me; it's how we think; it's the way we were taught to think that doesn't work anymore, that has to be changed.

"If we don't deal with the prime causative agent—toxic thought: the CUE Factor—we'll never get clear of the problems. And each one we *do* solve will just be replaced by more.

"This is what Auriel wrote about. He saw all this coming. He perceived the momentum of man's consciousness and extrapolated a likely outcome. What he saw ... has *happened*. He also saw a way out.

"*Sacred Memories* will give you the basis and the context for understanding what's going on and for successfully resolving the immediate crises and eliminating their prime cause: what I am calling the CUE Factor.

"Between what Auriel and I have written, you'll be able to see the chain of causation. Contrary to the first impressions of some of you, my discovery of the CUE Factor is grounded in science. It is a pragmatic application of the quantum physics proposition that the ultimate essence—beyond matter and energy—is *thought*.

"I won't take any more time with this now other than to say, if you see villains and you think the only thing we need to do is deal with *them* and what *they* are doing, you're falling way short of the mark. You and I need to do something. Each of us—you, me, your readers, your audience—each of us has a responsibility and an impact. And *Sacred Memories* is a crucial guide."

I took a sip of water, more for a momentary break to center myself than because I was parched. Holding the glass to my lips, I saw a line of seven tiny, bright lights spiraling rapidly upwards through the liquid into my mouth as I swallowed it. A warm pulse of gently invigorating energy radiated from my solar plexus throughout my body and tingled my skin. I returned the glass to the shelf in the lectern and resumed.

"We are besieged by scores of environmental problems in various stages of severity. Some of them are widely known. Unless they're abated, any one of them will inevitably lead to widespread and long-term disruption of life and, in the end, loss of life. Let me clarify: I mean human life.

"The most serious and immediate threat was completely unknown until it was discovered recently by a colleague of mine. It involves a covert program undertaken by an agency of the United States government, the Directorate for the Administration of Geophysical Research, DAGR, under the direction of Dr. G. Benedek von Hass."

At the mention of Breck's name, a legion of Sesavan beasts amassed in the astral region over and around the Conference Center. A counter force of Golden Warrior Guardians hastily assembled and held them at bay. I felt a shudder of anxiety pass through the room. Twenty more black suited Sesavans got up and stood in place, their filmy images superimposed over their hosts. They joined their companions already standing to glare threateningly at me.

"DAGR's mandate limits it strictly to fiscal administration: funding *other* organizations and overseeing geophysical research. However, they've managed to divert huge amounts of money to clandestine projects directly controlled by them, in violation of their mandate. We have confirmation of this as well as longstanding speculation that DAGR answers directly to the National Security Council." A rumble of surprise percolated and forty more Sesavans stood up. "The documentation will be included in the paperwork you receive later."

The rumble increased as the reporters looked at each other and expressed their astonishment.

"As a matter of public record, the agency was formed for the purpose of facilitating and promoting geophysical research with the specific aim of improving the ability to forecast geophysical events, principally weather, earthquakes, tidal flows, and so forth.

“We’ve traced their activities for the last fifteen years and found that during this entire period DAGR has been directly responsible for numerous covert programs aimed not at weather prediction, but weather and climate control.”

This caused many of the reporters to shout, some in shock, others in disbelief. The Sesavans surrounding the building stirred in resonance with the flaring emotions and were reinforced by double their number. The Warrior Guardians multiplied their own forces accordingly to hold the foe in check. For several blocks around the Center, the sky churned with over twenty thousand opposing troops maneuvering wildly for strategic positions. Inside the hall, another hundred of the black suits stood up to join their glaring cohorts.

Over the din, I shouted into the microphone, “And this is documented as well.”

Malcolm was prepared for the outburst. He had a handheld mic, stepped forward, and spoke with stern authority, “Ladies and gentlemen!” Then he simply glowered at the crowd, extended his left arm and forefinger and pointed around the room to the most troubled areas first. It was like he held a remote control. With a sweep of his finger, the room quieted. This had no effect, however, on the armies outside.

“All right then. Some decorum, please. You’ve not heard the worst of it.”

He nodded to me and I repeated, “We have documentation for this as well as experiments designed to determine and demonstrate the ability to orchestrate seismic events.”

The reporters resumed their reactive buzzing.

“Over time DAGR has broadened and escalated its activities. In recent years, through what was publicly presented as an academic project, a high power, high frequency transmitter and antenna grid was constructed near the Arctic Circle. The stated purpose was to conduct strictly passive studies of the upper atmosphere to augment understanding of the ionosphere with the aim of improving communications systems.

“That is not the actual purpose. DAGR is using this facility to actively alter the ionosphere and is conducting experiments and pilot programs for the purpose of developing capabilities for geophysical warfare.”

The room that Malcolm had calmed now exploded with the clamor of shock, fear, anxiety, alarm, doubt, suspicion, anguish, denial: the epitome of distress. The building shook from the intensity of the clash between the Sesavans outside attempting to storm the conference room and the Golden Warriors holding back the attempted advance with their shields. All the black suited Sesavans in the hall were now up and shouting at their hosts, agitating them.

Malcolm joined me at the podium, clicked off the microphone, and spoke over the din into my ear, “Let them vent some steam. Got to get it out of their system. Hoped this wouldn’t happen, but it plays to our advantage. The ruckus is going to draw more viewers and any affiliates that haven’t already picked us up. We’ve got a *huge* audience now, Aubrey. Preempting Regis on the West Coast!”

He looked at me, shrugged quizzically, then returned to the sidelines. I stood at the podium, calmly surveyed the commotion, and wondered what someone who was just tuning in would make of the uproar. After a couple of minutes the turmoil inside and outside the hall began to subside and Malcolm was able to quiet the room again.

I picked up where I left off, “We have documentation for this, too.” After a pause, “Now ... I’m going to enumerate some of the specific activities we discovered.” For the next twenty minutes I gave them a concise, thorough account of everything Harold had found, concluding with, “Less than two weeks ago we discovered one aspect in the initial phase of testing and operation which caused us great alarm.

“This involves transmitting a patterned array of pulses and propagating ELF (Extra Low Frequency) and VLF (Very Low Frequency) waves in the upper ionosphere. The publicly stated purposes of this are to improve submarine communications and develop a subsurface detection system using earth penetrating tomography to reveal tunnels, underground facilities, and resources such as oil and mineral deposits.

“The pulses are being directed to twelve regions of the ionosphere. A set of formulas developed by Dr. Kalman von Hass is being used to determine the sequence and power of the transmissions. As you may know, my first published paper was a commentary on Dr. von Hass’s work. These formulas were the focus of my analysis, so I’m very familiar with them.

“There are two potentially devastating factors. First, a large number of my colleagues and I believe the elder Dr. von Hass’s formulas contain subtle, but very serious errors. Second, the stated purpose of the project is not the actual purpose.

“This system is intended to be used for enemy submarine detection and annihilation using a focused, water penetrating electromagnetic beam. By overlapping and modulating transmissions, DAGR is attempting to harness power from the auroral electrojet and direct it, laser-like, to a target at submarine depth. The auroral electrojet is the north polar region of the ionosphere where there are strong and persistent currents flowing at the D and E levels ... that would be at an altitude between approximately 35 and 90 miles.

“For the past seventeen days DAGR has been manipulating the ionosphere and developing protocols to fire this weapon. Once they determine mission readiness has been achieved, they plan to direct a test firing at a deep sea submersible ROV ... um ... a Remotely Operated Vehicle ... in the North Atlantic.

“I’ve done a fairly rigorous analysis of DAGR’s computer model and come to the unavoidable conclusion it is tragically flawed. They presume a grossly overstated degree of control over the process. On the other hand, their environmental impact reports substantially understate the effect of this project on the surrounding area and completely ignore global implications. My conclusions are in the process of being confirmed by four scientists doing independent studies of the model.

“Utilizing the best methods of analysis I’m aware of, in my opinion it’s impossible to accurately predict the outcome of firing this weapon, much less control it. We can only guess. The severity of its impact, however, is not difficult to assess. One way or another, if this weapon is fired, a geophysical cataclysm of unprecedented proportions is more than a possibility. It is a likelihood.”



## *Chapter 36*

### *The Ultimate Clean-up*

Another calamity ensued. The Sesavan forces outside the building seethed with the emotions generated by my report. Other hordes amassed around the planet to attack the television audience as they, too, became inundated by a maelstrom of fear.

True to their mission, legions of Golden Warrior Guardians assembled at once to stem the attack. An intense pressure built as the rage of fear pressed to escape the containment of temperance. It was then I more fully grasped how treacherous this situation was and the delicate balance that needed to be maintained between calling attention to danger and maintaining calm.

While the reporters shouted at me and each other, goaded by their Sesavan parasites, one of the black suited astral fiends approached me. It didn't stop until we were nose to nose.

"You are outflanked and outmaneuvered, little dearie. How do you expect to tell them what they've been conditioned to fear, without driving them *to* me? Don't you get it? The more you try to expose me, the more you have to tell them what scares them silly. You've been tricked into *helping* me." It laughed hideously. "You're trumped at every turn. There's nothing you can do. You've reached the end of the road. Do you think they're going to read your little books and make nice when they have all *this* to fear?"

I thought I recognized a familiar tactic. "If you *really* believed that, you wouldn't be trying so hard to convince *me*."

"I'm *not* trying to convince you, dumpling. I'm just having a little fun. Toodle-oo!"

It disappeared and I was left wondering what to do. What it claimed did appear to be true. How could I expose such fear provoking circumstances without provoking fear? Facing what seemed an insoluble dilemma, nervousness shook my resolve and I headed for uncontrollable panic.

Fortunately, experience—in the light of Master Armaton's training—had prepared me to recognize the feeling for what it was. Instead of getting lost in it, I observed what was happening: I had been snared by the Sesavah in a web of fear.

Noticing this seemed to loosen its grip. In the slight calmness that returned, I was able to see I had gotten so caught up in the problem, I had momentarily lost my sense of self, my connection to Armaton, my friends, the Folk, and the All That Is.

Realizing this led me to think of Queen Veridia and the immeasurable power and resoluteness at her command. The words she spoke echoed in my mind, "... nothing thou wouldst experience of me is outside thine own possession."

The power I sensed in Her was in Me. Armaton had told me the same thing—repeatedly. She also said, "We are but two of many brethren in the All That Is." What was true for me was also true for the Many.

The reporters, the TV audience—all involved—were brethren and had the same capacities as the Queen. We all possess the potential of either extreme: the Queen or the Sesavah. We have but to choose and choose again and again in the face of supporting concurrence or conflicting contrast.

Words I had often heard my father speak while I was growing up applied again now: "Do your best, be yourself, and let the chips fall where they may." Remembering this restored even-mindedness. I resolved to do just that; press on; and trust in the higher nature of my brethren: that they would ultimately see the divinity and good within themselves and everyone else and choose Love over fear.

Although I had no idea how to solve the dilemma, I refused to believe it was insoluble. In any event I didn't need to come up with a solution all at once: just take one step.

From the corner of my eye I saw Malcolm step forward with his microphone. I waved him off. We needed to do more than just quell the blowup. Closing my eyes, with a deep inhale I invoked the presence and guidance of Armaton, the Queen, and Love Itself.

A warm current with a pink glow rose in my spine generating a tremendous magnetism that pulled a powerful beam of white light from the empyrean realm through the back of my neck into the base of my skull. It swirled and spread through my body multiplying its force. At the same time a platoon of Golden Warrior Guardians assembled around the perimeter of the audience and up the center aisle.

With my eyes still closed, I exhaled and thrust my right arm straight out, fingers extended and slightly spread. I did not control the light, but surrendered to it. From my outstretched hand it flared into each Guardian in the room; from them to those outside the building; and from them to the others positioned around the world. We were linked by intensely glowing strands of white light that increased in power as they passed through each Warrior. The resulting grid changed to a brilliant shade of blue when the planet was encircled.

The Sesavans were completely stymied. Those who were in the hall glaring at me couldn't stand the light and vanished. Elsewhere around the world, they came up against impenetrable formations of Golden Warriors. Though their numbers were equal, the Sesavans' assaults withered, for Love is always more powerful than fear.

In the same way the Symbols inspired me to write, the presence and flow of the blue light inspired me to speak. I was not thinking, so much as receiving thought. With eyes still closed and arm extended, words flowed quietly into the din of the reporters' ire, "You're so upset because all you see is danger and all you have to offer it is fear. I see more. I see the good in all. I see that together we can help each other offer danger understanding. Together we can find a way. Maybe the danger has come to teach, not destroy."

As I talked, the reporters started to elbow each other calling for quiet.

I repeated, softer than before, "You're so upset because all you see is danger and all you have to offer it is fear. I see more. I see the good in all. I see that together we can help each other offer danger understanding. Together we can find a way. The danger has much to teach us."

I paused. Now the room was still. Barely above a whisper, I repeated into the mic, "I see the good in all. I see that together we can help each other offer danger understanding. If we allow the danger to unite us and teach us, maybe we'll find a better way."

Continuing to speak in a soft and gentle voice, "How we handle this, how we react to this frightening prospect—whether we succumb to the fear that comes with it so easily ... so automatically ... or reach for some other way to respond—*that's* what the CUE factor is about.

"Getting so agitated—the way it was a moment ago—that's an example of toxic thought, what CUE Theory says is the ultimate form of pollution. The ultimate clean-up is changing the way we think: one person, one thought at a time. CUE Theory is saying that instead of looking for problems and solutions out *there*, maybe we should look at what's happening in *here*," pointing with my left hand to the side of my head. "When enough of us change enough, the *world* changes: mass consciousness elevates; we get back into balance with Nature and outgrow the tendency to wreak environmental havoc.

"We presume the way we react to certain types of events is hardwired. When danger looms, we get scared. It's natural ... it's what we expect ... it's *human nature*. When we're insulted, we get angry. When we're hated and attacked, we hate and strike back. We think, 'That's the way it

is. That's the way it *has* to be.' And so it *is*: over and over, on and on, throughout our lives, from generation to generation.

"We wonder if it will ever end. We *pray* that it can end. We see the problem out *there*—everywhere but within. We want our leaders, our governments—out *there*—to do something about it. We pray that a divine force—outside ourselves—will intervene and fix all the problems out *there* and bring peace to the world. Ironically, in ignorance, we continue to think and act in our own lives in ways that perpetuate the very things we're praying to overcome ... and we persist in this because 'That's the way it is.'

"When *does* it ever end? When we realize we're only as hardwired as we believe and accept. When we no longer see the saints and saviors of all the different religions as superior and separate from ourselves ... and inherently different from each other. When we understand that *each* of them came for *all* of us. They all preached the same message of Love: *for everyone to everyone*. They don't come to *tell* us what to do, so much as *show* us who we are by simply being who they are and showing us themselves.

"When does it end? When we begin to believe, not in a divine power outside ourselves, but one within each and all of us. When we see Who we really are and no longer accept or tolerate limitations imposed by a mistakenly dismal perception of what it is to be human. When we see how *crazy* it is to condemn each other in the name of Jesus, Allah, Krishna, Buddha, Moses ... and live our lives in Love as they lived theirs.

"When we don't just talk about it, but *live* our lives in love, horror ends; grace and well-being abound; and fear is quelled. We realize that our lives are not separate selfish quests for gratification, but that we are interconnected with each other, all life, and all things. We realize that Love *does* conquer all ... even fear ... especially fear.

"That's not to say it's easy to change. To think differently ... to choose differently ... is to act in contradiction to how most of us have been raised and how we expect each other to behave. The critical thing to remember is, we're in this together and we can help each other get through it ... like what we just did this morning.

"A few minutes ago you were all pretty upset. Think how that felt and how you feel now." I paused to let them reflect. "Now think about this: nothing's changed; the same danger, the same situation is still there. What's different?"

"Before, things were out of control; you were reacting reflexively. It made sense, it seemed absolutely appropriate; in some ways it still does. But in a matter of—what?—a minute?—that reflex was interrupted and replaced with an alternative.

"*That's* the process. *That's* at the heart of the CUE Factor: consciously observing and managing how we think.

"What's more, this ultimate clean-up—it's not necessarily about personal sacrifice: about performing some service at a cost or loss to yourself. It's about correcting problems and creating a healthy, thriving world by each of us empowering *ourselves* and improving the quality of our own individual lives.

"It's about everybody's gain. It's about replacing the paradigm of dog-eat-dog with win-win. It's about replacing the motivations of greed and fear with Love and compassion. It's about focusing more on how we can help and benefit from each other rather than protecting ourselves from each other.

"It's about thought—the elemental essence—the incredible reservoir of inherent personal power each of us has at our command: to create—or recreate—our lives and our world."

I lowered my arm and opened my eyes. Through my gaze and my smile, I broadcast my love

to the souls seated before me and those in the television audience. Calm had been restored: the Sesavah had been thwarted, at least for the time being.

“Well, the *good* news is: I don’t have any more bad news to report.”

They snickered.

“Before I take your questions, there’s something else to add: a few lines from Jacob Bronowski’s *The Ascent of Man*.

[To be] in love with the aristocracy of the intellect ... is a belief which can only destroy the civilisation that we know. If we are anything, we must be a democracy of the intellect. We must not perish by the distance between people and government, between people and power, by which Babylon and Egypt and Rome failed. And that distance can only be conflated, can only be closed, if knowledge sits in the homes and heads of people with no ambition to control others, and not up in the isolated seats of power...

We are nature's unique experiment to make the rational intelligence prove itself sounder than the reflex. Knowledge is our destiny. Self-knowledge, at last bringing together the experience of the arts and the explanations of science, waits ahead of us.

“In order to close the distance between you—the people—and DAGR’s ambition to control others, my associates and I are making knowledge—in the form of the information we’ve gathered—available to the homes and heads of everyone, not just the reporters here in this room.

“Both *Sacred Memories* and *Sacred Mission* can be downloaded directly from our website, thefolkofyore.com, or purchased from book retailers. You’ll find other information I’ve referred to at thefolkofyore.com. We’ve also posted a selection of images from the *Book of Symbols* and we’re working to produce a printed edition as soon as possible.

“As I said at the beginning, my purpose today is to inform you, not persuade you to believe me. You’ve got to find the truth for yourselves; then determine what you’re going to do with it. Where this goes, what happens next is in your hands.

“We may never have faced a problem like this before; but we’ve never had the resources we have now, the ability to access knowledge and interconnect worldwide in real time.

“Of course, there’s a supreme irony: it’s critical to our survival that the people who care the least about power and control become involved in order to monitor those who care the most.”

I looked at the clock, then continued, “We have a few minutes left before we’re scheduled to end, so I’ll take some questions.”

Just about all the reporters shouted and raised their hands asking essentially the same things: “When will the weapon be fired? What are the possible outcomes? How long do we have? What are the projected losses? What can be done to recover?” And so on.

When they quieted down I answered, “As I said before, there’s no way for me to tell what’s going to happen. I don’t have the answers to these questions.”

They clamored for me to run down the possibilities.

“I understand how much you want to know what’s going to happen. But it’s not going to serve any positive purpose for me to speculate.”

They protested, “The *public* has a right to know; so they can prepare.”

“How would they prepare? The range of possibilities is so diverse, at this time there’s no

way to figure out what to do.”

They persisted, “Then give us the range.”

“I realize you’re *accustomed* to speculating about the stories you cover. Until you know how they end, you run through all the possible causes, outcomes, suspects, variables ... and you feature reactions of the people involved ... the more emotional, the better.

“In *this* situation, dwelling on a host of negative outcomes and inflaming emotions isn’t going to help anyone; and if you understand what I’ve been saying, you’ll realize what potential harm that can do.

“The way out of this is for as many people as possible to remain calm and actively involved in verifying the truth and using their intuitive and material resources to find a successful way out.”

“Are you saying people should protest; that they should try to stop DAGR?”

“No. For now, I’m not recommending any action other than what I’ve just said. Let me say it again: we need as many people as possible to look at the information we’re putting out and independently verify it. Only then will we have a common foundation for assessing the danger. That’s when we’ll have some answers to the questions you’ve been asking. That’s when we can prepare ourselves or—better yet—come up with a solution.

“More to the point of your question: obviously, it would be better if the weapon were not fired. However, the probability is very high that a dangerous consequence has already been created by a chain of events underway for quite some time.

“So you understand, I’m not trying to be coy or evasive about what might happen. I don’t know the answer and I won’t indulge in what I judge to be pointless and disheartening speculation.

“Am I clear? ... OK. Next question.”

The woman I pointed and nodded to stood up and asked, “Dr. Manning, you claim the Directorate for the Administration of Geophysical Research has kept these operations secret for at least fifteen years. After all that time, how did *you* find out about them?”

“An associate of mine uncovered the information and passed it on to me.”

“Can you identify this associate?”

“No, not at this time.”

“Then how do you expect us to believe these serious allegations?”

I smiled politely and reminded her, “I don’t, as I said before. My intention is simply to pass this information further along. What I’m presenting here is a starting point, not a final proof. It’s critical that you—not just reporters, but the public—all of you—use this information to find out what’s really going on. You shouldn’t just believe me—or anyone—without checking out what I’m saying. ... OK? ... Next?”

A reporter jumped up as soon as I pointed to him. “Can you tell us how DAGR cloaks its activities? You mentioned an academic project.”

George was not going to be pleased with my answer. “I had personal experience with this at the San Diego Supercomputer Center, though I didn’t find out what was going on behind the scenes until after I’d left.

“Several years ago, UCSD and three other universities formed a partnership, the Distributed Terascale Facility—the TeraGrid—for the purpose of linking our machines in order to increase computing power. Our charter specified that membership was limited to ‘educational institutions’—which we all understood to mean ‘universities.’ One of the conditions for adding new members was approval by the existing partners.

“About a year ago the Academy for Weather and Resource Evaluation (AWARE), a private

institute—not a university—was annexed into the TeraGrid by executive decree; meaning no vote by the member schools and no prior notification. AWARE gained full access to the TeraGrid even though the equipment they linked into the system was subpar.

“There were stiff objections from most of the founding members’ staffs—right away and again several months later when it became clear AWARE would not be upgrading their machines. This was aggravated by the fact that they were using a disproportionately large amount of machine time and did not act with any sense of the mutual regard and cooperation the other partners had for each other. Despite the continuing protests, the Executive Board was inflexible.

“The whole time, there was enormous speculation about how and why this had been done. Although most people I had contact with suspected something shady was going on, no one was able to come up with any evidence; until now.

“It turns out that AWARE is completely controlled by DAGR. Functionally, they are the same entity; and DAGR obviously wields power and influence over the TeraGrid Executive Board. The construction of the Arctic Circle transmitter and antenna grid was originally contracted by AWARE who owns and operates the facility. You’ll see more on this in my journal. ... Next question.”

Another correspondent asked, “Dr. Manning, who are the four scientists validating your analysis of DAGR’s computer model?”

“I can’t give you their names at this time. They weren’t notified about this press conference because that would have involved revealing my findings. I wanted them to continue their analyses as long as possible without any influence from knowing my results. I don’t have permission to identify them.

“Now that this is public knowledge, I will ask them to come forward as soon as possible. At that point I assume you’ll want to meet with them yourselves.”

I pointed to the next questioner and no sooner did he begin than I knew it was a mistake. “Dr. Manning, you have a personal history of mental instability and a family history of subversive behavior. How do you explain charges that were placed against your father ...?”

Malcolm stepped forward with his microphone immediately and interrupted. His expression was grave, yet he looked back and winked at me with the eye turned away from the audience.

He addressed the reporter, “Mr. Armitage. Good morning, sir.”

Armitage, feeling he was about to get shut down, tried to interrupt back, but Malcolm wouldn’t let him.

To Armitage’s surprise, Malcolm extended an invitation, “You raise a serious point, lad, very serious. We’ve got to deal with it eventually so we might as well do it now. You come up here now, so we can focus full attention, would you?”

Armitage was flabbergasted, but no more than I. Once I heard Malcolm say his name, I recognized it immediately. He was, more than my most severe critic, a writer who was vicious and relentless and had ruined the reputations of several public figures, including one among his own, a network anchorperson. He played a big part in ruining mine.

Now Malcolm was bringing him to center stage where, if he got out of control, it would be very difficult to silence or deflect his attack. What was Malcolm thinking?

## *Chapter 37*

### *Opportunity for a Kill*

A variation of the same thought must have been going through Armitage's mind, "What is MacLaren up to?" But he was probably too preoccupied with the opportunity for a kill, to let wariness diminish his arrogant zeal. He smiled enthusiastically the whole time he bounced up the aisle, accompanied by a glaring—but jubilant—Sesavan crony who popped out of him.

When Armitage reached the front, Malcolm, who stood several yards to my right, beckoned him by extending his left arm. He wrapped it around the reporter in what appeared to be a welcoming embrace. But Malcolm didn't let go; and his grip was like a vise. His left hand tightly grasped Armitage's left arm, just below the elbow and pulled him close, pinning the reporter's right arm between their bodies. Armitage was virtually immobilized. His grin turned nervous now, his eyes wide like a trapped animal.

"Please, continue," Malcolm coaxed. He held the microphone in front of Armitage's mouth.

Overcoming his obvious anxiety, Armitage plunged forward. "Dr. Manning, wasn't your father a student radical under investigation by the FBI during the Viet Nam War? Didn't he have ties to terrorist organizations that promoted and were implicated in bombings, kidnappings, and armed robbery? Can you justify such 'thoughts and actions,' especially in light of your comments today?"

I was about to respond when Malcolm cut in. He was gentle throughout his dialogue with the reporter, but irresistibly firm. "That's quite something, Mr. Armitage. You've raised an important issue. I'm curious to know, what are your sources on this?"

Armitage sputtered his objections, but Malcolm pressed for an answer, "Come now, son, you got this from somebody. Who?"

"I can't reveal my sources, I ..."

"You don't need to go that far, lad, just give us a general idea."

One of the doors opened at the back of the hall. A lone figure entered, stepped to the side, leaned against the back wall, and waved in greeting. No one noticed him but the three of us at the front of the room. The shock on Armitage's ashen face revealed the extent to which he now realized he was trapped. The Sesavan attached to him, visible and audible only to me, writhed and screamed in anguish.

Malcolm continued, "Mr. Armitage, you're normally so vocal. Can't you give us some insight? Upon what do you base these questions you've raised?"

Now with the microphone staring at him, Armitage could only mumble incoherently and turn his face away from it.

"What you do, Mr. Armitage, is launch attacks with implications. By indiscriminately asking loaded questions, you cast aspersions without the need to support your inference. Some of your colleagues do the same thing.

"You do a little leg work, come up with some dirt that can't easily be disproved, label it 'apparently credible,' and hammer away. Your subjects invariably get unnerved—after all, it's their word against yours—which makes them look guilty and—voilà!—you have your story. Sometimes the relentless pressuring gets your prey to slip up and reveal things you didn't even know were there.

"Then there are the times you delve into the personal lives of public figures and reveal private embarrassments that are neither yours nor anybody else's business, though you claim the public has a right to know.

“What if the tables were turned on you, Mr. Armitage? What if I were to ask you some questions about Tallahassee?”

“Arrrgh!” Armitage recoiled in fear. His Sesavan flailed wildly.

“But, I won’t have to be as indirect as you. I can ask very pointed questions about specific people and events ... because *my* research conforms to the standard established in your profession: it is thorough, complete, and substantiated by several sources. What do you say to *that*, Mr. Armitage?”

“Please! ... I ... I ... !”

“Now, *you’re* certainly a public figure. How do you feel in *this* case about the public’s right to know?”

Armitage, who always made such a point—on and off camera—to look cool, calm, and collected, whimpered helplessly. Whatever Malcolm had discovered was obviously devastating.

“Relax, lad. I won’t be asking those questions. Because in my book that would violate your privacy and my integrity. Have I made my point, son?”

Armitage meekly shook his head up and down.

“Awright then! I gather you withdraw your question. Perhaps you’d like to return to your seat.”

Malcolm released him. Armitage bolted for the door. The man at the back of the room opened it for him.

The reporters in the room were dazed by what had just happened, but they didn’t appear to be upset by it. Although Armitage had long been feared by potential subjects of his scrutiny, he had little respect from them *or* his colleagues.

Then Malcolm broadened his focus. “Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I beseech you to redefine your sense of propriety, your professional standards. Though most of you do not go to the same lengths as Mr. Armitage, you do, at times, dance to the same tune.

“I daresay, everyone has at least one event or aspect of his life that he would prefer to remain private. I do. And I *know* you do.”

He paused and looked around the room. I wasn’t the only one who wondered just how much “thorough, complete, and substantiated” research he had done.

“The next time you’re tempted to take down a politician or an entertainer by indulging in hypocrisy disguised as conscientious reporting, perhaps you’ll remember this occasion. Perhaps the realization we *all* live in glass houses will prompt your compassion and better judgment.”

The reporters sat in stunned silence.

“Now, with regard to the question Mr. Armitage raised, perhaps the gentleman in the back can shed some light. Would you introduce yourself, sir?”

Everyone turned around. A tech rushed to him with a wireless mic.

“Yes. My name is Jim Kalmbach. I was a friend of Peter Manning, Dr. Manning’s father. *I* was Mr. Armitage’s source, although the information I gave him wasn’t anything close to what he was talking about.”

“Please go on,” Malcolm encouraged.

“I guess Mr. Armitage was contacting Peter’s old classmates, trying to dig up some dirt on him. I told him, ‘Good luck!’ The only thing he would ever find was the time Peter got served with an injunction for being in the college president’s office during a sit-in. Peter was politically involved, but he was hardly a radical. Mr. Armitage ignored this and kept asking for more details.

“I told him it was a John Doe injunction; although it was served by a federal agent, Peter’s



name never even appeared on the paperwork. Then he started asking me about the school. I said it was pretty low key—especially for the times—all males that were either engineering or science majors. For a long time Peter and I and a few of our friends were the only ones on campus who were vocal about our political opinions.

“Mr. Armitage kept poking around. When he asked me if there were any outside agitators, I told him about a guy from Berkeley who was there for a little while trying to get something happening, but eventually he gave up and left.”

Malcolm asked, “What was Peter Manning’s relationship with him?”

“There wasn’t any, really. The guy was just around every once in awhile and then he split.”

“Mr. Armitage questioned you about this man’s radical activities?”

“Yeah. I told him nothing happened at our school. I supposed he might have done something maybe somewhere else. The guy said he knew a lot of people—people in ‘the Movement’ was how he referred to them. He used to tell stories about Berkeley, but nothing outrageous.

“Armitage glommed onto that. He said, ‘So it’s entirely possible that this man was in contact with the most dangerous radicals in the country.’ He kept on me to answer, so I told him, ‘Well, sure, it’s *possible*.’”

“How is it that you’re here this morning?”

“I work in communications. Some of my company’s equipment was rented to cover this event. When I found out about it, I put two and two together and figured Armitage was going to try to ambush Dr. Manning, so I called your office and let you know.”

“Thank you very much, Mr. Kalmbach.”

Malcolm looked toward the cameras and continued. “To those of you watching on television I want to make something very clear. What we’ve experienced this morning illustrates what can be behind the news we see on any particular day.

“Just as some journalists have drifted from the high standards of their profession to seek and convey the truth, some of you—the public—have drifted from your responsibility to carefully consider what is being reported to you.

“*They* have a responsibility to avoid feeding you mindless drivel about personalities. *You* have a responsibility to use your discrimination and not feed on it.

“We would better serve ourselves and society by adjusting our expectations. How can we demand that public figures lead sanitary lives when we see how difficult that is just by looking at our own?”

“This is a time—and Dr. Manning has made it abundantly clear—when we need to have compassion and understanding for each other ... not tear each other down, but help each other ... celebrate and participate in each other’s success ... join together to focus on and solve *real* problems ... and not be distracted by human foibles. We all have them. While striving for perfection, let us not be intolerant of imperfection.

“All of us—those who make the news, report the news, and view the news—would do well to relax our grip on what we are so certain is right ... and open ourselves to possibilities outside the range of our—often rigid—opinions and expectations.

“Something’s gone very wrong when people with certain political perspectives see themselves as right beyond reproach and their opponents as not only unquestionably wrong, but evil; when our political parties prefer to see their opponents fail rather than honor or even allow a success that would accomplish an immediate good.

“This is a destructive behavior we have come to accept as part of ‘That’s the way it is.’ It is a sample of toxic thought we would do well to clean up.

“Returning to the issue at hand: what you’ve witnessed of Mr. Armitage today typifies the nature of the allegations and rumors regarding Dr. Manning that formed—and have festered—since she left for England to recover the *Book of Symbols*.

“Stories were concocted or contorted by Mr. Armitage and others in the press who relied upon reports from those associates of Dr. Manning who intended to cast her in the worst possible light for self-serving reasons which we are now beginning to uncover. It is my hope that we have put this campaign of disinformation to rest once and for all.

“All that having been said, I feel compelled to provide a counterbalance by stating the obvious. Excessive zeal and commercialism may profane, but can never obscure the legacy and continuing contribution of dedicated journalists—people in this room and around the world, their associates, and predecessors—whose work exemplifies the highest standards and ideals of their profession.

“Without their relentless persistence and courage to expose truth and those who would conceal it, this world would be in even greater trouble.

“Let us now return to a few more questions.”

The press conference lasted only five minutes longer and went smoothly the rest of the way. After the last question, Malcolm brought the proceedings to a close. “Ladies and gentlemen of the press, thank you very much for attending. After Dr. Manning and I leave, the material she referred to will be distributed. Please remain in your seats so this can be done in an orderly fashion.”

I thanked them also. Malcolm, raising his eyebrows and nodding toward the door behind the podium, gestured for us to leave. We walked briskly through the hallway to the media exit, left the building, and hastened our way back to his car. Only after getting a couple of blocks away did we breathe a mutual sigh of relief.

He spoke first, “Well, then, I thought that went rather well. You did splendidly, Aubrey.”

“Thanks. You did, too. I’ve never had such a difficult session with the press, yet it was handled so well. Very clever at the end, by the way: having them stay in their seats until we were gone.”

Malcolm smiled, “Thank you, my dear. It’s all in the details, the finishing touches. You’ve not seen them, but my staff has been invaluable in pulling this off ... and they’ve done it from a great distance while working on other projects.”

I voiced my most immediate concern, “The thing with Armitage, though, that was pretty heavy. You’re sure that was a good idea?”

Malcolm glanced at me quickly, then returned his gaze to the road ahead. “It was done with very careful consideration and deep thought, not to mention great reluctance ... and it was absolutely necessary.”

“He was publicly disgraced, Malcolm. I know what that feels like.”

“There is a glaring distinction to be made. Your reputation was deliberately and maliciously ruined by Breck von Hass and his cohorts. They intended to destroy you to serve their own selfish, nefarious purposes.

“Armitage disgraced *himself* by his underhanded tactics. I merely revealed them; not to destroy him, but to neutralize his attack and prevent others. I did so without malice; indeed, with compassion for his unfortunate motivation. Most people would find this difficult to understand, but he was dispatched with Love.

“A wise teacher once counseled me before I went off to war, ‘You are about to embrace the greatest challenge of your young life; the danger is not in facing a deadly enemy, but in

relinquishing your humanity to the ravages of war. You be sure that when you fire your weapon or strike a blow, you do it with Love.’

“I had no idea what he was talking about. I understood the concept of ‘love thine enemy’ but felt certain that had to be suspended when enemies were gathered to kill each other. Part of my military training included harnessing the rage and hatred that came so easily for an enemy that mercilessly bombed our homes and killed people we loved.

“Before long, I was in a landing craft headed for the beach at Normandy, my first battle. I was barely eighteen. I could never have imagined such terror. Our battleships’ guns fired from behind us over our heads. Shells from the German shore artillery exploded around us. Death and killing were everywhere and inescapable. I was numb. I couldn’t move.

“Suddenly, like the turn of a switch, everything went silent. I heard the words of my teacher. At the same time, a mental picture formed of the ammunition I had loaded into my rifle. I saw one bullet in particular that I knew was destined to kill a German soldier. In that thought, our lives became entwined.

“I saw him at that same moment, somewhere ahead of me, still alive, numbed by the same terror. He and I were reflections of each other.

“I thought of my family. I thought of him thinking of his. I saw how much we were the same, he and I. Two men, two boys, unknown to each other, yet locked in a destiny that was going to take one or both of our lives. In that instant I saw him as me. I could not help but love him as I love myself, and finally understood my teacher’s warning.

“Thereafter, each time I aimed my weapon, I understood I was about to fire at another version of myself.

“Nonetheless, that day and for the rest of the war I fought ferociously to defend my home and my loved ones. Defeat was out of the question; victory the only outcome. With equal intensity, I vowed to lay down my weapon at the soonest possible instant.

“Only one who has suffered war, sufficiently grasps the utter necessity of exhausting all other possibilities before weapons are raised again. I have seen too many raised prematurely or without sufficient reason. Force is a last and temporary resort; only Love ends the battle once and for all. But until Love reigns, some attackers may not be disarmed by Love alone; it must be accompanied by strength.”

As Malcolm pulled into the hotel parking lot he concluded, “All these things were considered in my decision to handle Armitage as I did.”

After he parked the car, the two of us rushed to his suite to see Armaton. We burst through the door. The television was on, which struck me as odd, since Armaton certainly had his own far superior means of observing distant events.

I called out, “Master Armaton! We’re back!” then realized he wouldn’t need to be informed of this. An uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach was confirmed when we went into the adjacent room. No one was there.

“That’s a bit odd, don’t you think?” Malcolm wondered. “There were two of him here when we left ... and now none. Where — why — would he have gone? Given the fact he can zip off in another body any time he bloody pleases ... makes me think he’d be here if that’s what he wanted.”

My stomach lurched again.

## *Chapter 38*

### *The Siege*

Although I was distracted by Armaton's absence, Malcolm and I had business to take care of. We reviewed the press conference and discussed possible reactions. He assured me we were prepared for any eventuality. After a few hours that included a light lunch, I hugged Malcolm goodby and rushed out the door to my car.

I made record time driving back to the place I was staying, eager to make sure Armaton was there. I flung open the front door and raced through the house. No Armaton. I searched the garden and the surrounding woods. He was nowhere to be found.

In what I knew was a futile gesture, I checked my phone messages. Of course there was nothing from him. Among others, Harold, Kamala, Ashvin, Prabhas, and Nirmala had called. I got them all on the line together.

We greeted each other. They were excited about the press conference and started to talk about it.

I interrupted, "Armaton isn't here. Would one of you let me speak with him?"

For a moment they were silent.

Then Prabhas said, "Aubrey, he isn't here either. When we turned off the telly after the press conference we looked everywhere for him. We thought he had returned—so to speak—to you."

Harold chimed in, "I haven't seen him since breakfast."

"Us, too!" Kamala reported. "What do you suppose has happened to him?"

I asked, "Nirmala, what about the writers?"

"We've not spoken with them since this morning, several hours before the press conference."

"Would you check?"

"Certainly." She clicked to another phone line.

In the interim, the conversation returned to the press conference. Each of them was enthusiastically calling attention to one highlight or another. I was so distressed about Armaton that I wasn't really tuned in.

When Harold had to call my name twice to get my attention, I saw how distracted I had become. Obviously I wasn't focused on the present, but worried about the future: when and if Armaton would return.

Observing my anxiety gave me some distance from it; and the chance to remind myself everything was OK, and that I did not choose to worry. Doing this freed me to rejoin my friends in the present.

Nirmala came back on the line. "He's not there, either. He disappeared sometime during the press conference."

Now having recovered my even-mindedness, I was no longer concerned. "Obviously there's a reason. When we need to know, we'll know."

We talked for over an hour about the press conference. I passed along some of the things Malcolm and I had gone over during our discussion and then we all hung up.

There were a bunch of phone messages from Eric Holtzman, my TeraGrid colleague who was participating in rerunning DAGR's simulation. Two more had come in during the time I was on the line.

I had hardly finished dialing when he answered, shouting, "Dr. Manning! How *dare* you! How could you publicly declare me to be part of your insanity? I agreed to examine your

nonsense only as a courtesy and with the expectation of strictest confidentiality. You've set out to ruin me along with yourself and I won't stand for it!"

"But I never even mentioned your ..." Slam! He hung up the phone "... name."

At that point it seemed prudent to check in with the other three, so I got them all on the line.

"Aubrey! Well, you've made quite a splash!" Gary Michaelson was laughing.

"More like a wave!" Lazzaro Geminiani added.

"More precisely, a tidal wave!" Jahzara Tippett laughed, too.

I told them, "I'm glad you're taking it so well. You understand why I didn't tell you what I was doing?"

They all did. Lazzaro commented, "But a phone call this morning would have been a nice gesture, just to give us a head's up."

"You're absolutely right. I'm sorry."

Jahzara pointed out, "That you didn't might have been for the best. If you had talked to Eric he would have flown off the handle right then and there and that would not have been a very good way to begin such an important undertaking."

The others agreed.

I was touched, "Thanks for understanding. I really appreciate it. What *about* Eric? Is there anything I can do?"

Gary said, "Nothing is going to turn him around. I don't think he was really with us even from the start. I don't know why he went along. The best thing, for the time being, is probably just to let him be."

"In any event," Lazzaro was quick to add, "whatever's going on with Eric is aside from the point. We're facing a monumental crisis. I've got to do a few more runs, but at this point I'm inclined to be in complete agreement with you Aubrey: there is no way for DAGR to control—or for anyone to predict—what will happen if this weapon is test fired."

Jahzara and Gary concurred:

"I'm getting the same indications."

"So am I."

I wanted to know, "How long will it take for you all to wrap it up?"

Their consensus was, "It's just a matter of days."

We agreed it made more sense for them to wait until their work was complete before coming forward, wished each other luck, and hung up."

I had hardly put the phone down before it rang.

Harold had news, "Breck is out-of-his-mind pissed off. I heard he was throwing things and that two TV's got trashed while you were on the air. He's coming back at you, Aubrey. Tomorrow. He's going to issue a statement."

"A statement; not a press conference?"

"That's what they said."

"That means nobody asks him any questions."

"I don't know. Anyway, the media's going nuts. They're all interrupting programs with news bulletins. You know, the ones that start with the heavy music, 'Dah-Dah-Dah-Dahhhh!' and the 'Special Report' graphics with the name of the story. One of them—I forget who—is calling it *Doom or Deception: The Clash of Science*. They have these head shots of you and Breck facing each other over a background that's—like—Mt. St. Helen's or something."

"That's pretty much what Malcolm expected. He's ready to deal with it."

"So what do you think is up with Armaton?"

“I don’t know, Harold. All I do know is: ‘moment to moment, one step at a time.’”

“Right.”

After we hung up, I turned on the TV and flipped over to CNN. My press conference was the lead story and they gave it a lot of airtime. The White House released a statement denying any knowledge of the covert programs I had described and reaffirming the “peaceful and passive nature of the Arctic transmitter array. It is strictly a research project primarily dedicated to improving our ability to assess and predict global climate changes.”

After that, they showed a photo of Breck and played back a brief statement he made by telephone. “Aubrey Manning has again demonstrated the wildness of her obviously defective perceptions and imagination. I will give a comprehensive statement tomorrow and make this patently clear. I have no other comment at this time.”

I thought, “That should be interesting!” and turned off the TV. Malcolm advised me not to plug into the frenzy of coverage he correctly anticipated. As he further suggested, I spent the rest of the daylight hours out in the garden and then curled up with a good book after supper.

The next evening Breck’s statement began at 7:00 West Coast time, 10:00 Eastern. And I thought Malcolm had clout; Breck was preempting prime time programming.

He was seated at an impressive wood desk with DAGR’s official seal emblazoned on the front. Behind him was the United States flag along with several others I didn’t recognize. The time slot he commanded and the image this setting conveyed put him almost on a par with the President. Breck apparently wielded far more power and control than I had imagined.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, my fellow citizens. I address you this evening on a matter of grave concern. Let me be clear at the outset: the issue is not projects which have the capacity to cause harm—there are no such projects—but the character and credibility of a misguided, irresponsible, and scandalized public figure whose motivation is undoubtedly a desperate attempt to revive a failed career.

“She has made wild and absurd claims—with absolutely no scientific basis—that have created widespread panic. Her main recommendation is for the public to purchase books she conveniently prepared ahead of time for the occasion.

“She presents numerous and elaborate accusations. First of all, I will not dignify her charges by addressing them. Second and more importantly, there are issues of national security involved that I cannot discuss. However, I will state—categorically—there is no project under my control or observation that poses a threat to any of the planet’s ecosystems or in any way endangers military or government personnel or private citizens from *any* nation; and certainly not our own.

“To demonstrate the absurdity of her allegations, it will more than suffice to reveal her complete lack of credibility, a task easily accomplished. It will take more than her high-powered media consultant to restrain the truth, as he was able to do at her press conference yesterday.

“This incident demonstrates her dubious character and lack of integrity, Let’s begin there. What we saw was—and there’s no other term for it—out-and-out blackmail. A journalist with a reputation for discovering uncomfortable details public figures try to hide, was extorted into withdrawing his question and forced to leave the press conference when an embarrassing incident in his *own* past—in no way related to any issue at hand—was threatened to be revealed.

“Then an alleged source came forward in a temporarily successful attempt to thwart the truth by diluting the credibility of the journalist. This alleged source colored his description of the interview process to create the false impression that he had been coerced and that the information he revealed had been misinterpreted. He then falsely played down the political involvements of Peter Manning.

“I have affidavits from three other students at the college Mr. Manning attended, during the time he was enrolled, which are in complete concurrence in describing him as a dangerous student radical, personally responsible for several student uprisings. That there is no paper trail or hard evidence of criminal activities is no proof they did not occur; it is testimony to Mr. Manning’s cleverness in avoiding detection by authorities.

“One of the affidavits is my own; Mr. Manning, James Kalmbach—the alleged source—and I were classmates. I observed Mr. Manning’s descent from average student to what I perceived at the time to be a raving anarchist. Though I would have preferred never to call attention to the delusions he suffered which led to his rejection of this nation’s ideals, I must do so now because the truth of the matter is relevant to the character and trustworthiness of his daughter.

“With respect to Mr. Kalmbach, his character is also suspect. In 1971, less than a year after our graduation, he was arrested for possession of narcotics with intent to sell. Let me stress: he was a close friend and associate of Peter Manning.”

I watched and listened in utter shock. I didn’t know about Jim Kalmbach, but nothing Breck was saying about my father was true. Yet he had managed to present it in a way that surely made it seem true. He was on his way to killing two birds with one stone. Literally. Destroying me and killing the story about his involvement with geophysical warfare.

He continued, “It seems Peter Manning’s destructive behavior set a pattern for his daughter. Although charges were never filed regarding her complicity in the San Diego Supercomputer Center fire, new information has come to light which—again—places her under suspicion.

“This morning, George Scribner, head of the Supercomputer Center, confessed to evidence tampering and was placed under arrest. Local authorities will provide further details. As I understand it, the data which led to her exoneration was fabricated by Dr. Scribner who admitted having an inappropriate relationship with her.”

Now this was getting crazy. The phone rang. It was Harold.

“Are you hearing this? How can he do this?”

“I hear it, Harold. I guess we have a chance now to see how good Malcolm *really* is.”

“Do you get what happened? The Dark Lord Sauron turned on Ming the Merciless and had him thrown in the clink!”

“Poor George.”

“I’m jealous, by the way. I had no idea.”

“Don’t!”

Breck went on to his next point. “It was claimed that four scientists were verifying the scurrilous allegations raised against the Directorate for the Administration of Geophysical Research. Who are they? Where are they? No one has come forward, nor been identified. Was this part of a successful—but dishonest—ploy to capture the attention of the media and secure coverage of a press conference that would otherwise have been ignored?

“Many issues were raised at this press conference; many were skirted. Most notably this: her theory and much of the material she presented rests on a foundation that involves a state of ‘communion’ with ostensibly ‘mystical’ geometric diagrams and ‘beings of light’ from some netherworld invisible to the naked eye. When she no longer had access to the equipment that would prove or—more to the point—disprove the spurious theory she has been promoting for years, she claims her conclusions were inspired by these same diagrams and creatures. This is not the work of a scientist, nor the claim of a rational, credible human being.

“With regard to her trip to England in pursuit of supposedly vital research, I have visual evidence of her activities. In the first shot you will see her on a farm near the village of Avebury.

I have affidavits from several witnesses including the farmer and his wife who took all the photographs and turned them over to British authorities.

“In the following series you will see her make her way into a field accompanied by a group of people. Here—where she stops—is the former site of a crop circle, a phenomenon that falls into the same category as flying saucers, the Loch Ness monster, and Bigfoot and has been exposed as a hoaxed concoction of pranksters. The group is comprised of individuals who are devotees of the Crop Circle phenomenon. Is this scientific research by any stretch of the imagination?”

“Her conclusions alone are sufficient to demonstrate the lunacy behind them. After years and millions of dollars in funding, her thesis comes down to nothing more than a tired anthem of the hippie culture to which her father was so devoted: ‘All you need is Love.’ She actually would have us believe this maudlin theme will mitigate all planetary environmental problems.

“*This* is science? *This* is what she proposes to offset the longstanding, scientifically grounded accomplishments and reputation of the Directorate for the Administration of Geophysical Research, not to mention my own?”

“She speaks with such apparent conviction, yet does not have the fortitude to make her accusations direct. She claims to be simply passing along information and does not feel obligated to offer a convincing argument. She passes the onus and burden of investigation and proof onto *you*, my fellow citizens ... and then tells you to start the process by buying her books ... because they will provide you with knowledge ... but she has published them as works of *fiction*!

“It is an absurd ruse: she claims a disaster is imminent, yet has no idea what it is. She says what she pleases and declares you have the means and—what’s more—the responsibility—to verify what she says, knowing full well that this is beyond the scope of your training and understanding.

“Then, stretching causation beyond its elastic limits, she claims that *you*, my hard-working and dedicated fellow citizens ... that *you* are largely to *blame*.

“At the Directorate, we are highly trained, highly skilled professionals. We appreciate the trust you place in us to understand and handle sophisticated technical matters on behalf of this great nation. We would never violate that trust nor would we ask you to do our jobs or take on the responsibility for our work.”

He smiled gently now and his voice softened, “Our founding fathers never dreamed the fledgling nation familiar to them was capable of the greatness and world leadership we achieved less than two hundred years after their time.

“I will admit I’m prejudiced, but I firmly believe the most significant factor in achieving this greatness has been the contribution of our outstanding scientists; from Benjamin Franklin to George Washington Carver to the men and women who are working diligently today to expand our horizons and improve our quality of life, long established as the best in the world. Some of these wonderful people work by my side at the Directorate.

“Our lives are not as glamorous nor are we as popular as our attacker once was. Our progress is often slow and the work tedious, but each day, day after day, we *do* make progress and—in the end—it all adds up. *That’s* the kind of dedication that makes this country great.”

He let his indignation show again, “I will not allow an assault from a misguided derelict of science disrupt our progress or in any way dissuade or disrespect the fine men and women of this great organization. It is my hope—and I am confident that—you will not either.”

Then he closed with a warm smile. “My fellow citizens of this great, great nation, thank you for your time and attention. Good night and God bless America.”



Harold was stunned, “Holy smokes, Aubrey! He tore the stuffing out of you. And they’re coming after you again. If you go out in public, they’re going to arrest you.”

“That’s not going to happen, Harold. That’s not where we’re headed. I can’t explain why, I just *know*. It’s a good thing though that I never moved back home. I had a feeling all along that wouldn’t be a good idea and now I know why.”

“What do we do now, Aubrey?”

“We all stay cool, you hang up, and I take this call that’s coming in.”

“OK. Bye!”

“Bye! ... Hi Malcolm. What did you think?”

“Well, cutting to the chase, he came at us with a ferocity and an approach that I hadn’t completely anticipated. That having been said, although I’ve still got some thinking to do, I’m not displeased with the way things have evolved.”

“They are planning to *arrest* me, Malcolm. If I can’t *go* anywhere, how do I answer his attack? How do I get word out? I’m back to being a fugitive. It’s like he’s neutralized me again.”

“Pish tosh!” Malcolm laughed. “He’s done nothing of the kind. It’s out, Aubrey; the story is out. It’s a big story that will get even bigger before it ends. From this point on, the media will come to you wherever and however you choose—*especially* since you’re perceived as a fugitive. All you need do can be done from where you are. I’ve thought this out thoroughly and made preparations.

“Breck considers the public to be a malleable flock of sheep that can be herded into compliance. He assumes that by restricting your movement and playing the darker aspect of human nature to his advantage, he can keep the lid on his secret operations. He’s convinced that if he destroys you, anything you’ve said will be destroyed as well. That’s why he will continue to ignore the issues, attack you unrelentingly, and do all he can to neutralize your efforts.

“He’s painted you to be the criminal progeny of a crazed insurgent. By attacking you this way, he provokes your instant denial and counterattack; it’s only natural that you would, since his allegations are fraught with lies. But that would be entering his realm, the realm of the Sesavah ... *and* a strategic blunder. By not striking back—in fact, by not responding at *all* for a time—we will turn Breck’s attack to our own advantage.

“There was a time when the tactics he employs worked like a charm. But today, there are vast numbers of intelligent, thoughtful, spiritually mature people who cannot be so easily controlled; who know when someone is trying to manipulate them and won’t stand for it. They will not be intimidated because they are motivated by Love, not fear. They seek and demand truth and recognize it when they see it.

“Contrary to Breck’s expectation, what has been spilled cannot be swept under the carpet. It will not go away. As soon as you set foot in that hall yesterday, you set the world on fire. It cannot be extinguished by anything other than truth, because too many truth seekers are aware ... and won’t be fooled by flimflam.

“This is the end game, my dear, a time to be creative, adamant, and ready for anything. We’ve openly threatened his domain. The truth you spoke provoked his attack and now the battle is joined. We will respond on Saturday.”

“Saturday! Malcolm, you want us to wait four days? And on a Saturday?”

“At 8 AM local time.”

“No one’s watching TV then—I mean except kids. All that’s on is cartoons.”

“Mmmm,” he droned contentedly, “It’s a very long time to wait. In that time a blessed alchemy shall take place: the darker aspect of human nature that Breck hoped to use to his

advantage—the tendency to gossip, spread rumors, and the irresistible urge to worry, speculate, and second guess—will be harnessed to draw worldwide attention to the light ... to your next appearance. You watch and see what happens.

“For the duration of the siege it’s best I remain at your side. I shall check out of here in the morning and come to your place. With a few pieces of equipment added to what you already have, we’ll have the capability for live webcasts which the major news outlets will cover.”

“You can convince them to give us air time again? Off a webcast?”

“There’ll be no convincing necessary, my dear. We’ll hardly be able to beat them off with a stick.”

## *Chapter 39*

### *Unusual Behavior*

Malcolm brought our conversation to a close. “I will update and coordinate with the others later. You relax, free your mind, and get a good night’s rest.”

That I did until 6:30 the next morning when the phone rang.

It was Lazzaro. “Aubrey, it’s terrible! I was so close, I came in early this morning figuring I could finish today ... but my system crashed. When I got it back up, all my files were purged. Everything!”

“Well, that may be a setback, but it’s not a disaster.”

“It’ll take me a day and a half to two days just to reload my back-up and start running again. I could have finished *today!*”

“Hey, it is what it is. When you finish you finish.”

“I know, but ...”

“It’s OK, Lazzaro.”

I took a shower, had a bite to eat and called Harold to make sure he had recovered from Breck’s statement.

It took him forever to answer. “Aubrey! Are you OK?”

“Sure, but what about you? You sound a little ...”

“They’re on to us, Aubrey!”

“Who? What do you mean?”

“I can’t access DAGR’s files anymore. Somehow they figured out they were getting hacked and how I was getting in and now they shut the door.”

“But I thought you said ...”

“It’s impossible, but somehow they did it. Even if they knew where to look, it would have been ...”

“Harold, you know about Eric, don’t you?”

“Holtzman? What about him?”

“I can’t believe I didn’t tell you! He completely freaked out over the press conference. He left me probably twenty messages. When I called back he just yelled at the top of his lungs and then hung up.”

“That’s it! That’s the only plausible explanation. *He* showed them the door and they slammed it shut.”

“I think there’s more.”

“What?”

“I got a call from Lazzaro about an hour ago ...”

“Uh oh!”

“He said his system crashed and all his files got purged.”

“Oh, no! I gotta go. I’ll explain later. I’ll call you as soon as I can.”

Malcolm pulled in at 10 AM followed by Ashvin who came to set up equipment. I was just about to tell them what had happened with Lazzaro and Harold when the phone rang.

“Hi, Aubrey, it’s Kamala. Has Ashvin arrived yet?” She sounded pensive.

“Kami! Hi! Yes, a few minutes ago. Do you want to talk to him?”

“No. I sent a disc with him. Has he given it to you?”

Ashvin sensed what was up, reached into his pack, pulled out a disc, and waved it back and forth.

“He’s giving it to me now.”

“You must watch it immediately. There’s something ... I can’t explain ... please take a look.”

I popped the disc in. It showed a pod of pilot whales passing through Cook Strait between the north and south islands of New Zealand a few days before. Several had beached near the city of Wellington. The footage showed local authorities successfully refloating them. Even after returning to their companions, all of them bleated ceaselessly—frantically, it seemed.

The narrator paid this no mind and talked about the great variety of fish and sea mammals which are attracted to the area by the confluence of warm and cold currents. This wasn’t a news piece, more of a human-interest story/travelogue.

“What about it, Kamala?”

“I’m not sure. Something seems terribly wrong, the way they’re calling—it’s as if they’re pleading for help.”

“Their calls *do* sound unusual, but I don’t have any idea why.”

“Alright, Aubrey. I just thought ...”

“If anything comes to me I’ll let you know. I’ve got another call, Kami.”

“Aubrey, hello. This is Jahzara ...”

“And Gary.”

“Hi. What’s up?”

Jahzara was grave, “Harold called each of us a couple of hours ago and told us what has been happening ...”

Gary continued, “He asked us to drop everything and check our files immediately. We both rushed to our offices and ...”

“All the files are gone, Aubrey! First Lazzaro’s, now Gary’s and mine. Someone has hacked *us* and deleted them. Eric must be telling Breck everything. What do we do?”

I thought for a moment. I’d never been in a situation like this before and shook my head in disbelief: this was a cyber battle. “I’m not sure *what* to do. Did Harold say anything?”

Gary replied, “Once he filled us in and told us to check our files, he said he had to get to the storage silos ... that it might already be too late.”

The implication stunned me; the silos contained thousands of cartridges with data from all the users of the TeraGrid.

“The thing is,” he went on, “this shouldn’t be happening. They’ve got complete access to *everything*. It’s like someone’s sitting at my console that knows all my safeguards ... passwords ... back doors ... *everything*. This isn’t supposed to happen.”

An idea came to me. “Let’s try something. Cold boot your systems. Do it at exactly the same time. As soon as you’re back up, change your access codes immediately. Then try to access your data and reinstall it. ... In fact, try this: check with Lazzaro. See if you can get him to cold boot at the same time.”

“We’ll do it right away.” Jahzara was resigned. “The thing is, Aubrey ... it’s *all* gone ... all our work, not just the DAGR material ... it’s ...”

“I understand, Jahzara. Let’s take one thing at a time. All of us together—we’ll figure something out.”

The prospect was chilling. Their life’s work was in jeopardy; years of effort, volumes of data, subtle details, momentary inspirations possibly lost. The day had hardly begun and it was already overwrought with chaos.

As soon as we hung up, I returned to Malcolm and Ashvin and told them everything that was happening. Malcolm offered to call the others and pass on the news. Ashvin returned to his

equipment installation and I replayed the whale disc. Kamala was right. Something about it bothered me, too, but I couldn't figure out what it was.

For the time being, there was nothing for me to do, so I went to my room for some quiet time and meditation. I had created a tiny chapel in an alcove originally designed to be a dressing area.

I closed my eyes, practiced a breathing and concentration technique, and focused on Master Armaton. My intention was to plead for his return. On prior occasions when I thought of him in meditation, I felt his presence. This time, all I could access of him was in my memories. Yet, they reassured me.

I remembered being so upset at having to battle the Sesavah all by myself in the kitchen and getting even more upset when he told me he had “witnessed” the whole thing. But then he explained, “Controlling one's present state of mind yields the power to control one's life and destiny,” and patiently helped me understand how I had unwittingly accomplished this. This wouldn't have happened if he had been there helping me. Clearly, when he is absent, there is a reason.

My rescue by the Golden Warrior Guardians certainly proved he would come the instant he was needed. And seeing Malcolm was a constant reminder of the disguise Armaton used on the airplane so he could be right next to me without me knowing in a time of great difficulty when it was best I be left to myself.

There was the time Armaton appeared in my room at the Gandhi's home shortly after I arrived in England. His words then comforted me now. “... my visit shall be brief, the point, simply, to remind you: I am here always, just behind the veil which separates the third dimensional realm from Infinitude. I am ever monitoring events. If I do not appear, know that, despite seeming calamity, all is well and thou art not in need of my direct assistance.”

It was only after ten days and major calamities that I saw him again. Then, too, he had watched over me while giving me the opportunity to independently work my way through the challenge. Afterwards he said, “Remember this, dear Aubrey. No matter what, in the face of seemingly impossible odds and insurmountable tangible physical threat, hold fast to thy truth, to the truth of this sacred mission, to the consciousness of Love, and—as thou hast already tasted—there shalt be a majesty to behold.”

At the time Armaton gave me this encouragement, I sensed the immense future calamities it was meant to assuage. They seemed to be at hand now. Through these memories, I realized it didn't matter whether he was visible to me or not.

As he had said when we were with the Gandhi's, “To trust in God is to know that thy life is completely in the hands of the Divine, no matter what. It is living God's truth, knowing ye will always be shown the way.”

Ironically, in trying times a lot of people decide it's too risky or they're too impatient to wait for intuitive guidance; they act immediately, mistaking desperation for boldness—when help is just around the corner.

Prabhas told me a story, which I remember only vaguely. Several of the Hindu deities are hanging out together in heaven when—suddenly—one of them jumps up. The others ask what's wrong and he says, “One of my devotees is in trouble. I must go to him at once.” He disappears in a flash only to return a moment later.

“What happened?” the others ask, “We thought you were going to help your devotee.”

“I was,” he answers, “but then he picked up a rock.”

I renewed my determination to stay calm, hold fast, and keep going; my main effort being

to tune into the divinely inspired intuition innate within each of us.

“One step at a time,” I urged myself. “No rocks.”

I remained in seclusion for another hour, then felt the pull to go back to my office. As I got there the phone rang.

Harold spoke in a strained whisper, “I couldn’t do it, Aubrey. I tried to get to the storage silos, but they beat me to it.”

“Who, Harold?”

“Security ... and a lot of dudes wearing dark suits and headsets who never smile. Lord knows who *they* are. Obviously the word is out that I hacked DAGR—thanks to Eric. They started swarming the place just after I got here. Whatever else they’re up to, I’m pretty sure they’re after me. And I don’t think it’s just to ask questions.”

“Where are you?”

“At the Center ... outside the machine room ... in a janitor’s closet.”

“What are you doing in ...?”

“They almost spotted me. It was the only place I could hide. Now I’ve got to figure out how to get out of here.”

“Jahzara and Gary called. I told them to ...”

“It’s too late. The files are gone. I saw the suits removing cartridges from the silos. Obviously they’re going to Breck. Jahzara, Gary, and Lazzaro—they’re screwed ... big time. They’ve probably lost everything ... not just the DAGR stuff ... *everything*.”

“How are you going to get out ...?”

“Wait! Quiet!”

I heard men’s voices. They were shouting, but the sound was muffled. They must have been outside the door to the janitor’s closet. It sounded like an argument. After a minute they stopped.

“Shoot, Aubrey! I’ve got to get out of here.”

“What are you going to do? Is there a janitor’s uniform in there you can put on?”

Sarcastically, “Yeah. Right.”

“OK, listen. How spooked are you?”

“Probably not as much as I should be.”

“Good. Now’s the time to put what this is all about to work. You’re getting out of there and nobody is going to catch you. You’ve just got to do it at the right time ... when there’s an opening.”

“How do I know when? If Armaton was here, he could ...”

In that moment Harold got it. Then he explained it to me, “If Armaton was here, he would know—intuitively—when I should make a break. He keeps saying anything we think about him, anything he can do, we can do. So I’m going to hang up now and then I’m going to do that breathing thing you showed me and I’m going to visualize the symbol for the Golden Warrior Guardians. Then when it feels right ... I’m out of here. I’ll call you from my car.”

Harold was amazing. He was always thinking, always learning, always ready to change and try something new. I wished him luck and we hung up.

Malcolm came in to see how I was doing. After catching him up on the latest, I told him, “Everything *looks* like it’s unraveling, yet I *feel* like it’s coming together. Strange.”

“Not that strange. Chaos precedes great change ... which I suppose is a contemporary play on ‘It’s always darkest before the dawn.’”

“My dad had this dark sense of humor—if you’ll pardon the pun. Sometimes, when I was in a jam, he would sit me down for a pep talk. After a few consoling words, he’d put his arm

around me and gently say, “You know, it’s always darkest before the storm,” Then his eyes would get really big; he’d gasp and put his hand over his mouth, like he’d accidentally let the *real* truth slip out and then he would go into the zaniest rap like he was trying to cover it up. It was always so ridiculous and funny, it made me think that maybe I didn’t have to take whatever the problem was so seriously.”

“Master Armaton seems to have a similar approach. As far as he’s concerned, worlds could be crashing and still: all is well and wonderful.”

I admitted, “I had a hard time with that at first, but not any more. If you get sucked into reflexive fear, you draw and anchor the thing you fear. No matter what’s happening *around* you ... or what looks like might happen imminently *to* you, if you stay clear of it in your head, you’re still available for a positive outcome.

“If you’re really clear, the world may still crash, but it won’t crash on you. The thing is, if enough people stay clear in their heads, the world *won’t* crash. Some positive alternative will emerge because that’s the only outcome the preponderance of thought will allow.”

“What you’re describing, Aubrey, is quite the thing I appreciate about the Folk and their prophecies. They allow for, encourage, and, in fact, instruct a positive outcome for all; without requiring allegiance to an organization and abnegating all control. There is no prodding by guilt—‘So much has been *done* for you; the Lord has *died* for you’—or fear—‘Unless you believe the way we say, you won’t be saved; you’ll suffer, and spend the rest of eternity in hell.’

“Even as a small child, I realized such appalling notions could never come from God, only men; and rather dismal men at that.”

The phone rang. We laughed and exclaimed in unison, “Now what?”

It was Lazzaro. “It didn’t work. Nothing worked. It’s all gone. All the years ... My career ... That’s it!”

“Lazzaro, I’m so sorry. Don’t give up. There must be a way. We can ...”

“You don’t understand. I’m not *like* you. I can’t *do* this. I have a family to worry about. Nothing like this was supposed to happen. My life is over.”

I tried to talk with him, to give him some hope; I sent him waves of healing light; I invoked the Golden Warrior Guardians; but there was no way to help. He was willfully locked in a morbid, hopeless frame of mind, lost to the Sesavah. That explained the rotten stench I detected— not in the air, but in my mind—the moment I picked up the phone.

Once I was convinced he wouldn’t budge, I let go of trying to help him and ended the call. Malcolm was still in the office when I got off the phone. He started to console me.

“Malcolm, I’m OK. It’s very sad; it’s terrible: what happened to Lazzaro; but the real tragedy is how completely identified he is with it. Until he loosens his grip, nothing can loosen the Sesavah’s grip.”

I tried to call Jahzara and Gary, but couldn’t get through.

The next few hours passed uneventfully. During that time, I wondered how Harold was doing. With the dark sense of humor I inherited from my Dad, I laughed at the idea of calling him to find out.

I needed a breath of fresh air so I decided to go for a walk in the woods. Before leaving the house, I watched the whale report a few more times. The more I watched, the more convinced I became that something strange—and important—was going on; but it still eluded me.

Instead of taking one of my usual routes, I blazed a new trail and found a clearing I hadn’t been to before. I sat on a boulder and checked out the “neighborhood.” I heard the unmistakable whistling sound of air passing through the wings of Mourning Doves in flight. Several landed

about fifty feet from me, unaware or uncaring of my presence. They rustled through the dry leaves, pecking at the ground. There were no grasses or other sources of seed nearby, so they must have been feeding on insects, which they do only rarely.

“Unusual behavior!” I thought.

The phrase hung in my mind. It repeated, over and over. Then I got it.

I jumped up, spooking the doves, and raced back to the house, thrashing my way out of the forest along the fresh path I had made when I caressed my way in. I flew to the phone and dialed my old friend Cha Cha Morales, one of the administrators of the mission in San Juan Capistrano.

“Ms. Morales,” she answered; very serious; very official.

“C-C, it’s Aubrey.”

“A-B! Hola! What’s up with you? Man you sure know how to stir up the pot, girlfriend!”

“I do what I can. Listen, C-C, things are getting a little heavy ...”

“If that’s your idea of little, I don’t *know* what big is.”

“The thing is, I can’t talk long and I need some information.”

“Shoot.”

“I remember seeing something on TV—it must have been in April—that the swallows hadn’t returned yet to the mission.”

Each year on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19—or within a few days—Cliff Swallows arrive after a 7,500-mile journey from their winter home in Goya, Corrientes, Argentina. Their reliable yearly return became famous after the publication of a collection of stories called *Capistrano Nights* in 1930 and a 1939 hit song written by Leon Rene.

C-C answered, “Yeah. The crazy thing is, they never *did* show up.”

“Really! Has that ever happened before?”

“We have records going back a couple of hundred years. Back then they didn’t come to the mission, but they always returned to the area in the middle of March. So, no; I don’t think it’s ever happened before.”

“Did they leave Goya?”

“Uh huh. Right on time: on the 18th of February; but they went to a different place.”

“What do you mean? You know where they are?”

“We got word in May—I think it was on the 23rd—from the mosque Hassan II in Casablanca where they nested. They’re in Morocco.”

“Morocco? How do you know it’s them? You’ve got them tagged?”

“Uh huh. Some of them.”

I whistled my astonishment. “They went to a different place, alright! They went to a different *continent*.”



## *Chapter 40*

### *Frenetic Calls*

C-C laughed, “Maybe they decided to convert. The bishop will be pissed. He’s not *that* ecumenical.” She turned serious. “So does this mean something, Aubrey?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Does that DAGR thing up in Alaska have something to do with it?”

“That’s what I’m thinking. C-C, I’ve got to go. It was great talking to you again.”

“Same here, A-B. Listen, if this thing ever ends ...”

“*When* this thing ends ...”

“*When* this thing ends, maybe you’ll come up again for some pie at the Walnut Grove.”

“Definitely. Count on it.”

Unusual behavior. That was just the first part. I suspected something similar was going on with the whales. I watched the disc over and over and still got nowhere.

I muttered to myself, “OK, so nothing seems that unusual ... except for the frenetic calls. Pilot whales aren’t unusual in Cook Strait. Beachings aren’t that unusual. So why are they making such a racket? It’s like they’re calling and nobody’s ... Oh geez! That’s it!”

I speed dialed Kamala.

“Kami! I think I know how to find out what’s happening with the whales.”

“You do? This is such good news. How will you be doing this?”

“Actually, I was calling to ask for your help.”

“Please—tell me what you are thinking.”

“I want you to call a friend of mine at the University of Auckland—Scott Craig. They’ve got one of the world’s leading research departments on whales and dolphins.

“See if he’s got detailed footage of the bull that was beached. If not, then help him get ahold of some. What we need to do is figure out the exact species of those pilot whales. Kami, please get back to me the instant you have an answer.”

“Most certainly, Aubrey.”

A short time later I glanced at the clock and noticed it was a few minutes before four. I sought out Malcolm and Ashvin.

“Would you guys like to stop and check the news?”

“Spiffing. What do you say, Ashvin?”

“Yes. I would like to see what is going on.”

We turned it on at the top of the hour. The lead story was the public reaction to my exposure of DAGR and Breck’s statement. People everywhere were in the grip of fear and anger. They showed politicians and private citizens arguing about which of us was lying. Some were demanding investigations of DAGR; others wanted me subpoenaed before Congress; and still others wanted me tossed in jail immediately so I couldn’t cause any more trouble.

Variations of this were happening in countries all over the world. It was literal chaos. In many cities there were riots and looting. The fear and negative reactions provoked by my revelations were overshadowing the unity and constructive responses that were taking place. The majorities of people around the globe who were immersed and identified with their most base emotions far outnumbered those who remained calm and were heeding my call to carefully search for the truth.

The Sesavah revelled in the turmoil and its domination. The Golden Warrior Guardians could only protect those few who were attuned to Love. They remained unaffected. But the

demons had their wretched way with the others. They violated their victims with lustful exuberance, prodding them to assault each other and defile themselves.

“Malcolm! What have we done?”

“We have unleashed the Truth. The beast and the god in us now vie for supremacy. It is the actualization of the Great Shift.”

I repeated what Master Armaton had said the first night he came to me:

“Deep within all there is a beast.  
It lurks in hiding, poised to spring  
Whene’er it senses easy prey  
Exposed by thoughts of fear and doubt.

Enticed by greed and hatred’s stench,  
It feeds by feeding tendencies  
That further darken darkened minds

~

Deep within all there is a god.  
It waits in hiding, poised to spring  
Whene’er it senses ease of mind  
Reflected in one’s thoughts of love.

Enticed by peace and joy’s perfume,  
It feeds by feeding tendencies  
That further love in loving minds.”

I continued, “Then he said, ‘...the beast and the god add to themselves and displace each other. That is to say, love adds to love; fear adds to fear; and each diminishes the other. Temperance always, that thou might perceive clearly, choose wisely.’”

“I had no idea what he was talking about then. Now I understand all too well.”

The spectre of depravity was sickening. Wild-eyed people were beating each other on the streets and running out of shops, arms overloaded, spilling their plunder.

I muttered, “Something doesn’t make sense. This is *way* over the top ... and these people look so strange ... like zombies ... It’s like they aren’t thinking. Something’s very wrong ... There’s more to this than the Sesavah ... It’s *very* unusual.”

And then the phrase hit me like a ton of bricks. “Unusual behavior!”

“Oh my God!” I shouted.

Malcolm and Ashvin shouted back, “What’s wrong? What is it?”

“This isn’t real. It’s not natural behavior.”

“Well,” Malcolm suggested, “these are extraordinary times. When people are under such pressure, they often ...”

“No, you don’t get it. This has something to do with DAGR’s transmitter.”

“How do you know this?” Ashvin asked.

“I don’t. But I’ve got a very strong feeling.”

“What can we do?”

“I don’t know. First we need to find out if it’s true.”

The phone rang. When I saw who it was on the caller ID, I whooped in relief, “It’s Harold!”

He must be out!” and picked up.

“Harold! Thank God, I ...”

There was a roar and a wailing sound on the line. He was trying to shout over it. I could barely hear him. I was just about to hang up and call him back, when I realized the noise wasn’t a bad connection. It was coming from something happening around him.

All I could make out was, “... got out ... minutes ago. ... chasing me. ... don’t know ... .. outrun ... .”

The wail was a siren. Inconceivably, Harold was being chased by the police.

“Tell Malcolm ... text ... .. I have both my CPU’s with me. I can’t let them ... .. they’ll find out everything. They’ll find out where you are. The only thing... .. wreck the car ... .. try to blow it up. ... .. definitely been worth it, Aub- ... ..-maton says, don’t give up, don’t ever ... . ... .. Go do it! Give ‘em all you got!”

Then the line went dead. “I lost him!”

I called him back. “He’s not answering! All I get is voicemail!”

Suddenly, I was in a zone of unreality more bizarre than anything I had encountered even with Armaton. What had just happened to Harold? Could I believe my ears? Was this some freakishly real dream? The voicemail message I had heard scores of times before now seemed surreal.

My head began spinning and I fell to the floor. My eyes closed reflexively. I heard Malcolm calling to me, his voice fading with the rapidly increasing distance that now separated us.

When I opened my eyes, I was in a dark place. The only thing visible was a pinstripe-suited demon who loomed over me with its foot pressed against my neck.

It taunted me, “But this isn’t *sur*-real, my darling; it’s *real*-real: what I warned you about, but you wouldn’t listen. You didn’t *believe* I had the power to strike you or your playmates down. Now what do you think? Any regrets?”

I knew I had summoned the Sesavah by my fear for Harold and fought with everything I had to resist its temptation.

“These books of yours, these Folk, what good are they now? What did I tell you? There is only *death* for you fetid rabble! Disease, injury, violence and death—*that’s* your destiny, you and the rest of the miserable human scum. I *told* you. How much more do I have to do before you ...?”

With a swipe of my arm, I whisked the beast aside and jumped to my feet. I turned my back on it and stepped away. With my will and determination I had cut the connection and it vanished.

Now I was being restrained from behind. As I lunged to free myself, someone bellowed, “Aubrey! It’s me! You fainted!”

I broke away and turned to face the voice.

“You fainted, Aubrey!” Malcolm exclaimed. “What happened?”

I quickly recovered my sensibilities.

“I think Harold was just in an accident ... not an accident ... I think he did it on purpose. He must not have gotten out of the Center without being spotted. The *police* were chasing him ... and he ... he said that he had ... .. he had his computers with him and that he couldn’t let anybody get them. It sounded like he was going to try to hit something to create an explosion ... then he said goodbye ... and the phone went dead. I can’t believe it! Have we lost Harold?”

Ashvin’s eyes filled with tears. Malcolm appeared dazed—he stared blankly as if lost in thought and then quickly refocused, becoming steely eyed.

With a quaking voice, he spoke with intense determination. “We must not ... we *cannot* lose

heart. If this is true, I ...” His voice broke. “When I was in the war, I lost seven of my dear friends—seven!—all in a span of ten months. Six of them ...” He had to pause. “Six of them died at my side. One moment they were here ... the next ...”

He sniffed deeply once and continued, “But there was a war on. I couldn’t ... I ... I had to keep going. If I had stopped, if I had gone to them, I’d have been a goner myself. So I had to ...” His voice trailed off and he stared into space again.

Then he recovered. “We must press on. We cannot go to him either. We cannot look back. We cannot give in to our sorrow. There is too much at stake. A time will come when this battle is over and we will have the opportunity to honor and mourn the fallen. For now, we must press on.”

Too much about this bothered me. “I don’t understand. Harold was going to wait until the right time and then make his move. I *know* he was guided by his intuition, so how could he have gotten caught? And why did he crash his car? If they found out where I was, the worst thing is that I would have gotten arrested. We could have dealt with that. Why did he do it? Why did this happen?”

Malcolm reminded me, “Speculation, dear Aubrey. It won’t get us anywhere but immersed in madness. If and when we need to know, we’ll know. In the meantime, we must follow Master Armaton’s admonition, ‘Temperance!’”

“Ashvin, you go back to work now, son. We need that equipment.” Malcolm pulled him close and embraced him, patting his back. Then he gave me the same consolation and said, “Aubrey, you—out of all of us—you must stay even-minded. You cannot lose heart. Now you add Harold and his sacrifice to what keeps you focused and determined to prevail. It can be done. It may be excruciating—I *know*—but it can be done. It *must* be done.”

Then he asked me to help him sort through files. It was busy work. He could easily have had someone from his home office staff handle it electronically. We both understood why he asked me and I dove into it.

Each time my attention drifted to Harold and the terrible feeling of loss that threatened to overwhelm me, I seized control of my mind and directed my thoughts to the love that I felt for him, the Folk, Master Armaton, the Queen. This was the only way I could keep my mental footing.

After what seemed like hours and hours, I checked the time. It was 5:45; only an hour and a half since Harold’s call.

“All that’s holy!” shouted Malcolm.

“What is it?”

“Hold on!” Malcolm stared intensely at his computer screen. “3:52. What time did you speak with Harold?”

“About 4:15. Why?”

“He must have sent this while he was still inside. I have a text message from him.”

I yelled for Ashvin to come as I leaped out of my chair and bounded across the room to see. This is what it said:

BRECK WANTS 2 KILL AUBREY. DAN ER MIN . B USIN  
WEAPON NOW 2 MAKE PEOPLE CRAZY. I LEAVE HERE  
NOW 2 TRY 2 ET 2 U. MORE 2 TELL—IF NOT U MUST  
STOP B.

“Good Lord!” Malcolm wheezed.

“*That’s* why Harold did it, Malcolm! Because he thought they’d kill me! Look! They *are* using the transmitter. Somehow Harold must have found out.”

“What does ‘DAN ER MIN’ mean?” Ashvin wondered.

“DANGER MIN,” Malcolm was quick to reply. The letter ‘G’ is missing in several places. See? Over here he means ‘USING WEAPON’ and here: ‘GET 2 U.’ His phone was sending a space instead of the ‘G.’”

“So DANGER MIN would mean ...?”

“Minimum danger? Something like that?” I guessed. “Maybe killing me isn’t that high a priority for Breck, but Harold still needed for us to know. The *crucial* thing is having confirmation DAGR is using the weapon. *They’re* causing most of the chaos, but why?”

Malcolm was quick to answer, “Because it *looks* like you caused it.”

We were interrupted by the phone. The caller’s identity was blocked so the privacy manager kicked in. I waited for the recording of the caller’s voice identifying himself. When I heard it, I almost fell over.

*Chapter 41*  
**DANGER MIN**

In his characteristically dour tone, I heard, “George Scribner.”

“Good God! It’s George! How did he get this number?”

I took the call. “George! What ...?”

“Aubrey, I’ve got to talk to you.”

Hesitantly, “OK ... go ahead.”

“No. In person. We’ve got to meet.”

“I can’t visit you in prison, George. They’ll *arrest* me.”

“I’m out on bail. Come to see me. I’m at a motel in Oceanside.”

“George, I don’t know if that’s such a ... . How did you get this number?”

“Skirtlandt gave it to me. I called him and told him what I have. He wanted us to get together. I can tell you things. I can show you things. Nothing matters any more. I’m ruined. Maybe there’s a way I can redeem myself ... do some good. Check with him. He’ll tell you.”

“Hang on a second, George.” I muted the phone. “He wants me to go and see him. It sounds like he’s got information he’s willing to give us. He says he talked to Harold. That’s how he got the number.”

“Where is he?” asked Malcolm.

“In Oceanside at a motel.”

“Find out where exactly, Aubrey. I don’t like this,” Ashvin cautioned.

“Nor do I ... and what’s the nature of the information?” Malcolm added.

I turned off the mute. “Where are you staying, George? What motel?”

He waited before answering. I got the impression he was deliberating whether or not to tell me.

He finally did. “At the Crescent Hills Motel on Hauser Avenue.”

I repeated as if to confirm the location, but more so for the benefit of my companions, “The Crescent Hills Motel on Hauser Avenue.”

Immediately Ashvin began shaking his head, waving his hands back and forth in front of each other, and mouthing the word “No!” repeatedly.

George confirmed the sleaziness of the location, “That’s what it’s come down to, Aubrey. In just a matter of days, they took it all away. What I’m used to is the Ritz-Carlton. Now I’m down to staying at a hellhole motel in a neighborhood I never would have even driven through before. I’m going to make *them* pay. I’m going to take them down with me.”

“When do you want to meet George?”

“Two o’clock. That’s the only time I can do it.”

“Tomorrow afternoon at two.” I gestured to Malcolm and Ashvin as if to say, “What’s wrong with that?”

“No,” George answered, “Later tonight. 2 AM.”

“Two in the *morning*.” My friends gestured frantically for me not to go. “That’s not going to work for me George. Maybe if it were somewhere more public or at a different time of day, but that late at night ...”

“Meet me at the Denny’s on Avenue A.”

“The Denny’s on Avenue A.”

Ashvin frowned and shook his head back and forth.

“What do you have for me, George?”

“I can’t ... I *won’t* talk about it over the phone!”

“And I need something to go on. Can you tell me anything about DAGR using the weapon for behavior modification?”

There was a long silence.

“Look, if you won’t talk to me now, then there’s no point in ...”

“Yes.”

“Yes, what?”

“I can tell you. I can show you. I have proof.”

At that point I made a unilateral decision. “OK, George. I’ll meet you at two. Where will I find you?”

“You just be there. I’ll find *you*. Make sure you come alone. If I see anyone with you or any cars that look like they’re following you, it’s all off. I *mean* it!”

I hung up the phone to the fervent protests of my two friends.

“You can’t do this, Aubrey.” Malcolm demanded. “This man has been your enemy for years. And now he’s desperate. You have no idea what he’s up to.”

“He said he has proof that DAGR’s been using the weapon to alter people’s behavior. That’s got to be why so many people have gone nuts. If we can expose it, maybe the government will be forced to shut it down. Maybe this way we can stop them before they fire the thing.”

“It’s too risky.”

“I know. But it’s a risk worth taking. Besides, not doing it is even *more* risky.” Pressing on, “They’re going to be looking for my car. Malcolm, can I use yours?”

Knowing I wouldn’t be deterred, he relented by grumbling, “Yes, I suppose.” There was one important thing we had neglected to do—perhaps because it meant acknowledging something we didn’t want to accept.

I brought it up. “No one knows about Harold.”

Malcolm slapped his hand to the side of his forehead. “You’re right! You’re right! How could we have ...?”

“Malcolm, will you take care of it? I don’t ...”

“Of course.”

“I will help also,” Ashvin offered. “Perhaps we can do it together.”

“Yes. Yes. That would be splendid.” Malcolm was grateful to share the difficult calls.

“I’m going to take a shower, then see if I can get some sleep, so I’m alert and ready for George.”

I set my alarm for 11:30. Before it went off, I was awakened by loud knocking on my door and Malcolm calling, “Aubrey! You must get up at once!”

I had dressed before laying down so I rushed straight to the door.

“What is it, Malcolm?”

“There’s a terrible fire. The whole sky is glowing red.”

As we raced outside to look, we ran into Ashvin who had come back in to report, “It is a huge fire, Aubrey. It’s spread all across the horizon. It looks like there are still a few ridges that separate us from it.”

I stepped out onto the deck, which was the best vantage point. Their description was no exaggeration. I had seen wildfires at night before, but never this big. Staring at the glow I tried to analyze how far away the fire was and if it would prevent me from getting to Oceanside and—just as critical—getting back.

Then, over the span of a few seconds a vertical plume of faint white light formed from a

location about a third of the way across the horizon from our right. It extended to the full height of the red glow. We saw a second white plume form the same way—straight ahead—a minute later; and a third—to the left—about thirty seconds after that.

This was no wildfire. I called the California Department of Forestry's 24-hour hotline. They confirmed there were no fires.

The CDF operator was perplexed. "We've been getting a lot of calls in the last half hour. The funny thing is, everybody is saying the fire is to the north of them. But we're getting these reports all the way up and down the state. We can't figure it out."

"Have you seen it yourself?"

"No. I'm stuck here inside. But I'll take a look in a little while on my next break."

"Be sure you do. It's only the second time I can remember the Northern Lights have been visible this far south. And the only other time—in the late 80's—wasn't nearly this intense."

"No kidding! So *that's* what it is! I'm gonna take that break now and have a good look. Thanks for telling me. How is it you figured it out?"

"I ... um ... work in the field."

"Well, thanks again. I'll pass it around. Now we'll know what to tell people to settle them down. Everybody's already so freaked about this DAGR thing, they don't need something else to worry about. Good night, then."

"Good night."

Ashvin wanted confirmation, "Is that what it really is, Aubrey? The Aurora Borealis?"

"Yep. That's what it is."

"That's quite something. It's very beautiful. The white lights seem to come and go and dance across the sky. Maybe this is a good omen."

"It's an omen, alright. What it means is the ionosphere has been compromised so severely that we're in San Diego seeing a phenomenon that isn't normally visible below Anchorage. What it's an omen of is a gigantic magnetic storm ... only I'll bet this one is generated from the surface of the earth, not the sun.

"As soon as you can, Ashvin, check for unusually severe solar activity in the last week. If you don't find anything out of the ordinary, then DAGR is the only plausible explanation."

I looked at my watch. "It's 11:20. I'm going to finish getting ready and then leave to see George."

"Jolly well," Malcolm answered, "I can be ready in twenty minutes myself."

"Malcolm, you can't come with me. George insisted I come alone."

"You can drop me off nearby and then I can ..."

"No! I don't want to take the chance on him spotting you. I'll be OK. It's just George, for crimony sakes."

"Aubrey I cannot let you do this on your own."

"I *have* to do it on my own. Please don't make it more difficult than it already is. I need you to be OK with this."

"You're taking an immense risk that jeopardizes more than your own safety; it jeopardizes this mission."

"I know that, Malcolm. But it's a necessary risk. Look, here's what I'll do. Every half hour, I'll call you and let it ring twice. Don't pick up—just check your caller ID to make sure it's me."

"Every fifteen minutes," he came back.

"OK, every fifteen minutes ..."

"And you talk to me, you tell me when you're about to go into the restaurant."



“Agreed.”

I got to Denny’s just after 1 AM. This was definitely a public place. Even at that hour it was packed. It took two circuits of the parking lot to find a space. I passed at least a half dozen boisterous groups of people congregated here and there.

For a few minutes I sat in the car adjusting to the place and scoping things out. Knowing someone is out to kill you makes a simple act like going to a restaurant take on the onus of a big event. I reassured myself by turning over the phrase “DANGER MIN” in my mind.

At 1:30 I called Malcolm, let it ring until he picked up, and then—in my most dramatic rendition of that ‘poignant’ moment in movie thrillers—declared, “This is it! I’m going in!” I laughed.

“This isn’t funny, Aubrey.”

Malcolm was very serious—which made it even funnier. So much was at stake, it was too much for me to take so seriously.

I chose to be silly instead and paid homage to Ace Ventura, ““If I’m not back in five minutes... just wait longer!””

“Be careful. I know you don’t fear it, but *respect* the danger.”

I couldn’t help myself. In a terrible John Wayne impression I shot back, “Listen up, pilgrim! I’m more dangerous than danger.”

Now I felt loosened up and ready. As I walked to the entrance I realized that with each step, the heels of my shoes clicked just as impressively as any movie hero’s.

The hostess escorted me to a booth about two thirds of the way into the restaurant. I sat facing the entrance. To my left, I looked on to the side parking lot through windows facing east.

This was quite a place. I wondered how it could be so busy on a midweek night. Music was playing over the sound system, but I could barely hear it over the din of talking, laughing, and shouting. The presence of two armed security guards indicated this place would not otherwise be trouble free. I wondered how widely I could apply “DANGER MIN.”

I sipped a cup of decaf slowly, stretching it until just after 2 when I accepted a refill. By 2:15 I wondered if I was on a wild goose chase. I dialed Malcolm again and hung up.

A few minutes later, about thirty yards outside the window, a lone figure approached on foot. Although it was too dark and he was too far away to recognize, I knew it was George. I had been scanning the area and no one was there a moment ago. Apparently he was hiding and just then emerged. I wondered if he had been observing me.

He walked hunched over with his head down, hands in his trouser pockets, and the collar on his sports jacket pulled up. He wore a dark baseball cap with the brim lowered over his face.

Neither his head nor his eyes raised the whole time I observed him until he joined me in the booth. He spoke in a gravelly voice, like he needed to clear his throat. He never did.

“Hello, Aubrey ... um ... how are you?” He sat down.

I stared at him in disbelief. He appeared not to have shaven or bathed in days, his clothing was soiled and disheveled, and he had developed a nervous tick that twitched his head or turned his eyes up every few seconds.

George didn’t wait for me to answer. “Guess I look a little rough around the edges, huh? ... Well, that’s not the least of it.”

He was also experiencing muscle spasms that alternately jerked his arms, legs, and torso one way and another.

Cracking a wry grin that revealed a missing tooth, he rasped, “So, what have you been up to since the last time I saw you?” Laughing convulsively, he wheezed and coughed.

“George, I’m sorry, but I don’t have much time. What can you tell me?”

“So, is that all I’m good for? Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!”

Now I could smell the alcohol on his breath. He plopped his elbows on the table and rested his head in his hands covering his face. The waitress came by for his order and looked at me inquisitively, raising her eyebrows and nodding at him.

I silently mouthed the word, “Coffee.”

She returned with it quickly and I waved my thanks.

“George. Here. Drink this.”

“What ...? Oh. Thanks. That’s very kind of you.”

There was something more than alcohol going on with him.

“George, what’s happened to you?”

He slurped from his cup, then looked into my eyes. Tears glistened in his. “I took a wrong turn ... and this is where I wound up. It’s a dead end and there’s nowhere to go.”

His demeanor shifted abruptly, “But that’s not why we’re here. We’ve got *business* to take care of.”

“What about that, George? Are you ready to tell me?”

“Ready? I’m ready! I’m more than ready. Those miserable double-crossing ...! What do you want to know?”

He took another noisy sip.

“Is DAGR doing something to disrupt mental function? Are they using the transmitter to drive people over the edge?”

“Oh ... they can do that, OK!”

“But *are* they? Do they have something to do with the rioting?”

“Something.”

“And you have proof?”

“Yup!”

“Would you show it to me, please?”

“OK.”

I waited. He slurped his coffee.

“The proof, George. Please show it to me.”

“I will ... as soon as I’m done with my coffee.” He emptied the cup. “Actually, I think I’d like a refill.”

“Fine.”

I signaled the waitress who came right over with the pot.

“Alright. Show me.”

“I *told* you: after my coffee.”

“I can look at it while you have your coffee, George.”

“No you can’t.”

“Why not?”

“Because it isn’t here.”

“Where *is* it?”

“In my room.”

“That wasn’t the deal. You said you’d bring it here.”

“No I didn’t. I said I’d *meet* you here. If you want to see it, you’ve got to come back with me.”

Abruptly he got up, saying, “So, if you want it: let’s go. Otherwise, it’s been real,” and

headed for the door.

There wasn't much time to deliberate. I had come too far to turn back. I muttered "DANGER MIN" one more time to myself, left a ten-dollar bill on the table, and bolted after him.

"Where's your car?" I called out from ten yards behind him, "I'll follow you."

"Where's *your* car? I don't have any."

I didn't like the idea, but I took him to it.

After letting him in, I dialed Malcolm again while I walked around the back of the car to the driver's side.

It took barely a minute to get to the Crescent Hills, just a couple of blocks away.

"Park over there," George pointed.

We got out and he went to a room right in front of the car. After fumbling with the key in the lock, he opened the door. I walked in. He followed, then closed and locked it.

The lighting was dim, but I was able to quickly scan the room. I saw no sign of luggage or indication that he had been here for any length of time. Near the window at the front of the room was a small round table with two chairs. What I saw on the table made my stomach turn.

There were a straw and an open envelope next to a small pile and four thin lines of white powder. A wave of perception and realization shuddered my mind and body.

As George mumbled, "I'm sorry," two figures emerged from the bathroom.

One of them growled, "This is it, Dr. Manning ... the end of the road."

The phrase "DANGER MIN" flashed through my mind once again. This time I pictured Harold's text message and noticed what eluded me before. What we had read was incomplete. There was a space between the "N" in MIN and the period that followed. A "G" was missing. Harold didn't mean "minimum danger." What he meant was "DANGER MING."

## *Chapter 42*

### *The Temptation*

The two men lunged from either side and grabbed me. The one who had already spoken said, “We have a treat for you,” then barked at George, “Don’t you have any manners? Pull up a seat for your girlfriend.”

He appeared to be in a stupor, but managed to scrape a chair out from under the table.

They forced me into it and tied me up with bed sheets. One bound my arms together behind the chair back while the other lashed my feet to the front left leg.

The quiet one stood behind me, put both his hands over my mouth, and jerked my head back into his abdomen. His grip was so strong. I couldn’t move.

The talker dragged the straw through the pile of white powder several times, loaded it, then capped off one end with a fingertip. He put the other end into my right nostril, held it in place, then pinched my nose shut between the thumb and forefinger of his other hand.

He smiled viciously, “Whenever you’re ready ... I’ll give you a snort. Just let me know by making your eyes bulge.” He went on, cackling, “Hey! This is good stuff. You should be grateful ... a lot of people would ...”

My head started spinning, just as it had when Harold crashed his car. Everything went dark. The talker’s voice faded into the distance that grew between us. I supposed the Sesavah wanted a chance to gloat over its victory and celebrate my demise.

As I expected, a male figure emerged from the astral darkness. But this time, it was no Sesavan. He was the most magnificent Golden Warrior Guardian I had ever seen. He stood tall, gleaming in gold and white light, and looked at me with a penetrating gaze.

“Thy presence is requested. I have been sent to escort thee to the Royal Council. Wouldst thou accept this summons?”

Just as I was about to explain the difficulties I was presently up against, he continued, “There is no need for concern regarding thy circumstances. We are in a state outside three dimensional time parameters. Rest assured, thou wilt be returned to the exact moment from which thou hast been summoned.”

“Actually, if you can work it out, I’d like to come back a few minutes early and maybe do things a little differently.”

He didn’t reply, but impatiently frowned at me with a one-pointed air of expectancy.

“Alright ... I accept.”

In the brief time we had been talking, the darkness that surrounded us filled with stars and a highly polished, circular, purple marble platform with indigo veins materialized beneath our feet. It was approximately twelve feet in diameter. Out of the corner of my eye, I inconspicuously scanned the heavens to get a fix on where we were, but didn’t recognize any of the constellations.

The instant I agreed to go with the Warrior, the stars directly above us began to wobble. Their gyrations broadened and increased in speed so that they formed lines and shapes along the track of their motion the way sparklers do when kids wave them back and forth in the dark. They coalesced to form a massive Symbol high over our heads.

I recognized it—and the words the Golden Warrior then spoke—from a passage in *Sacred Memories*.

He declared a destination, “Maroth in the Alarius; fifth layer in Folk space; Royal Council.” Immediately the Symbol descended from its lofty perch and hurtled down toward us. The

closer it got, the more it shrank. By the time it reached us, it matched the size of the platform on which we stood. The Symbol made of star light continued to fall, passed through us, and merged with the marble.

As it did, an intense white light flared out radially and filled the plane beneath us to every horizon. The platform disappeared. When a time gate tower arose out of the infinite white plane, I realized we were on the surface of the White Sea aspect of the Great Plane of Knowledge. Of the five gates in the tower, one glowed. The Warrior Guardian and I, bonded in intent, floated together toward it.

We passed through the gate into another realm which I knew intuitively was Folk space. After emerging from the other side, we hovered over land which looked remarkably like Mother Earth. The most significant difference was that this place was entirely pristine.

As Aerial explained in *Sacred Memories*, the planet Maroth is the Folk space surrogate for Earth. It is the final destination for all extinct species, an eleventh dimensional sanctuary for all life.

We settled to the ground in a field of lush green wild grasses that danced in the wind and greeted us with their songs. From our left I heard the sound of a large creature bounding through the adjacent forest. It burst out of the brush into the grasses twenty yards in front of us. From its double looped close-set black stripes and long whiskers, I recognized it as a Javan tiger, the third and latest tiger subspecies declared extinct. The last one was seen on Earth in the mid-1970's.

The majestic beast loped a few strides forward, stopped, looked back at us, looked ahead, then back again and finally turned and took off at top speed.

"It's like it wants us to follow," I remarked.

My companion maintained his stoic silence and somber expression and started walking forward—along the same path the tiger took. After what seemed like a mile or so, we caught up to it, sitting in a clearing licking one raised front paw. The warrior stopped and motioned for me to sit on the flat surface of a rock. He took a seat on another several yards to my right.

Once sitting, I heard a whirring sound that grew louder and deeper. It resembled a chorus of didgeridoos. Six glints of light formed in a circle whose circumference included the Warrior Guardian, the tiger, and myself.

The rapidly intensifying lights condensed into six Beings seated in exquisitely carved polished granite chairs. I recognized the figure to the right of the Guardian before he fully formed. It was Armaton. So pleased and excited was I to see him again, I leapt up to run over and hug him. The Guardian sprang forward to block me and stood between us. Like a traffic cop, he motioned for me to stop, then pointed back to my seat which, like his, had transformed from a simple boulder into a matching granite chair. I thought the better of trying to charge past him and complied.

Once the group was fully formed, I recognized the Queen opposite me. Belaying my wonderment, the Guardian presented me to the Council and they to me.

"Your majesties and kind Folk, Dr. Aubrey Manning of planet Earth."

They all looked uniformly grim; even Armaton, who made no effort to personally greet me. I was surprised by his cool indifference and concerned about his stern demeanor.

"Dr. Manning, you are before the Royal Council, called to order by their Highnesses Queen Veridia and King Robaniel"—each of them nodded, ever so slightly as their names were mentioned—"and attended by Master Armaton, Special Envoy to Her Majesty; Chief Gift Bearer Weysala the Brave; Monitors of the Palace Arbortorium, Desral and Mehestu; Earth emissary and oracle, Panthera Tigris Sondaica; and servant to all, myself, Muktilo, Commander of the

Golden Guards.”

I searched for some clue as to the proper protocol—what I was supposed to say or do—but found none. When I looked to Armaton, he stared back impassively.

These were some of the highest consciousness, most powerful Beings in existence. Though I felt a tremendous respect for their stature—still—I was not in awe of them. If they didn’t make their customs known to me, all I could do was act according to my own nature. I smiled and said, “Hello.”

The tiger responded by gently swishing its tail. The king and Armaton exchanged somber glances.

Then his majesty addressed me, “Dr. Manning, we have carefully followed the progression of thy mission. Master Armaton has been in constant communication with us and our guidance had been with thee through his intercession.

“Our unanimous concerns prompted us to convene the council. We have reason to question thine actions. Therefore, we have summoned thee to this inquisition.”

Inquisition; that term caused me some concern.

“Given the circumstances from which thou hast just been extracted, it appears our mission has failed and thine earthly life is about to be forfeited. This outcome is but *one* indicator of thine apparent failure.

“Our singular purpose has been to restore mankind’s capacity for unconditional Love by elevating man’s consciousness in a manner known to and understood by thee: one person, one thought at a time. Although this has begun for many, most of Earth’s citizens at this time are in a highly agitated mental state, aligned with and controlled by the Sesavah. Most of the fear that now prevails erupted only after thou drew attention to fearsome circumstances. In the wake of this wave of fear, the Sesavah gained its great advantage.

“The mission—indeed, the identity—of the Society of Folk is Love. Through Love alone can man—or any beings—survive and thrive. Our purpose can only be attained by raising human consciousness. Once that is accomplished, all else shall follow.

“In retrospect, dost thou see thine actions as having strayed from the purpose and focus of our mission? Didst thou not consider Master Armaton’s withdrawal might have been in response to such a misstep?

“Please consider this: if we offered to intervene, which of thy past actions wouldst thou choose to change?”

I was stunned by what the king had said. As dire and impossible as my situation seemed even in that motel room, deep down I didn’t feel it was over, that the mission had failed. Yet now, the equivalent of a god had told me it was. I had nothing to refute him but my feelings, slight as they were at that.

The notion that Armaton withdrew because I had strayed from the Folk’s purpose was chilling to me. That certainly explained his present dour demeanor and unresponsiveness. I thought I would always have his support. If what the King said was true, everything that meant anything to me was lost.

Did I think I had strayed from our purpose? Never; not even now in the face of this criticism and what appeared to be utter defeat. But maybe there was a chance to reverse defeat. The king seemed to be offering an alternative. If I chose to change any of my past actions, he said they could intervene. That would be one way—the only way it seemed—to turn things around. Maybe I could prevent Harold’s death.

My mind raced to find something to take back. But as crucial as this was, I couldn’t come up

with a thing. Nothing I had done was insincere or untrue to my deepest sense of self. To go back and change something after it had occurred just for the sake of altering the outcome was no more than base manipulation. As much as my mind wanted to, my core intuition warned me not to violate the integrity of my actions.

At the same time, waves of sorrow and regret welled up from some indeterminate source in me. But this made no sense. If I could find nothing to change, why was I feeling regret? Then I understood the temptation. It was too familiar not to recognize.

Some semblance of the Sesavah or its influence managed to accompany me even to this high place in the presence of these magnificent Beings. It was fed by their disappointment and disapproval. I had been led straight to the temptation of doubt and regret. But I would not succumb; no matter what the King or Queen, the Council, or even Armaton thought of me, truth was truth and I would not sacrifice it even for the success of this mission and certainly not to curry their favor.

I remembered one of the writings I received, meditating on the “Great Shift” Symbol.

Everyone, sometime or another, will face a life-changing challenge. We would lovingly remind: be not afraid to implement what your circumstance will require of you; stay in integrity; do wholeheartedly what you know is for your highest and best good; be so committed that defeat is unacceptable and never allow the shadow of doubt its unholy due.

It seemed to me, this should apply not only in the moment, but after the moment as well when presented with the opportunity to alter the past.

I addressed the Council weighing my words carefully. “Madam, Sirs, gentle Tigris. If your identity is with Love, then it is also with Truth, for the highest form of each is identical to the other.

“I would give almost anything to change the outcome of my actions. But I cannot—I will not—sacrifice my sense of self and truth to change even the worst circumstances: the victory of the Sesavah, the terrible sacrifice of my dear friend, and the imminent loss of my own life.

“Everything my friends and I did was motivated by Love and dedicated to Truth. If these are the outcomes of my actions, I can only believe no better outcomes were attainable. We all did our best; the best that could be done.

“You mentioned, sir, that your goal of instilling unconditional Love in mankind can only be attained by raising man’s consciousness and that once done, all else would follow. With all due respect, it’s just not that simple. The Folk realm may be imbued throughout with Love, and you all—no doubt—possess great wisdom, but that apparently doesn’t give you a practical understanding of how things operate on Earth ... at least at this time.

“The change in consciousness that will be the ultimate salvation of mankind has not come soon enough to avert the cataclysm that threatens all life you prophesied yourselves in the *Book of Symbols*. It’s true that telling the world about DAGR created a lot of strife. But it’s DAGR who *poses* the threat you prophesied. And it’s not just a *prophecy* any more; it’s an *event* ... that’s happening *right now*; not next year or even next week. Right now. And they need to be stopped. That may not be our highest priority, and it’s certainly not our final priority, but there’s no question in my mind it’s our most immediate priority.

“What’s more, the brunt of the fear you’re talking about has nothing to do with what I’ve

done or even with the people that are in the throes of it. DAGR's weapon is being used to disrupt people's minds. The *weapon* is responsible for the 'agitated mental state' most of the world is in right now.

"The people who work for DAGR are—essentially—agents of the Sesavah. If you're willing to deploy the Golden Warrior Guardians to block the astral Sesavans, don't you see the necessity to block its physical agents?"

I looked around the circle to all the members of the Council. I wouldn't have thought it possible, but their demeanors had become even more severe. Even so, that could not deter me. As dire as things were, my heart soared realizing the extent of freedom I had achieved by speaking my truth, consequences be damned. It's not that I wasn't concerned; not by a long shot. I just knew and felt how right and ultimately necessary it was to be true to and continue the course of action my friends and I had begun.

I was ready to move on. "From your expressions, I gather you don't agree or approve. That's OK. I'm ready to go back on my own and do or face whatever's next. That will mean either getting out of the jam I'm in or taking my last few breaths through a drug filled straw. Somehow—and I don't know how—I don't think it's over.

"If you'll excuse me ..." I turned to Muktilo. "Would you please take me back now?"

No one moved or spoke.

With as much temperance as I could muster, I bellowed "Look, I understand if *you're* not going to do anything, but don't hold me back from what *I've* got to do."

They were so startled by my fervor, each of them flinched. The tiger twitched its tail and pawed at the air. Flurries of glances were exchanged. When I looked at Armaton, his eyes were welled with tears.

The king spoke. "Dr. Manning, we now know what has been necessary to ascertain from the moment you were first contacted by Master Armaton."

My exasperation eclipsed my respect. "I'm sorry. What are you talking about?"

With a heart-melting smile, he answered, "It is we who apologize, not for our actions," he leaned forward slightly and winked, "but for the necessity of taking them and whatever unpleasant impact they've had upon you."

I knew that meant something had changed, but I needed to hear a lot more.

"Of course," he responded to my thoughts. "The objective of this Council was disguised in order to verify your true feelings outside our influence."

"Okaaaaay," I replied, still exasperated.

The Queen jovially twirled her pointed forefinger at the King, conveying the message, "You'd better speed it up, dear." He looked to Armaton who smiled, arched his eyebrows, and shrugged as if to say, regarding me, "She is who she is."

His majesty invited Armaton to take over, "Perhaps *thou* wouldst wish to inform thy charge."

"I would your highness. Thank you. Aubrey, everything thou *hast* done, all thou recommend *be* done ... we are in unanimous accord. The true purpose of this meeting was to ascertain—beyond all doubt—the extent of thy confidence in thy role, thine acceptance of it, and thy commitment to it.

"Much to our surprise and delight, thou hast displayed far more than we desired or could have hoped of thee."

His eyes welled up again.

"It would have more than sufficed for thee to simply remain firm in thy belief despite our



apparent *disapproval*. But ...” he and the others laughed, “... thou wert prepared to continue the battle even without our *involvement*.”

They laughed more heartily.

“At the outset, thou resisted the notion that thy role in this mission had been prophesied. Now thou hast made it thine own, irrespective of prophecy.

“What thou hast said regarding Love, truth, and personal integrity cuts to the deepest core of our essence. That thou wert willing to sacrifice the mission, thy loved ones, and thine own life rather than violate thine integrity is one of many ways thou hast proven how perfect thou art for this mission.”

He glanced around the room and everyone nodded in agreement to what he had just said and his anticipated next comment.

“Now, my dear, it is time to return.”

“But what about ...?”

“No questions, only Love ... and trust ... that all is always well and wonderful ... that thou art always protected and always in the lap of Love.”

“I have no idea what to do, how to get out of ...”

“That’s the beauty, is it not? The mind simply doesn’t know. It makes trust in God more compellingly viable. Dost thou remember my words when the crowd assailed thee in the crop circle field?”

“You said, ‘Behold the magnificence of that which surrounds thee. See how events unfold, outside thy control, yet synchronous with thy most lofty desires and inclinations ... with thy destiny. Behold the majesty!’”

He repeated, “Behold the majesty!”

### *Chapter 43*

## *Black Invaders*

I still had questions, but when I tried to speak I choked instead. Without warning, the heaviness of my physical body was thrust back upon me. I felt the intense pressure and pain of the quiet one's grip over my mouth as he ground the flesh around my lips into the front of my teeth. Cramps seared up and down my legs, which had been twisted painfully when they were tied to the chair.

The talker completed his sentence, "(A lot of people would) ... die for a snort of this. In your case, *literally*." He laughed derisively, then snarled, "This is going to be your last headline ... when they find you OD'ed with lover boy, here."

My lungs on fire, I wondered when I would see the majesty.

He went on, "I have a message from Dr. von Hass. He wanted you to know that what's going on here: he planned it, he ordered it, and he's enjoying me doing it just as much as if it was him. The last thing I'm supposed to tell you is: if you and your father were so smart, why ...?"

All of a sudden, five telephones rang at the same time: my cell in my purse on the bed, the room phone, George's cell, and the two assailant's cells. It was like a string of electronic firecrackers went off.

The two men were so startled, they jumped. The one behind me let go of my head. The talker threw up his hands and dropped the straw. I gulped a deep breath of air. Before I had a chance to exhale, an explosion ripped down the outside door. The large window over the table shattered in. The two men screamed. George stared blankly.

Several heavily armed, masked figures clad head to toe in black burst through the door and window yelling at the top of their lungs, "Get down! Down on the floor" over and over. The two thugs dropped face down. George was dazed and remained standing. In a flash, one of the invaders tackled him. All three were immediately handcuffed.

More black invaders streamed in. After they checked the room, the closet, and the bathroom, I heard the word "secure" amongst the radio chatter. Then two uniformed police officers, a man and a woman, entered. I recognized them from the fire at the Supercomputer Center.

I managed a wan smile, "Officer Hampton! What are you doing here?"

"I heard you were in a jam."

"Malcolm? Malcolm called you? How did he ...? How did you get here so fast?"

After he and his partner freed my arms and legs, he extended his hand and helped me to my feet. I raised and lowered each leg a few times to work out the kinks and restore circulation.

"I don't know who Malcolm is." He motioned to the door and I followed him outside. "Let's have somebody check you over."

"I'm OK. I'm fine."

A paramedic gave me a quick exam. She concluded, "No damage here," and released me.

"So what happened? How did you know I was in trouble? How did you know where I was?"

"It's a long story."

"I'm all ears." Then, abruptly, I gasped as I realized the trouble I was in right then and there.

"What's wrong?"

"Look, I'm grateful for your help, but I have to leave."

"I'm afraid I can't let you do that."

My concern now seemed justified. "Are you placing me under arrest?"

"No, of course not. Is that what has you so jumpy?"

“Isn’t there ...?”

“A warrant out for your arrest? Officially, yes. I’m exercising some latitude here.”

“What about them?” I nodded to the SWAT team.

“They’re with me ... and this wasn’t an official mission. *Officially*, this is out of our jurisdiction, none of us are here, so we can’t arrest you.

“Then why won’t you let me leave?”

“You can leave whenever you want. I didn’t mean it the way it sounded. The thing is, I ... um ... have something ... you’re really going to want to see in my car. I’m parked down the street, outside the perimeter.”

We started to walk toward it.

Then he asked, “So, do you want to hear or not?”

“I’m sorry. What?”

“The story; how we got here.”

“Yes. Yes, I do.”

“This afternoon I’m on duty in La Jolla and we get an APB on a fugitive that campus security chased out of the Supercomputer Center. We’re practically on top of the place so we roll. We get a description—white male, black rimmed glasses, khaki shirt and trousers—and I’m thinking ‘No way!’”

“It was Harold!”

“Yeah the geek who helped you put out the fire. I’m sorry. Is that offensive?”

“It’s not important. You saw Harold?”

“Saw him! We were the ones that chased him down. Just when we had him, the lunatic totalled his vehicle.” Mournfully, he shook his head and swiped his brow with his palm. “How could we know he would ...? There was nothing we could do! By the time we pull up, there’s gas leaking everywhere and we find him slumped over ... holding a cigarette lighter!

“I grab the lighter and toss it, but we figure the vehicle is still apt to blow any second. My partner checks his pulse and gets nothing, but we pull him out anyway and carry him a safe distance away.

“My partner starts CPR. By the time the paramedics roll in, we figure he’s been out probably eight minutes. They decide not to move him and work on him there. After another twenty minutes—nothing—and they finally call it.”

I shuddered hearing him describe how Harold died.

Officer Hampton noticed. “Are you OK?”

“Yeah, it’s just ...” I shook my head back and forth trying to recover my composure. “Well, it makes me feel better knowing you all made such an effort to help him ... and that *you* were there, that somebody Harold knew—even slightly—was there when he ...”

“I wasn’t the only one.”

“What do you mean? Who else was there?”

“Monahan—from the fire at the Supercomputer ...”

“I know Monahan ... You don’t have to ... What was he *doing* there?”

“Responding to the call. It was the craziest thing. *I* was right near Harold when the APB went out on him and then later—and miles away—*Monahan* was right nearby on his way back from another call when he crashed. What are the odds?

“Anyhow, they foamed everything down and when Monahan noticed I was there, he came over. Then he recognized Harold and called for Reyes and the other two guys ...”

“Larry and Dan.”

“Right: Larry and Dan. So we were *all* there when the paramedics pronounced him.”

“Wow! That’s remarkable. It’s like he had an honor guard.”

“Aubrey!” I heard someone shouting my name. I looked around and saw no one. “Aubrey!” I heard it again.

Without warning it felt like I had been swept into the astral. A third time I heard, “Aubrey!” and saw Harold’s spirit hailing me.

“Harold!” I shouted back. I tried to transport myself to him but my body felt leaden.

Suddenly I was back in the physical and Officer Hampton was pulling me up off the ground. He and his partner grabbed hold of my arms and tried to stabilize me on my feet. Abruptly, my awareness shifted to the astral, then back to the physical. The transitions seemed to be taking place so rapidly, it made me nauseous.

The door to the police cruiser in the physical twenty feet in front of us flew open. At the same time, Harold’s astral body appeared to float toward me. When it reached me, his spirit gave me a bear hug. It was so good to see him again, even in this form. I hugged him back.

But something very strange was happening. Harold’s arms around me didn’t feel any different from Officer Hampton’s and his partner’s grips. I squeezed Harold’s shoulder, then quickly reached over and squeezed Officer Hampton’s shoulder. They felt identical. I alternated back and forth several times with the same results.

Officer Hampton laughed and said, “I think your boss is getting fresh with me.”

In shock, I asked him, “Who are you talking to?”

Hampton said, “Him, of course!”

At the same time Harold said, “Me, Aubrey.”

“You see him? You’re talking to him? You hear him?”

The officer nodded up and down incredulously.

“Harold! You’re *not* dead?”

“Not any more.”

I grabbed him and hugged the stuffing out of him, uttering, “I can’t believe it! I ...!”

Officer Hampton interrupted, “Look, we have to do this someplace else. SWAT has the area cleaned up as much as it’s going to be. They’ll put the assailants on ice until we review the surveillance tapes and sort out what to do. But right now we’ve got to get both of you out of here before people show up who aren’t as inclined as we are to be unofficial.

“Dr. Manning, I’m going to make a judgment call here. You don’t look like you’re entirely up to driving, so I’m going to suggest my partner take your car and follow us to your place where I’ll drop you and Harold off. On the way, we can catch you up on the rest of the details.”

Harold understood my hesitation, “It’s OK if Wil knows where you’re staying. He’s basically one of us.”

I turned to Officer Hampton, “Is it William? That was my dad’s middle name.”

“No. Actually, it’s Wilmet ... which is why I’d prefer you call me Wil.”

“Well, if I call you Wil, then you’d better call me Aubrey.”

“OK. Shall we go?”

Harold and I got into the back seat of the police car and Wil continued his story. “When the paramedics gave up on Harold, Monahan wouldn’t let it go. They had done their job, they were packing up and he’s yelling, ‘Dad-blasted weenie toad suckers!’ and then he jumps on Harold and with Reyes, they start doing CPR again.

“It must have been less than thirty seconds, when not only does Harold come to, but he’s totally lucid and starts jabbering a mile a minute. He tells us about being there watching what

was going on while he was ‘dead,’ looking down from fifteen feet up in the air. ... and he describes things that actually happened.

“The paramedics haven’t left yet so we have them check Harold and they don’t find any injuries other than a few bruises. They have no explanation for what happened.

“Then Harold starts ranting about Breck von Hass wanting to kill you and we have to help. I’m thinking he’s delirious, but Monahan says he’s heard of this kind of thing before: people that come back after they’re pronounced and they have clairvoyant abilities.

“We stare at each other for a few seconds and then he says, ‘Look, Hampton, you and I both know there’s a skunk in the henhouse. This von Hass character is one ornery polecat.’

“The thing is, ever since the fire, we’d been following the news and talking about what was going on with you, especially all the trouble you were in. It never made sense. There was no way you started that fire. As soon as your book came out—the last one, *Sacred Mission*—Monahan picked up a bunch of copies and gave both me and my partner one. What you wrote made a lot of sense to all of us; and so did your press conference.

“It was a no-brainer figuring out we had to help; the first thing was to get Harold to a safe place where he wouldn’t be picked up. Monahan explained the situation to his crew and the two paramedics and we all agreed to report the incident the same way: while being pursued, the suspect was involved in a single vehicle collision and fled the scene on foot.

“We recovered Harold’s computers—I still have them here in my trunk—then I took him to my place and he told me more about what he saw while he was ‘gone.’”

Harold took over the story. “I found out about Breck coming after you while I was still in the janitor’s closet. I overheard one of the guys talking on the phone with George. He probably figured being at the end of the hallway was a private place to talk, but I was right there on the other side of the door.

“They were trying to come up with a way to lure you to them. It sounded like George kept going off track, complaining about something. It really freaked me when I figured out what it was: Breck had used the behavior modification weapon on George and it had scrambled his brain. I also got that Breck was using it to scramble the brains of people all around the world.

“Right after they hung up I got the really strong feeling it was time to get out of there. First I needed to warn you in case something happened to me, so I sent a text message to Malcolm. I didn’t send it directly to you ‘cause I wanted to make sure you weren’t alone when you found out.

“After I sent it, I did the breathing technique to calm myself and then—Zippo!—I got out of there. I just knew I had nailed the right time to leave. I made it down the hall, down the stairs, and to the elevator near the entrance just after someone had gotten in. I was thinking, ‘What timing!’ as the elevator doors were closing. But then I heard a couple of guys inside screaming at me to stop. Fortunately, they couldn’t get the doors back open, so I bolted outside and ran all the way to my car. By the time I got to it, a police car was pulling into the lot.

“This morning, when I left my house, I knew I wouldn’t be able to go back so I took my two computers—that have all the Folk stuff—with me and put them in my trunk. There was no way I was going to let anybody get ahold of them so I got in the car and beat it out of there. The police car started chasing me.

“I didn’t know where to go, but I drove as fast as I could. A couple of times I couldn’t see the cops in my rear view mirror so I tried to lose them by screeching into a last-second turn thinking they’d miss it, but each time they showed up again. It became pretty clear I wasn’t going to get away, so the only thing left was to figure out how to keep anybody from getting my

CPU's.

"The solution was pretty obvious, so that's when I called you. I couldn't just do it without saying 'Good bye.'

"I wound up on Torrey Pines Road. I remembered there was a place up ahead where there was a steep embankment. I figured that was my best bet—going airborne. Maybe the gas tank would rupture or at least get punctured when I came down. I gave it a shot.

"I pushed in the cigarette lighter and held it down to make sure it got good and hot. I grabbed it just before I took off."

Wil said, "We couldn't believe our eyes. He went straight off the road. He wasn't out of control. It was deliberate! I'm yelling, 'Why the hell did he do that?' Anyhow, you heard the rest of that story, but not the *Twilight Zone* stuff. Tell her, Harold."

He was happy to oblige, "It was the coolest, craziest thing that ever happened to me. When I steered the car off the road and into the air, I felt this bubble of energy well up inside me. In the next split second while the car was still arcing up, the energy spread throughout my body and got way more intense. The bubble burst right at the point where the car started to drop; but I kept arcing up, faster and at a steeper angle.

"I must have gone to like a thousand feet when I made a loop and dove toward the ground just in time to see my car smash down. Then I looped up into the sky again and—this is really crazy—the bubble thing happened again and I split in two. There were *two* of me, but still only one of me thinking—you know—in charge. Talk about multitasking!

"The two of me cruised around together for a minute and then one went down to hang out at the scene of the accident, while the other one split off and shot out into the Universe faster than speed.

"So, at the same time I was watching Wil and Shandra—that's his partner—pull me out of the car, I was heading out at warp speed to who knows where. I kept going faster and faster until—*Bang!*—it was like I hit a wall and stopped short, but there was no feeling of deceleration. Instantaneously, I was just floating out there in the middle of night with more stars—bigger and brighter—than I'd ever seen before.

"One of the stars started zooming towards me. When it got close I saw that it wasn't a star after all. It was Armaton! The funny thing is, at the same time it was a surprise, I knew it was going to happen. It was like having the pleasure of a surprise without the suspense. Crazy, huh?

"Armaton had this big smile and he said, 'This rendezvous is a pleasure I have anticipated myself. Join thine intent with mine and much shall be revealed.'

"We wound up over the Great Plane of Knowledge. I could see the alternating bands of black and white of the Past and the Rays of Hope Aspects.

"Armaton said, 'There is information to be gleaned from each. Wouldst thou?'

"No sooner did I say 'Yes,' when I felt the bubble again and *that* part of me split in two. Now there were *three* of me—not counting the dead guy Wil and Shandra were working on. But I was able to get the hang of it because my capacity to think and manage my selves increased. It was very trippy.

"So one of me goes to the Past and checks it out while the other goes to the Rays of Hope to check out the future. That's where I saw what Breck and his sleazoid horde had planned and different ways their plans could play out. That's how I knew where and when to be and what to do."

Wil took over, "Then, after Harold told us, we had to slash and burn department procedures because—even though he turned out to be right—to the department, the *way* he found out would

have made about as much sense as ... as ... “

Harold cracked, “We need Monahan for a good metaphor.”

“I *have* one.” Wil shot back, “It made as much sense as a three-legged dog in a disco.”

“Not bad!” Harold critiqued, “Right up there with the master.”

“Actually, it’s one of his,” Wil confessed. “Anyway, in spite of all that, Shandra and I went ahead and put together the strike team. We gave them the best explanation we could of what was going down. We called in favors and promised favors. There are some people we’re still going to be paying back after we retire. Somehow, we managed to put it all together on the sly and off the books.

“The hardest part was holding back as long as we did. I wanted to go in even before they grabbed you, but Harold kept telling us to wait, that you’d be OK until we got something on von Hass.”

“On the Great Plane, I saw his life,” Harold explained, “I got a thorough read on his ego, what drives and controls him. I knew he wouldn’t have you killed without rubbing your face in it first: that he had proved he was smarter than you because he could kill you. He wanted you to know it. He *needed* you to know it.

“The thing is, now that we stopped Breck from killing you, we have to figure out what to do next. He has his lunatic finger on a very dangerous trigger.”

## *Chapter 44*

### *Greater Recollection*

The rest of the way we discussed strategies and Harold revealed more details he had learned on the Great Plane of Knowledge. Before I knew it, we were pulling up to the gate. I opened it with the remote and Wil pulled up the long drive with Shandra following close behind in Malcolm's car.

"Looks like someone's leaving in a hurry." Wil remarked.

Up the hill we could see a car careening down the drive. As a precaution, Wil turned on his emergency lights. Right after he did, the speeding car stopped abruptly.

"That's not a good sign." He immediately radioed to Shandra. "Possible intruder up ahead, Shay. Back me up." Then to us, "It's probably nothing, but we've got to treat it like the worst until we figure it out ... so I want you both to get down below the level of the windows and stay put until one of us tells you we're clear."

When we did, he turned on his siren and sped up. Then he skidded the car sideways and screeched to a halt. We heard Shandra stop right behind us.

Wil got out, drew his weapon, and crouched behind the cruiser, which he had positioned on an angle across the road, blocking the intruder's way.

Over the loudspeaker he ordered, "Turn off your headlights and get out of the vehicle ... slowly. Keep your hands where we can see them. ... Alright, take two steps away from the vehicle. ... Now turn and face the vehicle. ... Put your arms straight out in front of you ... Now lean forward and let yourself fall toward the vehicle. ... Hold yourself up with your arms. ... Good."

We heard quick footsteps—someone from behind running past us. It must have been Shandra.

"Is there anyone else in the vehicle?"

We heard a muffled answer that sounded more like "No" than "Yes."

"OK. Stay put. Don't move a muscle."

Wil let Harold and I know what was going on, "Shandra's checking the vehicle. ... Looks OK. ... Now she's going to pat them down ... looks like a young Hispanic male driver and an older white male passenger."

"Who *are* these people?" I whispered to Harold, "What are they doing here? And how did they get in?"

Wil reported, "They're clean. I'm going to check them out with Shandra. Sit tight. I mean it. This isn't over yet."

I whispered again to Harold, "I hope Malcolm and Ashvin are OK."

After a two second pause we looked at each other and said in unison, "Malcolm and Ashvin!"

Together we poked our heads up to peer out the window. At first Wil was blocking our view. Then we could see clearly.

I shouted, "It's OK! It's Malcolm and Ashvin! Wil, it's OK!"

We got out of the car, shouting, "It's OK. They're with us!"

At first Wil seemed agitated, probably because we had left the relative safety of the car. He relaxed as he realized what we were saying.

Then Malcolm shouted, "Aubrey, is that you? Are you alright? I didn't know what to think! It's been an hour and a half since ..."



“I’m OK! Everything’s fine!”

Malcolm seemed on the verge of tears. We ran to them.

Ashvin shouted, “It’s *Harold!*”

He ran toward us. Malcolm started to bawl. In between sobs he exclaimed, “Good God in heaven!” and staggered toward us. Wil and Shandra tenderly helped him forward.

Ashvin plowed into Harold, hugged and patted him stoutly, and sputtered his joy—unintelligibly to me—in his native tongue. When Ashvin finally let go, Harold stepped toward Malcolm and the two embraced.

Then Malcolm held Harold at arm’s length and exulted in wonder, “What miracle is it that brings you back from the lost?”

“It’s a long story, Malcolm. I’ll be happy to tell you, but I’ve got to have some food. I’m starving!”

“Yes, of course. Let’s all go up to the house.”

I introduced Malcolm and Ashvin to Wil and Shandra, then we all returned to our vehicles. But first, Malcolm embraced me, saying, “We were on our way to Oceanside. I didn’t know if we had lost you, too. That would have been too much to bear.”

“It’s OK, Malcolm. It’s all OK. More than we could even know.”

After the three vehicles were parked, we all headed for the front door.

“That’s odd,” Malcolm remarked. The kitchen lights are on. I’m sure I turned off *all* the lights.”

I saw Wil and Shandra tense up, going into battle mode again, and stopped them, “Hey! Chill! I think I know what’s up and it’s a good thing ... a *very* good thing.” We went inside, greeted by a wonderfully familiar fragrance. “Do you smell that?”

At the kitchen, a familiar voice greeted us.

“Good morrow! I have anticipated the arrival of healthy appetites. Which of thee wouldst care for an early breakfast? A selection of Cheese Louises is ready to come out of the oven.”

Four hands shot up. Wil and Shandra stood there looking dazed.

“Harold, welcome to thy new abode. I have prepared a room for thee. Thou wilt find it stocked with a replacement wardrobe—in thy case not much of a challenge to duplicate—and other amenities of home.”

As we settled down to an extraordinary meal, Wil and Shandra got over their gap-jawed awe at meeting Master Armaton. Harold and I told the stories of our adventures and we all discussed the next move.

Shandra called the strike team for an update. After a series of animated “Uh huh’s” and a perturbed, “No!” she cupped the phone and reported to us “Scribner’s the only one talking—like a mile a minute—but he’s not making a lot of sense. The hit men have clammed-up.”

She turned her attention back to the phone.

Wil explained, “It may take some time to nail von Hass. We’ve got the perps on tape, but there are legal complications. Even if we *do* get statements, there may be some problems with admissibility. We’ll sort it out and get him eventually, but—like I said—it might take time.”

“But, we don’t *have* time,” Malcolm fretted, “von Hass is expecting to see Aubrey’s death on the news—by evening at the latest—and I should think he would have expected a call by *now* from his men. Once he realizes they’ve been caught—that *he’s* been caught—there’s no telling *what* he’ll do.”

Wil agreed, “Monahan says, ‘Corner a mad dog and you corner the market on mayhem.’”

“Maybe we can *avoid* cornering him.” Harold sounded like he had an idea. “What if ...

*nothing* happened? Wil, how long can you keep George and those two guys off the street?"

Shandra was tracking this conversation in addition to having her own. She answered, "They're not lawyering up. They're not talking at all: not even giving their names; there's no ID's on them. As long as they keep that up, this could go on for days."

Harold played it out, "So what if life just goes on like nothing happened? No news on Aubrey. No word from his guys. He's going to wonder what's going on, but it shouldn't push him over the edge. It buys us some time to maneuver."

"Yes. Yes!" Malcolm was realizing the potential. "It may be just *enough* time. And I'm thinking of some spiffing ways to maneuver."

Shandra had more information to relay, "The cell phone of one of the perps shows an outgoing call at 2:33 AM ..."

"That's the time we logged Aubrey arriving at the motel," Wil noted.

"... less than a minute long ..." Shandra continued. "... It was to von Hass."

"Letting him know they had her," Malcolm concluded. "So as far as he thinks ..."

My phone rang. The call was from New Zealand.

"Hello! Scott, is that you?"

"Tena koe, Aubrey. Kei te pehea koe?"

"Kei te pai. How are *you*?"

"Good as gold!"

Eagerly, "So, do you have something? Did you figure out the species of the beached whales?"

"I had it sussed even before Kamala called. Blew *my* mind! *Mesoplodon carlhubbsi*!"

"I *knew* it! Hubbs' beaked whale!"

"They shouldn't *be* here, eh? They're supposed to be in ..."

"... the *North* Pacific ... like 5,000 miles to the north. *Tell* me about it. This isn't isolated. Do you know the swallows in San Juan Capistrano?"

He started singing, "When the swallows come back to Capistrano, that's the day ..."

"Not the song, the birds. They didn't come back this year; they wound up in Morocco."

"Get off the grass! You think there's a connection, eh?" He thought for a moment. "DAGR? Sensitivity of biosystems to unnatural perturbations in the earth's electromagnetic field? ... causing anomalous migration patterns?"

"Uh huh."

"Can you prove it?"

"I don't have time or the means to prove it—just present a convincing argument. Can you back me up?"

"Crikey! Put a chap on the spot, why don't you. Look, I don't mean to pike out on you, eh, but I'm just a little Kiwi dag. I've got no clout ... to back you up or to protect myself from being paddled. As much as I'd like to ..."

"No worries, Scott. Just thought I'd ask. Do *this* for me, though: get it out to the media about the whales. You don't have to tie it to DAGR or try to explain. Just tell them what you found."

"Already done. I was interviewed yesterday. Sorry I can't do more, Aubrey."

"That'll be plenty. Thanks, Scott ... and for getting back to me so soon. Take care."

"Kia kaha."

I rejoined the conversation in the house.

"Aubrey," Malcolm reported, "We've amended the plan: we're going to let Breck know you're alive ... in our own special way. He has a press conference scheduled for 11 AM. I have a

feeling he's counting on you being dead so you're not around to refute what he says. It will be a double surprise when we put you on the air the instant he's done. You don't mention anything about Oceanside. Just deal with what he says and whatever else you have. Can you handle an instant rebuttal?"

"You bet."

"Excellent. We've got two hours. Let's get ready."

With that, everyone scattered in a flurry of activity. Malcolm got on the phone with his staff to make arrangements with the media. Harold and Ashvin went to my office to prepare it for the webcast. Wil and Shandra left to report in for their next shift. Only Armaton and I remained in the kitchen.

"Perhaps a brief nap would be in order," he suggested.

"Maybe." I smiled, walked to him and we embraced.

"In sleep, reinvigoration awaits ... and a greater recollection of thine experience with the Council."

"But I remember everything."

"In this third dimensional realm which engenders the perception that time passes only in a linear manner, the complete recollection of an eleventh dimensional experience may occur in spurts: gently during sleep or abruptly in the midst of activities, as need be."

I went to my room. As soon as I lay down, true to Armaton's word, the Royal Council "continued."

The Queen addressed me, "Thou art not aware of the potential failure just averted. Our mission requires the absolute integrity thou hast demonstrated. Choosing to alter the past—hadst thou done so—would have proven thine unsuitability to continue. In that case, our support wouldst—of necessity—have *truly* been withdrawn.

"The king's question to you in this regard was deceptive in its premise: 'if we offered to intervene,' wouldst thou choose to change thine actions? Our own sense of integrity would have prevented our doing so. He was *not* offering to intervene, merely posing the question. In fact, we *could* not ..."

The Queen was interrupted by my alarm. After a very deep sleep, I awoke revitalized. It was 10:15. I took a quick shower and joined my friends in my office.

I barely heard the TV over Malcolm's, Ashvin's, and Harold's voices as they were attending to final details. "Stay tuned for a special report from Washington on late breaking developments ...."

There was something I wanted to resolve before I addressed the public. "Ashvin, were you able to find out anything on sunspot activity?"

He slapped the side of his forehead, "Oh no! I'm so sorry. In the excitement I have forgotten. There was nothing ..."

"That's OK. Believe me, I understand. Maybe I can find out real fast. If I go online, will I be in your way?"

"No, Aubrey, you don't understand. I *did* find out. I simply forgot to tell you. There was nothing unusual. Just after you left, I emailed one of my cousins who works in the Department of Solar Physics at the Royal Observatory of Belgium. She replied immediately: solar conditions have been quiet for almost two weeks. So it's as you said: DAGR is likely the cause of the unusual aurora borealis activity."

After thanking him I went outside and left them to complete their last minute preparations. Sitting on one of my favorite rocks, I relaxed and breathed deeply the cool fresh air.

The next thing I knew, the Queen was completing her sentence, “(In fact, we *could* not) have altered any past events in thy reality. Each ray of the Past Aspect on the Great Plane of Knowledge is inviolable. Other possible outcomes exist in adjacent Past rays, each a unique expression in the overall field of possibilities. However, one cannot interchange the outcome of one ray with the causal path of another. That is to say, a particular outcome cannot be separated from the thoughts and actions which manifested it and exchanged with the outcome of a different stream of causal thoughts and actions. What one hath wrought is wrought.

“The same applies to the future: the individual Rays of Hope. No path of thoughts and actions can lead to an outcome other than that which is the ineluctable vibrational consequent. One cannot pick and choose thoughts, actions, and consequences separate from their vibratory relationship to each other.

“Many humans have an unfortunate misunderstanding of the Law of Cause and Effect as it pertains to their lives and experiences. Many become caught up in repeating patterns of failure and misery in one form or another, not realizing a more savory alternative is but a thought away. They do not see what occurs in their lives as the appropriate and mathematically accurate result of where they place their mind and attention. Many do not understand: they *themselves* have the power to create their circumstances and, in fact, *do* so—unconsciously—as they default their power of choice to thoughts which occur out of habit, conditioned by the heritage of stagnant thinking passed down from the Dark Ages now being left behind.

“From this paucity of comprehension, they believe themselves to be *victims* of life’s circumstances, not the *creators* they, in fact, are. After a chain of negative thinking which inevitably attracts negative circumstances, many will beseech the mercy of a god they perceive to be outside and separate from themselves to step in and change what they *themselves* have wrought by the unavoidable magnetic attraction of their patterns of thought.

“This expression of helplessness and subjugation of will is tragically ironic, for to pray to God in such a way invokes not a *higher* power, but the Sesavah, whose primary objective is to convince its intended victims that they are powerless, without choice, and subject to its control. Indeed, they can be, but *only* when they so *choose*—be it consciously or unconsciously.”

Weyala, the Chief Gift Bearer spoke, “Life, even in the third dimensional realm, can be conducted far more deliberately than is the common perception. In the eleven dimensions of Folk space, as Aurial has written, thoughts manifest fair instantly. What thou thinkest *is*. In the third dimensional realm, the solidity of objects and the linearity of time create a buffer between thought and manifestation ... and fortunately so. The indiscriminant thinking of lower consciousness beings would be disastrous if manifested instantaneously and effortlessly.

“As a rule, consistency and repetition of thought charged with emotion are required before manifestation occurs. The consequent delay is—alas!—sufficient to prevent most from grasping the inherent power of thought to manifest outcomes—desired or not. Such ignorance precludes an appreciation for the power of thought and gives rise to the notion that man is separate from and subject to the god of creation.”

The King took it further, “With no disrespect, we, the Folk, sometimes find the situations which result from the limited perspectives of third dimensional perception amusing; not unlike thine own amusement at seeing characters in comedy performances proceed along ridiculous behavior patterns, the result of misunderstanding and misinterpretation.”

Desral began to laugh and went into a classic baseball comedy sketch, “Who’s on first?” Mehestu answered, “Yes.”

The King also laughed and continued, “Many of ye find great hilarity in this particular

routine of Abbott and Costello, little realizing its deep insight into the foibles of human interaction. The same element which gives rise to the enjoyment of this skit is a prime contributing element to thy greatest conflicts; that is: thine inability or unwillingness to *listen* to one another.

“Humans often refuse to relax stubborn perceptions and opinions in order to reach for the *intended* meaning of another’s communication. Instead their primary focus is interpreting what they hear only from the perspective of fortifying their own position and opposing the other.

“Ye display great insight in thy comedy, yet do not heed its wisdom as often as ye laugh at its absurdity. In countless episodes of *I Love Lucy* ye have observed the calamities caused by Lucy’s propensity to tell little white lies in order to get her way. In the end, Lucy always confesses she has ‘learned her lesson’ only to do it again in the next episode of the program.

“Though similar, less enjoyable calamities ensue in the aftermath of thine own lies—little white or black—many of ye—humble citizens and powerful leaders alike—also do it again in the next episode of thy lives.”

Queen Veridia wanted to clarify, “Lest it be thought we find only amusement in mankind’s travails, consider this: We, the Folk, Beings of Love, are immersed in a Sea of Joy at all times and in all circumstances ... but one.”

She and the rest of the Council suddenly turned solemn. The quick contrast to their prior demeanor was startling.

The Queen continued, “Our greatest challenge—our greatest temptation—is to maintain our temperance as we observe the suffering of Earth’s peoples when they immerse themselves in the darkness of the Sesavah.

“Do you comprehend the depth of this? We are the very identification of Love, the pre-eminent consciousness, holding the capacity for Omniscience and Omnipresence. However, our Power, vast as it is, does not shield us, but makes us privy to thy suffering.

“In our All-Knowingness, we *experience* the wicked consequences of thy detrimental choices. We are tempted into anguish when we see ye marching blithely in thy not-knowingness straight into the jaws of the Beast, unable to prevent or warn ye.

“Loving all of ye, we are tempted into bewildered despair when we experience thy preference for hatred, brutality, and judgment, given that beauty is only a glance away, within and about each and every one of ye. A further irony: outside the blinding influence of habitual perceptions, even those who hold the most scorn would see they are far more the same than different from their perceived adversary.

“Neither we nor Mother Earth are unaffected by thy dark proclivities. One way Folk are lost to our Society is by straying from the razor’s edge of compassion into the temptation of human pain, becoming consumed and identified with it.

“So, you see, we do not take mankind’s troubles lightly. It is only with the stringent exertion of will and choice in this regard that we are able to keep our hearts light. Were we not to do so, our Society would join the ranks of the most lost.

“This effort to maintain our temperance, we certainly do for ourselves, but also to show ye that it can be done; that it is possible to keep one’s temperance in *all* circumstances.

“Remember: there is no inherent difference between us. Do not place us on a pedestal. Within us all is the same Soul. What we have done is found more ways to express and identify with it. What we do, so, too, can ye do.”

“Aubrey!” Malcolm called from the house, interrupting the Council meeting. “You’d best come in now. Breck’s conference is about to begin.”

After returning to conscious awareness of the third dimensional present, I felt the withdrawal of a subtle ominous force that had been present but unnoticeable for several days; like the hum of an air conditioner that you don't perceive until you experience the real quiet when it's turned off.

Then, before I could get up, a searing pain blasted into my heart. I fell to the ground gasping for breath and writhing in agony.

## Chapter 45

### *All a Lie*

My mind swirled in and out of consciousness. I heard Malcolm shouting to the others for help, but his voice was muffled and barely audible.

As I lay there on my back, I couldn't shake a vivid mental image. A sword ripped into my chest piercing my heart. The grisly hand of a murky figure held the sword's grip. I felt him thrust the blade all the way through my body into the ground beneath, pinning me to it.

Looking up, I saw I was at the bottom of a huge, shrieking, sooty funnel formed by innumerable thousands of hideous gray faces swirling around and over me. Their expressions were bizarrely contorted as they screamed hysterically at the top of their lungs.

Waves of anguish and terror spilled as blood from the wound and puddled around me. The deep red stain spread, cutting wide swaths in every direction until it covered the Earth and transformed into a thick black tar. This hardened into a brittle shell that squeezed the planet so tightly it thrashed in torment until the encrustation shattered.

The dark figure leaned over me; his silhouette dominated my field of vision. Suddenly a brilliant white light appeared in the vast distance. Glints of it penetrated the funnel forming a halo around his outline.

I heard a voice come from the light. It was my own. "The pain contains information. Once it is known, clear the energy and the pain will subside for it shall no longer be needed."

Using a technique Armaton had shown me, I did just that. The image and the pain vanished simultaneously just as my friends gathered around me.

Before they could perform whatever emergency procedures they had in mind, I sat up and thrust out my arm, as if to say, "Hold off!" I told them, "I'm OK. It's over. There's no time to explain. We need to get in and watch Breck's conference."

My words were spoken so emphatically, they all complied. As Armaton extended his hand and pulled me up, we exchanged knowing glances. His nod told me he was every bit as aware as I regarding the knowledge imparted by this experience.

We reached my office and sat down just in time to hear, "We interrupt our regular programming to bring you a special report from ..."

Malcolm spoke over the announcement, "Aubrey, when it's time, all you need to do is turn to the camera and speak. You can use the monitors over there," he pointed to them, "to track what's going on. Any images you want to show, just bring them up on your computer. We'll take care of transmitting them."

"OK." I acknowledged.

Outside, it had been a clear, calm, warm, sunny, typical San Diego day. Now the sky had darkened. Furious winds pressed the trees from their upright, placid postures to bent and defensive ones. Leaves, twigs, and small debris careened through the air and tapped angrily at the windows, walls, and roof.

The ground shook lightly with the unmistakable rumble of mild earthquakes.

I became aware of an astral overlay, a black cloud that enveloped the entire planet. It was a dense, thick, seething swarm of Sesavan entities that had come from all corners of the astral realm to reinforce the comrades that had already infiltrated and become deeply entrenched in the minds of men driven by fear. Its size and power were staggering and seemed to choke the life out of Mother Earth.

This was prophesied in *Sacred Memories*. A warning was reiterated at the Royal Council.

The Queen's expression remained grave. "When thou returnest, a trial of life shall be faced, the outcome dependent upon strength of mind and purpose and trust in the ultimate supremacy of Love, despite all outward appearance of defeat and devastation."

At first I thought she meant my own situation in the motel room, but there was a much wider, more chilling implication. "There are forces gathered in numbers and power that would tempt even the most courageous to cower in terror. Do not succumb to this temptation, no matter what thou seest, no matter what wicked, unassailable forces surround, outnumber, and overpower thee.

"Only Love can prevail against such odds. As gentle as Love is, so, too, is Its power almighty. Forces shall gather on thy behalf to press our cause and protect thee from the irrepressible assault of evil.

"Rememberest this, we are with ye, with all who engage the enemy in the supreme battle of that great day. Whatever terror there may be to come, no battle, no foe shall be essentially different from any other; no strategy more complicated or effective than one grounded in Love and executed in fearlessness. For each and all, the contest shall be resolved in the theater of the mind.

"Thou returnist with the complete deep and abiding blessing, confidence, and support of our Society. On that day, in that battle when thou art our champion, know that untold legions of Golden Warrior Guardians are joined with thee, commanded by Muktilo, our great exemplar."

I turned to him and whispered, "Thank you."

Eyes closed, head bowed, palm placed his over his heart, he replied, "It is my honor, my duty, my joy."

"Good afternoon, my fellow Americans," Breck began. Ominous distant thunder joined the ongoing rumble of the ground beneath us. "I won't take much of your time. I know you want to return to your favorite programs, but I have critical information to reveal to you that should show conclusively the fallacy of accusations recently made against the Directorate for the Administration of Geophysical Research."

The quick glance I exchanged with Armaton told me he, too, was aware of the fetid Sesavan astral entities that were Breck's puppeteers. Many more had become attached to him since my reconnoitering vision in his AWARE office. They were also more completely melded with him.

With each word he spoke, the fiends that were attached to him—along with the others that enveloped the planet—spewed a sickeningly pungent dark green and morbid-yellow splotched bile that flew in all directions. Although it was repelled by those who remained calm in a vibration of Love, the spray was inhaled or swallowed by all those whose fear-filled thought patterns attracted it. Larger stinking, sticky wads adhered to the skin of those unfortunates who drew it to them. The acid bile seared its victims, prompting them to even more corrosive thinking.

"Dr. Aubrey Manning has claimed that DAGR is behind a project that endangers no less than all life on the planet. We will now demonstrate just how spurious, empty, and absurd these allegations are."

Breck seemed to lose his balance momentarily. He clutched the podium to steady himself. The camera on him swayed slightly at the same time.

He explained to the television audience, "We've been having minor temblors here for a little while. That one was a bit stronger."

I went online immediately, hoping not to verify what I strongly suspected was happening.

Breck resumed, "In remarks Dr. Manning made to the press just three days ago, she declared



that four scientists were about the business of verifying her conclusions. Since then, all four have come forward—voluntarily—to refute her unconscionable and irresponsible claims which have led to worldwide panic and rioting.

“After my introduction, the spokesman they chose to represent them will address you. First, Dr. Eric J. Holtzman from Argonne National Laboratory; Dr. Lazzaro T. Geminiani from the Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center at Carnegie Mellon University; Dr. Gareth L. Michaelson from the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; and Dr. Jahzara Tippett from the Center for Advanced Computing Research at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.”

The camera panned to each of their faces as they were introduced. Eric was the only one who appeared untroubled. Lazzaro looked terrified. Gary was dour. Jahzara was pensive and looked like she had been crying. I wondered what they had all been through to get them to this place.

Eric stepped forward. “Good afternoon. Eric Holtzman. I’m going to read a brief statement.” He cleared his throat lightly. “On Thursday, May 25, Drs. Geminiani, Michaelson, Tippett, and I received a phone call from Dr. Harold Skirtlandt, an assistant to Dr. Aubrey Manning, requesting a telephone conference for the following day.

“This was the first contact any of us had had with Dr. Manning or her associate since before her mysterious disappearance last December when she was suspected of starting the Supercomputer Center fire.”

“He’s lying!” Harold shouted. “I was talking to them in February when they gave me their TeraGrid passwords for you to ...”

“Shhhh! Harold! Just listen!” Malcolm insisted.

“During the conference which took place on May 26, Dr. Manning was very agitated, talking incessantly about someone who was ‘after’ her. She said she needed to protect herself and begged for our help.

“All four of us,” he gestured stiffly to the other three, “were mystified by her wild accusations about the Directorate for the Advancement of Geophysical Research. She insisted Dr. von Hass was behind a plot to ‘get her.’ In the light of Dr. Manning’s past erratic behavior, these manic, irrational ravings caused us to have grave concerns for her mental health and stability.”

Dozens of long tendrils from the beasts that consumed Breck were lashed to others manipulating Eric. Having willfully capitulated to their influence, his grotesque astral countenance reflected that he had become more one of them than himself.

“Not knowing how much of a danger she would pose to herself or others, we played along, in the hopes that our apparent ‘support’ would encourage her to continue to communicate with us. We wanted to monitor her condition and persuade her to seek the psychiatric help we all felt she needed.

“As a means of validating our perception of her condition, we elicited the consultation of Dr. Farley Iverson Bancroft, Chief of Staff at Southgate Medical Center in Tucson, Arizona and a Professor of Psychiatry at the Taylor College of Medicine. Dr. Bancroft is here to report his findings.

“It must be stressed that this is not an evaluation of Dr. Manning, per se, but a general opinion regarding behaviors we described to him. Dr. Bancroft?”

He stepped up. Dr. Bancroft was a slight, bald man with beady blue eyes behind rimless glasses who talked out of the side of his mouth in a perpetual sneer. He wore an innocuous gray

or possibly tan suit, neatly fitted except for the sleeves, which were too short and exposed most of his shirt cuffs when he placed his arms on the podium. The tendrils of his own firmly affixed Sesavan cluster reached out and clenched those of the bestial parasites attached to Eric and Breck.

He cleared his throat with loud groans that resonated from deep in his throat, “Unnnh unnnnh! Good afternoon. I want to make it clear that I am not making a diagnosis, but determining what condition best applies to a hypothetical patient who presents symptoms such as those described to me.

“You all have copies of my report.” With a quizzical look, he turned to Eric, “They’ve got the ... Yes, OK ...” then back to the reporters, “Since you have the details already, in the interest of time, I’ll spare them and get right to the point. In my opinion, the symptoms presented—generally: delusional behavior; euphoric, heightened, and irritable moods; and acute schizophrenic episodes—indicate a Substance-Induced Mood Disorder, likely the result of extended drug usage. Given the age and general condition of health ascribed to the hypothetical patient, it would not be inappropriate to assume recreational drug usage. Only a specimen analysis of the actual patient, of course, would prove conclusive.”

“Which I would say,” Malcolm overlaid, “they’re expecting to be able to perform soon on your dead body.”

Dr. Bancroft stepped away and Eric returned. “Given the delicate and unstable condition we perceived Dr. Manning to be in, we did as little as possible to further disturb or irritate her, hoping she would avail herself of professional help before doing harm to herself or anyone else. We never dreamed she was capable of wreaking such havoc.

“Not knowing her plans, we were shocked to witness her press conference and the terrible turmoil which followed in its wake. We were even more shocked to realize *we* were the four scientists she referred to who would ‘corroborate her findings.’” He held up two pairs of fingers to indicate quotation marks.

“In discussing the situation with my three colleagues, we discovered that each of our accounts on the TeraGrid had consistent excessive time charges since the end of March. We put two and two together, called Dr. Skirtlandt—who we knew to be closely involved with Dr. Manning—and confronted him. He confessed to stealing our account and access information so that he and Dr. Manning could make unauthorized use of the TeraGrid.

“Dr. Skirtlandt defended his actions by arguing that Dr. von Hass was conducting illegal and dangerous projects and needed to be stopped in any way possible. When we pressed him to back up what he was saying, he admitted to hacking DAGR’s computer systems. We immediately informed Dr. von Hass. Later we learned an arrest warrant was issued for Dr. Skirtlandt. In addition to charges of ...”

Breck rushed the podium, shoed Eric away with a curt “Thank you, Dr. Holtzman,” and took over again.

“Dr. Skirtlandt’s intrusion into our computer system constituted a violation of national security and a federal warrant was issued for his arrest. He was spotted in the San Diego Supercomputer Center yesterday afternoon. When stopped for questioning by campus security, he fled the building and led police on a high-speed chase until he lost control of his vehicle and ran off the road. Unfortunately, he escaped before the police could detain him. He remains at large.”

“Geez!” Harold exclaimed, “At large. I sound dangerous.”

Breck continued his presentation, thickening his saccharine sincerity as he progressed.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the press, my fellow Americans at home watching, do you see now what has been happening? I don’t wish to call attention to the unfortunate situation that has befallen a formerly honored colleague, but I must do so in the interest of calming the terror her lies have perpetrated on innocent Americans.

“Dr. Manning is a very troubled individual with a personal and family history of unstable and criminal behavior which she managed to shield from the public until only recently. With as much strife as she has caused, I would still remind you ... ask you ... to have compassion. In her substance abuse, she is the victim of a *disease*—really—which strikes professionals in many fields, unable to cope with the pressures of their responsibilities.

“At the same time, you must remain firm in your rejection of the false and terribly damaging claims she has made. Do not allow them to influence or continue to upset you. Remember: we are Americans. We are a strong and resolute people. Be strong and unbending now, when your country needs you.

“Because of national security issues, I have not been able to disclose information regarding experiments that *have* been conducted by the Academy for Weather and Resource Evaluation. I should point out, by the way: although DAGR has no direct line management responsibility, we do oversee and coordinate all AWARE projects as is the case with other organizations that fall under our auspices.

“It is my hope and I am confident that the situation will change soon—momentarily—in such a way that I will be able to report news of excellent and astounding progress that will greatly strengthen our nation and vastly improve our security.”

“He’s winding down,” Malcolm observed. “Get ready Aubrey.”

He turned off the speakers as all of us put on earpieces so we could hear the audio feed from the broadcast.

Breck concluded, “We may be able to reveal this remarkable stride at any moment, as soon as I get word. For now, I’ll take some of your questions, but please don’t ask me about this development. I cannot discuss it until I get confirmation.” Pointing, “OK, you with the red tie and the ... yes, you.”

“Dr. von Hass, are you saying that *nothing* Dr. Manning has claimed is true?”

“In a nutshell, yes, that’s what I’m saying. Have you read her book? That should be proof enough. ‘Beings of light.’ ‘Out of body experiences.’ ‘Crop circles.’ She would have been more credible had she invoked Santa Claus. At least children would have believed her. There’s nothing she’s said—nothing she *can* say—that is credible or verifiable.”

Malcolm exulted. “He doesn’t suspect a thing; he thinks you’re dead. He doesn’t *ever* expect you to respond, Aubrey. This is where his house of cards falls apart.”

Pointing his finger, Breck invited, “Next question. You over there in the pink blouse.”

“Are you denying the Arctic transmitter array has offensive weapon capabilities?”

“At this time I can neither confirm nor deny any such capabilities.”

“But you have said that *if* such capabilities existed, they would pose no threat or danger of any kind to anyone.”

“That’s not precisely correct. I believe my words were to the effect that no project under DAGR’s auspices or in my field of knowledge posed any such threat ... without reference to a specific project, confirmed or denied.”

Someone approached the podium from Breck’s right, handed him a note, and walked quickly off camera. He read it and appeared to have an emotional reaction.

“Ladies and gentlemen, my fellow Americans,” his voice cracked, “since we’ve gone on the

air, most of the rioting that has gone on for days has ceased. People seem to be tuning in and getting the message that there is no danger, that it was all a lie. I'm so pleased to report, the crisis appears to be over."

He stepped away from the podium, turned to the side, and held a hand to his forehead, as if to compose himself. The Sesavan entities attached to him shrieked with glee at his dramatic display and apparent control of the situation.

He stepped back. "Let's have another question. Please feel free to challenge me. The more probing your questions are, the greater effect we can have in setting the record straight and calming things down even more. Alright ... in the blue shirt over there."

"Dr. von Hass ..."

"Good Lord, this is it!" Malcolm seemed to recognize the voice of the reporter and—even more—anticipate the question.

## *Chapter 46*

### *Exposing the Truth*

The reporter asked, “Dr. von Hass, would you be willing to have Dr. Manning respond to your comments?”

Fully confident in my permanent unavailability, Breck shot back without hesitation, “Of course. In fact, I would be pleased to engage her in a debate as soon as it could be arranged. I think that would be very helpful in exposing the truth. “But,” he shrugged, “I’m afraid she won’t accept.”

“How can you be so sure?”

Breck was taken aback. “Well, that ... um ... Dr. Manning is a fugitive from justice. I doubt that she would risk being arrested ...”

“Actually, we have her on a live feed.”

“...by showing up in a public—I’m sorry, what did you say?”

“She’s standing by right now. All we have to do is patch her in.”

Breck’s body stiffened, becoming slightly shorter and more contorted than his usual twisted posture. He stared wide-eyed, licked his lips, and twitched his head from side to side several times like a bewildered dog. His Sesavans gasped and shriveled like prunes.

He stammered, “There must be ... I’m afraid there’s ... some mistake. Dr. Manning is ...uh ... isn’t ... um ... available ...”

Malcolm was off to the side talking very quietly into the phone, coordinating our video feed with the broadcasters.

“Actually, she is.” To the technicians, “Can we put her on?”

The monitor in my office displaying the TV broadcast flip-flopped a few times, then settled into a split screen image. A group shot of Breck, the four TeraGrid scientists and Dr. Bancroft was on the left side and a slightly grainier shot of me in my office was on the right.

The reporter confirmed, “Dr. Manning, we’ve got you on this end. Can you hear me?”

“Yes. Yes I can. Actually, I can see you, too.”

Everyone on the left side of the screen was aghast to see and hear me. All but Breck were off-mic and difficult to hear but, nonetheless, intelligible.

Jahzarra screamed, “Aubrey, you’re alive!” then sobbed uncontrollably.

Gary held her repeating, “Thank god!” over and over.

Eric was furious, grumbling, “I can’t believe it!”

Lazarro looked even more frightened than before. He took several steps to one side, then back again and did this several times muttering, “What do we do now? Somebody, tell me what to do,” as he paced aimlessly.

Dr. Bancroft looked very nervous and kept trying to get Breck’s attention, “Dr. von Hass. Excuse me. Unnnh unnnh! Pardon me ...”

Breck was stupefied. He seemed to be in shock. The beasts that were adhered to him flailed wildly, trying futilely to beat him into action. They were energized by the dank astral cloud around the planet. Initially, when my image appeared onscreen, it recoiled. Quickly recovering, it renewed and intensified its vicious inherent determination to subjugate humanity, keeping us tied in fear to ignorance.

The earth and sky continued to rumble. The air thickened, grew stale, and filled with a nauseating electricity. In the astral sky above the house, battalions of livid Sesavans broke ranks with their comrades in the dark, hellish cloud and dove down straight toward us, deafeningly

screeching their vile, fiendish intent.

From the Earth beneath us, a shaft of light encompassing the house and the surrounding grounds burst up into the sky to meet the invading hordes. Thousands of other inexorably powerful beams shot up from strategic locations around the planet. Muktilo was present in each of them, commanding defensive forces of Golden Warrior Guardians who streamed endlessly up the beams of light.

He paused momentarily to stand before me, bowing his head in salute. I did the same, expressing my gratitude and solidarity.

Then Muktilo rejoined his troops who surged upwards, shields at the forward. They plunged into the diving swarm, blocking their attack, breaking and scattering their formation.

Around the planet, the Golden Warriors formed a protective barrier between the Sesavan cloud and the surface below.

The reporter acknowledged, “Good!” then introduced me. “Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Aubrey Manning is joining us live from San Diego, California. Dr. Manning, would you like to respond now to Dr. von Hass’s comments?”

“Thank you. Yes. Good morning. I want to discuss some very serious events which have taken place, the *most* serious shortly before this special report went on the air.”

Another wave of shock convulsed Breck’s body and heaved through the Sesavans.

“First, it’s important to address the ability of this audience—all of you—to process the information I’m going to present.

“Science often involves specialized knowledge and language that most people would find difficult or impossible to understand. That does *not* apply here. With rare exceptions among you, nothing I plan to talk about is beyond your ability to understand and—furthermore—do something about.

“*You* hold the power in this situation. The question is, do you realize it and are you willing to use it?

“Now, regarding Dr. von Hass’ comments, there can *be* no debate. He refuses to address any of the issues I’ve raised and focuses all his attention on me instead. *I* am irrelevant, especially in light of the grave things that are happening, so I will not divert precious time and effort trying to defend myself. Without further delay, I’ll get to the heart of the matter.

“Since my press conference on Monday, I’ve discovered information that substantiates some of the things I told you about. Apparently there have been symptoms since at least the beginning of the year that indicate a heightened use of the Arctic transmitter array and the consequent impact upon global and regional bio- and geophysical systems. You can quickly confirm most of this yourselves: online or by checking with the appropriate agencies. In some cases, all you’ll need to do is look out your windows.

“The earliest symptoms I’ve learned about have to do with disturbed migratory patterns; one affecting a well known bird and another, an obscure species of pilot whales. These are likely just two instances of a more widespread phenomenon.

“Many of you have probably heard of the swallows at the mission in San Juan Capistrano, California. They return every year—like clockwork—on or about the 19th of March. This year, for the first time since written records have been kept—going back to the 18th century—the swallows failed to return. Instead, they flew to Morocco, some 6,000 miles to the east and nested there.

“A few days ago, a pod of pilot whales beached near the harbor at Wellington in Cooke Strait, between the North and South Islands of New Zealand. The whales were positively

identified by the University of Auckland as the species *Mesoplodon carlhubbsi*. This species has never been known to stray from two regions of indigenous waters in the North Pacific: off Japan in the west and between central British Columbia and southern California in the east. *This* pod was found 5,000 miles farther south than it's ever been seen before.

“All life is immersed in complex arrays of oscillating energy fields that overlap and interact. Scientists have identified one particular pulsation emitted by the earth's core—in the range of 10 Hertz or 10 cycles per second—to be something like a beacon that all living organisms rely upon in subtle but essential ways. Life forms ‘hook up’ with this pulsation. It helps to synchronize and coordinate all living things with their own natural patterns, each other, and the world around them.

“Although other *naturally* occurring fields are always present—many much greater in intensity—they are recognized as familiar background and do not interfere with reception of the synchronizing signal. However, the presence of intense *unnatural* fields can disrupt reception and negatively impact basic functions.

“That is what I believe has occurred with the Capistrano swallows and the displaced pilot whales. The electromagnetic field strength of the signals generated by AWARE's Arctic transmitter greatly exceed the minimum power necessary to create such a disturbance. Bouncing signals off the ionosphere and the moon would give them a complete global reach.

“Admittedly, this is speculation. Only unrestricted access to AWARE and DAGR records and facilities would help produce proof. If we were not in such imminent danger, I would call for an investigation. But, I'm afraid we're out of time.”

Malcolm's second cell phone rang. He picked it up immediately. When he recognized the caller, his demeanor become even more serious than it had been. Quietly but quickly, he jumped up and took the call outside my office, still monitoring what I was saying through his earpiece.

I continued. “However, another symptom provides its own evidence.

“Last night, at approximately 11:00 Pacific Daylight Saving Time, I observed a red glow across the night sky interspersed with moving plumes of white. It was the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights. No doubt many of you saw the same thing.

“If you check with the Space Environment Center or go to their website, you can confirm that the aurora is still present and extends below the Tropic of Cancer. If it's nighttime where you are and the sky is still clear, you should be able to see it right now, even as far south as 20 degrees latitude. That would be approximately in line with Southern Egypt, Bombay, and Hong Kong. The Northern Lights have *never* been seen so far south before. Why now?

“The aurora is normally caused by the solar wind: charged particles that boil off the surface of the sun. When the solar wind hits the earth's magnetic field, it causes electrons from the upper atmosphere to accelerate down the field lines in the vicinity of the north and south magnetic poles. A glow is created simultaneously at both poles when these electrons collide with atoms of atmospheric gas.

“Occasionally, when the solar wind is powerful enough, the aurora can be seen farther away from the poles than normal. In order for this particular aurora to be seen so far south, there would have to have been a solar flare impossibly more violent than any we've ever measured before.

“It can take two to four days for solar wind to reach the Earth. If you check the SEC website, you'll find there have been *no* significant solar radiation storms for the past *twelve* days. That completely rules out solar activity—before now the only known cause of auroras.

“There's only one other possibility: the AWARE Arctic transmitter. In my judgment, that device is capable of creating a flow of electrons sufficient to cause this phenomenon.

“An additional detail is compelling. As I said before, solar wind causes auroras to form at both poles simultaneously. In this case, there is only one aurora ... emanating from the Arctic Circle ... where the transmitter array is located and focused.

“One final point on this. Given that this is a tightly shielded clandestine operation, such a telltale sign is obviously unintended. From that, I think it’s logical to deduce the operators of this equipment do not have the understanding to predict its widespread effects or the ability to control it.

“Now, to the most serious matter at hand. I believe the antisubmarine weapon was fired today, not long before the beginning of this press conference.”

A colossal tumult broke out. Sesavans everywhere roared in outraged fury. Their astral cloud pressed against the defending Golden Warriors.

Breck was roused out of his befuddled daze and bellowed, “That woman must be *arrested*. This is high treason!”

The reporters created a huge din, shouting wildly at the prospect of such a weapon being used.

During the distraction of this uproar Malcolm returned to the office, turned off my microphone, leaned into my ear, and said, “That was Montgomery Buchanan on the phone, a former protégé of mine, Deputy White House Press Secretary. Apparently Breck managed to hide much of what he’s been up to from the President. But they’ve recently found evidence verifying some of the things you revealed. They’re also very alarmed at atmospheric and seismic events just detected that they think may have something to do with DAGR.

“This was a highly confidential conversation. They’re asking for our cooperation and assistance. Monty and I go back a long way. He’s a good chap who’s proven himself to me many times over. We trust each other’s integrity and judgment implicitly. I told him about Oceanside and now he wants to brief you on some very dangerous ...”

“I understand. Of course we’ll help, but I don’t need a briefing. I’m fully aware of what’s going on. Tell him that they should pay close attention to what I say and take swift, effective action when they sense it’s right. Tell him this is not a time for hesitation, covering their backs, or political maneuvering. They’ll know what to do and they’ll have the courage to do it if they stay in their Truth and act out of Love.” I smiled, “I know that’s asking a lot, given what they’re accustomed to, but they have it in them. Don’t talk to the politician. Talk to his soul.”

“Righto.”

The Warrior Guardians held the Sesavans at bay and the reporters calmed down. The reporter who introduced me was now the only one on camera on the left side of the TV screen, replacing Breck and his entourage.

He refocused the audience’s attention, “Dr. Manning, we apologize for the interruption. Please continue.”

“Of course. Thank you. As I said, the antisubmarine weapon was fired this morning and we’ve already begun to experience some of the effects.

“We’ve been having mild earthquakes here in San Diego since just before this news report went on the air. When Dr. von Hass mentioned the earthquakes in the Washington D.C. area, I sensed there was a connection and a much wider problem.”

While speaking, I turned to my computer and clicked onto a bookmarked website.

“According to commonly accepted theory, the earth’s crust is divided into several immense regions—called tectonic plates—which are in motion relative to each other. Although the motion is imperceptibly slight—just a few centimeters per year—tremendous stress is built when the plates grind together or pull away from each other. Earthquakes are a mechanism for relieving



that stress.

“I’m pulling up a page on the U. S. Geological Survey website that shows recent earthquake activity.”

As soon as I had it up, Ashvin and Harold, together with the broadcast technicians, showed it. The image of a world map filled the TV screen.

“The little yellow boxes indicate an earthquake that’s occurred within the last week; the orange boxes, within the last day; and the red boxes within the last hour.

“There are approximately 200 yellow and orange boxes, mostly around the Pacific rim, ranging between 2.5 and 6.2 on the Richter scale. That’s not out of the ordinary for a week’s worth of activity.

“But, as you can plainly see, the map is inundated with red boxes. There have been thousands of earthquakes just in the last *hour*. They measure below 3.5, a magnitude not normally a cause for concern. But the number and spread of them is.

“The first swarm and the area of highest concentration occurred in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean below Greenland on the border of the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. This was the likely point of origin, which I estimate to be 52 degrees north latitude and 32 degrees west longitude.

“From this point, the earthquakes spread around the world along the plate boundaries and then to their interiors.”

I paused before delivering an inevitable conclusion. “On Monday I stated that generating seismic events is one of the offensive weapon capabilities of the transmitter array. I also reported that the weapon was being prepared to be fired at a target submarine in the North Atlantic. “However, I don’t believe these earthquakes were deliberately triggered. If that’s the case and they were *unintentionally* set off, this may pose a very grave danger: it would indicate that the weapon is out of control and its repercussions cannot be stopped or moderated by the operators.

“So, if you’re experiencing earthquakes—and most of you probably are— realize that this is not isolated to your local area. They’re part of a worldwide phenomenon.

“Something else is happening that you may also be incorrectly perceiving as localized. This is not a day that’s suddenly turned gloomy just in your own neighborhood. In the same time frame as the earthquakes— within the past hour or so— colossal systems of thunderclouds have begun to blanket most of the planet. Massive widespread currents of electricity are flowing from the ionosphere to the earth’s surface as a result of millions of lightning strikes.

“The entire planet seems to be going into a precarious state of flux. To the best of my knowledge, there’s no record of such anomalies happening before ... and certainly not at the same time. Although the prospects are frightening, even more so than over the last few days, I don’t expect people’s reactions to be nearly as severe.

“As I explained on Monday, the AWARE facility is capable of generating powerful wave patterns that can disrupt human mental and emotional functions. I believe they started transmitting these patterns over broad swaths of the planet right after my press conference ended. This led to confused thinking, mental breakdowns, panic, rioting, and other chaotic behavior. The objective—accomplished in many ways—was to make it look like fear generated from my presentation was responsible for the terrible unrest that followed.

“It has come to my awareness that these transmissions were terminated earlier today. In the absence of this intense agitation, mental and emotional functions have been able to normalize ... which restored some semblance of order.

“Dr. von Hass, on the other hand, attributed the cessation of rioting to the talk he just

delivered. Those of you who were involved in the turmoil can prove what's true. Did you recently notice a sudden sense of relief, a shift in your frame of mind irrespective of what he said? Was this accompanied by a sharp improvement in your ability to think more clearly than you've been able to in the last few days? Did this happen during Dr. von Hass's talk or *before* you tuned in?

"Please share your conclusions with as many people as possible. It will help us all in exposing and spreading the truth."

A sudden monstrous surge of Sesavans broke through three sectors in the Golden Warrior layer of defense girdling the planet. At the same time, a convulsive blast rocked the house. We lost power to all the equipment. I was temporarily blinded by the flash and the concussion knocked the wind out of me. When I could finally suck in a breath, the pungent stench of sulphur filled my nostrils.

## Chapter 47

### *An Ultimate Moment of Destiny*

Malcolm, Harold, Ashvin, and I were dazed: silent and locked in blank stares.

I shook my head briskly and broke out of my stupor enough to ask, “Are you guys OK?”

They grunted and groaned but the consensus seemed to be, essentially, “Yes.”

Harold muttered, “What the hell was that? Did we get hit by lightning?”

Armaton came into the office in time to answer, “ ‘Twas lightning ... and more.”

He brandished a golden scepter in his right hand resembling the one Aerial described in *Sacred Memories*. An intense white-hot glow radiated and crackled from its tip. He held it vertically at arm’s length and seemed to be using more strength to hold it aloft than its weight alone would require. More than gravity, another force—magnet-like—was pulling it down. As he lowered the staff, it jerked the last few inches to the floor and landed with a sharp rap. Knowing I shared his intuitive awareness, Armaton nodded, inviting me to explain what he had said.

“We were just struck by a concentrated beam of negative thought forms ... spawned by the minds of men, directed by the Sesavah. The lightning rode on the crest of the wave. Think of it as the astral version of heavy artillery ... *very* heavy artillery. It was one of three tactical strikes. The press conference site in Washington D.C. also got hit. The objective was to knock us off the air.

“The Golden Warriors have been able to break up these first two assaults and drive the Sesavans back behind the defensive perimeter; but not before they had accomplished their objective.

“The third onslaught is the most brutal, directed at the position of the transmitter array’s target in the North Atlantic. The Sesavans have penetrated the Warriors’ defense and are streaming through without resistance.”

Master Armaton continued the explanation, “The force behind the attacks does not come from the Sesavah, but is controlled by it. As I have said before, it has no power of its own but to deceive and cajole. The beast is fed and fortified by minds that dwell on what it craves: misery and terror.

“It cannot murder or tyrannize on its own, but can arouse such tendencies in minds it plies. On its own, it can destroy nothing but the will of its victims by tempting them with doubt. On its own, it is impotent. But through its human deputies it can spit an insult, slap a face, hurl a stone, pull a trigger, blow up a bomb, and command mighty armies wreaking slaughter and torment.

“There is and has been a preponderance of negatively charged thoughts, emotions, and actions on this planet since the onset of the last Dark Age. The Sesavah, with its coffers engorged, has refined an ability to concentrate the resulting raw destructive energy into focused beams which it aims and discharges at its worst enemies: those least apt to succumb to its temptations.

“Among other things, such barrages are capable of wreaking havoc with electronic devices. Were it not for my intervention, the equipment here and in Washington would have been damaged beyond repair.

“I was called to assist the Golden Warrior Guardians. At the same time I am with ye, I am also in an empty office adjacent to the press conference. Using my scepter in both places, I am drawing and diverting the energy from each attack—and its residue—into Mother Earth to be absorbed. Because of this intervention, thine equipment is not destroyed, only temporarily rendered dysfunctional. I would urge ye to commence the restoration process.”

Harold and Ashvin seemed pretty clearheaded again and they sprang to action, listening while they worked as Master Armaton continued, “On her own, Mother Earth is counteracting the force of the North Atlantic attack. As Aerial has written, it is what she does for man: neutralizing and balancing the impact of his toxic thoughts and actions.

“She does her best to soften and deflect the consequences of Her children’s misdeeds. But, as she has warned over and over and over, the time has come when Her capacity is all but spent and the outcome can no longer be ameliorated.

“We are at the culmination of the Great Shift, prophesied by the Society of Folk in our *Book of Symbols*: when the end of the world as it is perceived is here and survival of the human race is at peril.

“The intent of the prophecy—along with many signs Mother Earth has given—was to warn humanity in the hope that, heeding the warning, this unparalleled cataclysm might be averted. Man has not been thusly wise. The day has dawned—*this* dreadful day—when Humankind may well have awakened to its final hour.

“There is no one and nothing else left that can diminish or forestall the calamity on behalf of Mankind. Untold forces for Good have gathered and acted on Man’s behalf throughout his existence. We, the Folk, and other kindred Beings do so on behalf of all life, all creation which we see as an extension of ourselves. It is the choice our societies make from natural inclinations toward Love and comprehension of the interconnectedness of all life and all things.

“The Society of Man distinguishes itself with a different perception. It sees itself as separate and distinct from all other life forms and matter. In lower consciousness, it holds regard for others mainly as a function of their usefulness. It values other life and things primarily for their value in service to it: as commodities or conveniences.

“What most bewilders we observers is the extension of this self-directedness to individual men toward each other: beings of higher intelligence within the same species acting entirely selfishly, preying upon each other in ignorance and violation of their brotherhood. So it is that intelligence does not bespeak consciousness.

“By ignoring, denying, or otherwise failing to see the *consequences* of choices, the mass of men has learned little from errors. Accordingly, the change required to avert insufferable consequences has not occurred in time.

“Yet, there are many who *have* seen ... and learned ... and changed ... who understand our message, who would heed our warning. It is they and those whom they influence who now face their destinies. It is they upon whom all now depends.

“This is an ultimate moment of Destiny, which reveals the unavoidable and irrefutable evidence that *all* Destinies—all life and all Creation—are intertwined.

“Dear Aubrey, Malcolm, Harold, Ashvin ... this is a moment for which ye and many, many others have prepared for untold lifetimes. It is a critical point not just for this planet, but in the fabric of the third dimensional realm. And what is rent asunder in the third dimension is not limited to this realm alone.

“By the universal timing of the Cosmic Cycles as seen on the Great Plane and explained by the Yugic Cycles of Eastern cultures, the era of darkness on Earth is over. However, its effects—firmly ensconced—remain. Though the Sesavah has no inherent power, it is laden with cunning and has found a way to use its cunning in this situation to achieve ultimate supremacy.

“If it can maintain dominance over the minds of men and retain a hold on the masses after its time for dominion has passed, it will have defied an infinitely longstanding Cosmic order and imperative.

“As the Great Plane expresses, there is a natural timing for the cyclical exchange of preeminence between wisdom-bliss-love consciousness and ignorance-misery-fear consciousness. If the Sesavah is successful in tempting a critical mass of Earth’s Citizens to maintain a consciousness of fear in the era designated for Love to reign, this defiance of Cosmic order would destabilize the underpinnings of Creation. Such a rift would have unimaginable catastrophic repercussions throughout the third dimensional physical realm and reverberate across the higher dimensional realms for which the third is an element of structural foundation.

“The implications are unfathomable even to we Folk, capable of assimilating the complications of eight more dimensions than ye. We have no idea what the outcome would be, other than the Cosmic order would be plunged into such a bedlam of disharmony that order might never be restored again. It could mean utter dissolution.”

Malcolm and Ashvin’s jaws dropped. They stared wide-eyed at Armaton’s mind-numbing disclosure.

Harold continued working on the equipment and dealt with it as only he would. From over his shoulder he concluded, “So the Sesavah taking over ... that would be a *bad* thing.”

We couldn’t help but snicker.

“And there is thy salvation!” Armaton was fairly shouting. “That ye canst maintain thy temperance and laugh in the face of annihilation!”

This only encouraged Harold. “I’m almost sorry now I never took up smoking.”

Master Armaton continued, “So now ye know the danger at hand. Though all is now at risk, all is not yet lost; not by any means. There is one last—yet promising—chance, the deciding factor. It is in each person who heeds our message and chooses to see each as One among Many in the All That Is. Our salvation lies with those who choose to live their lives, not in quiet desperation, but in hope; those who can see beauty and share Love even in difficult circumstances.

“In the most supreme of ironies, salvation lies with those who can remain in temperance and love, fearless in the face of the most fearful possibilities ever to confront humanity; who understand that the only danger, the only fear, *is* fear itself.

“It has all come to this moment, because, offered repeated opportunities and warnings in less critical circumstances, too many have refused to change.

“The Great Shift we now face shall result either in humanity soaring into Light and Love in harmony with the Cosmic order or plunging further into darkness and fear, possibly irretrievably.

“It is incumbent upon every human who comprehends our message to *take* heed and *do* something that—at its basis—is neither difficult nor complicated: make the simple shift from thinking and behaving out of reflexive habit to making conscious, deliberate choices; and then—more challenging—choose Love and sovereignty over fear and disempowerment.

“What stands in the way are ... habitual behaviors and feelings that put up resistance to change: fear of the unknown, disbelief, cynicism, pessimism, attachment to the past, and so forth—*all* of which the Sesavah plies with the temptation of doubt.

“Though thou art an object of the prophecy, dear Aubrey, the outcome rests on shoulders other than thine: those of each who hears our call. Thou art but a messenger and one among *many* necessary participants. The *Great* Shift is no more than the sum total of each *individual* shift.”

The ground beneath us rumbled and shook severely, punctuating the conclusion of Armaton’s explanation.

“They’re getting worse, Aubrey.” Malcolm exclaimed.

“I suspect that’s happening everywhere. The weather’s kicking up, too.” To Harold and Ashvin, “How long before we can get powered up again?”

“I am going out to check the panels and reset the circuit breakers now.” Ashvin answered. “If there is no damage, we should have electricity within minutes. Then we can better assess the equipment.”

Malcolm’s phone rang. “MacLaren. ... Yes we got hit at the same time. ... We don’t know yet how long it will take. ... Two hours on your end? Well, I’ll call you back as soon as we figure it out. ... So, we’ll shoot for 1:30 West Coast time. ... Right.”

After hanging up he cracked, “It would appear we have a bit of an interlude.”

True to Ashvin’s word, he got the electricity back right away and the computers were restored within the next hour. As soon as I could I went online to check conditions. It looked like *everything* was getting worse.

Malcolm was on the phone almost nonstop the whole time. He took several calls from the White House and was in frequent touch with his office in London. From his demeanor and an occasional wink, I gathered he was pleased with the way things were going.

I switched from the internet to channel surfing on the television. The networks continued their coverage by playing excerpts of Breck’s and my comments, and speculating on and on about what could happen. This was the first time in my experience that the worst scenarios they came up with didn’t even come close to the actual possibilities. But then, how could they have known?

I stopped at an ominous report from the East Coast. In a driving rain, the correspondent shared a wind buffeted umbrella with a wrinkled, leather-skinned old salt.

The reporter shouted above the weather’s din, “Coastal locations on both sides of the Atlantic are reporting very unusual tidal activity. Here in Portsmouth, New Hampshire we’re about 45 minutes away from what should be high tide and—remarkably—it’s still low tide; in fact, the tide is at a *record* low. I’m here with ...”

His interviewee was so anxious to speak, he couldn’t wait to be introduced and pulled the microphone to him.

“ ‘Tain’t natural! Fifty-two years I been puttin’ to sea. My father before me and his father before him. No man’s ever seen anythin’ like it! Never! It’s the spook of the moon, the devil’s tide!”

The sheer magnitude of whatever was causing this sent chills up my spine. It was a complete mystery that none of us had come close to anticipating. I fought to overcome the dread it tempted in me.

Another channel showed a posh restaurant in Paris. Long crystal chandeliers swung like clock pendulums. What had been perfectly set tables were in disarray as clattering dishes, silverware, and glasses danced to the edges and crashed to the floor.

I caught part of the voiceover, “... as swarms of earthquakes continue to rock across every continent ...”

After clicking the remote again, a network anchorman announced, “We’ve just received this footage from the Bhaktapur area in east Nepal. You may find this hard to believe, but these shots were taken after midnight, local time. The eerie appearance of daylight is caused by nearly constant lightning strikes in the Great Himalaya Range north of the city. Despite heavy rains, residents of this twelfth century city have flocked to the streets ...”

Malcolm’s phone rang. It was 1:05. The technicians in Washington had repaired the equipment and we would be going back on the air in a few minutes.

At 1:11 the press conference continued. The camera panned the Washington D. C. set. Breck and his entourage were seated facing the press in the audience. He was turned around to the side cupping his mouth and cell phone with a free hand, trying very hard, yet unsuccessfully, to conceal his great agitation.

The reporter who first introduced me was at the podium, acting as a moderator. He reopened the proceedings, “We apologize for the interruption and the long delay. There were simultaneous lightning strikes here and at Dr. Manning’s location. As a result, equipment went down in both places and has just now been restored.

“Dr. Manning, we have your signal on this end and I understand you’re picking us up as well. There have been some important developments in the time we were off the air. I’d like to ask Dr. von Hass to come back up and fill us in.”

Breck was still on the phone and appeared to be frantically barking orders as emphatically as he could in a whisper.

“Dr. von Hass, are you able to ...?”

Resentfully, he slapped his phone shut. “Yes. Yes, of course.”

His ruffled demeanor shifted to a forced happy-go-lucky, calm facade; but beneath the surface he was seething. He got up and strode to the podium.

“Thank you very much. Well, I have excellent news. I’ve just received confirmation that one of the experiments I referred to earlier has been successfully completed by the Academy for Weather and Resource Evaluation. We have spotter aircraft in the area and in a moment we’ll be able to look at some live shots.

“As I mentioned before, it was not possible to issue any information whatsoever regarding this test because of its crucial importance to national security. Now that we’ve proven the system is operational, we *want* the world to know, to understand the tremendous power this great nation wields.”

Malcolm’s phone rang again. He mouthed “White House” to me and took the call outside the room.

Breck went on, “This morning we staged the first successful test of an unparalleled defensive capability and power. For the first time in the entire history of Mankind we have achieved what was always believed to be impossible. We have proven our superiority to Nature and demonstrated our ability to harness and control power so vast, it was beyond our dreams.

“I can *now* confirm the existence of a device capable of gathering, amplifying, and focusing raw energy from the upper atmosphere and utilizing it for the purpose of defending this nation and destroying our enemies.”

The reporters reprised the uproar they staged the other day when I originally told them about the weapon Breck was now in the process of admitting existed.

After they calmed down he resumed, “With this device, we far outdistance any competing nation’s weapons capabilities. We now have the power—in real time, at the flip of a switch—to instantaneously enforce our policies when we wish. To ensure our security, we no longer need to rely solely upon armies and conventional weaponry which take so much more time to mobilize and deliver.”

After a pregnant pause, he added, “And we *certainly* don’t need to depend upon any *other* nations.”

Although this comment reflected Breck’s personal conviction and his usual brash confidence, beneath the surface I sensed he was troubled and unsure. This was because he was probably told during that phone call just how bad and out of control things were. But there was

no turning back, so he forged ahead despite great trepidation.

Breck's arrogance came from the Sesavah. It was smug and cocky in blind anticipation of impending victory. The beast wantonly plied its control, intoxicated by the power it was being fed by a world caught up in fear.

Giving my attention to the Sesavah as I had done by thinking about it, drew it to me. In a wispy serpentine form, superimposed over my surroundings, it gloated and blustered, "The Book! The Book! The Book! You meant for it to stifle me. But I have turned its power *against* you and now I will crush *all* of you." Licking the air with its long thin forked red tongue, it grimaced and disappeared after one final barb. "The fear and victory I taste are delicious."

Breck went on. "I should mention that this morning's test covers only one of a host of applications for this technology. Let me describe what we accomplished today.

"First, we scanned the ocean depths with a broad beam from our Arctic transmitter array and detected an underwater target whose precise location was not known. It was at a depth of 2,000 *feet!*—far deeper than the most advanced submarines can dive ... and we *found* it! Within seconds, we reconfigured the transmitter to weapons mode, concentrated and pinpointed the beam, and destroyed the target.

"This is a totally clean device, leaving no trace radiation or chemical residue. In fact, there is little recognizable target debris, since most of it was vaporized into its natural constituent elements."

The reporters started to shout again. During the tumult, several men arrived and stood on either side of the front row.

"Now, just because Dr. Manning stole information regarding this test and revealed it to you, doesn't mean she's right about anything else. Although our staff has *speculated* that the apparatus might have the capability of seeding earthquakes, we have pursued nothing—I repeat—*nothing* in this direction.

"In the highly unlikely circumstance that the current seismic activity was inadvertently catalyzed, this could only be a good thing. Nothing is happening right now that would not be happening all on its own. If the tectonic stress has been released prematurely, this would result in far less severe events than would have been the case had the stresses been allowed to build more fully."

Breck looked off camera to his right and addressed a technician, "Do you have them? ... Yes? ... My fellow Americans, you are about to view history in the making. It is a moment equivalent to the first lunar landing, a time when man steps away from being subject to Nature and expresses his dominance.

"We have images relayed from surveillance aircraft in the target area and as soon as these kind folks can manage it, we will see shots taken at the site. Other than the aircraft crews, no one—not even I—has seen what's taking place."

The TV screen fluttered and filled with snowy static out of which an image gradually emerged. I had difficulty trying to figure out what it was ... because it defied reality.



## *Chapter 48*

### *Toxic Impact*

Breck stammered, “What you’re seeing here is ... uh ... I ... um ... I’m not seeing ... um ... Can we get the ... uh ...? Are we ... um ... in focus? How about the voice feed? Put up the voice feed.”

He turned to the technicians off camera and gave them a piercing look that screamed “... or else!”

Soon we heard a blast of radio static. It almost drowned out some other sounds: voices frantically yelling; jet engines roaring and whining like they were under a tremendous strain.

Abruptly, the audio went silent.

After a few seconds a dispatcher, acting professionally calm, tried to raise the crew, “Alpha Tango Sierra Zero Four, Weapons Control.”

There was a pause.

Then another blast of static and aircraft noise for about ten seconds.

Silence.

“Alpha Tango Sierra Zero Four, Weapons Control.”

Pause.

More static and noise.

Silence.

“Alpha Tango Sierra Zero Four, Weapons Control.”

Finally, above the furor, a distressed voice shouted a reply, “Weapons Control, Alpha Tango Sierra Zero Four. We are all turned around here; 500 miles due south of target point.

“We were at zero visibility, flying IFR straight and level until thirty seconds ago. We broke out of heavy clouds and ... instruments *still* have us straight and level ... It *feels* like we’re straight and level ... but ... it *looks* like we’re in a nose dive. But then ... if we look *aft*, it looks like we’re straight and level.”

“Alpha Tango Sierra Zero Four, we have your telemetry. We confirm straight and level. Checking your visuals ... Stand by. ... Stand by, Zero Four. ...”

A moment later the controller muttered “Damn!” under his breath then returned to the aircraft, “Alpha Tango Sierra Zero Four, we’re seeing the same thing.”

Another aircraft called in. “Weapons Control, Alpha Tango Sierra Zero One.” The pilot’s voice sounded strained beneath the calm, professional veneer.

“Go ahead Zero One.”

“We may be able to ... uh ... I don’t think Zero Four is going down. We ... uh ... we don’t know what’s going on, but we have some visuals you need to see. We were eight miles due north of target point at time of firing. We *saw* ... we *recorded* ... what happened. We’re transmitting our surveillance data now.”

The TV screen showed some alphanumeric code, then switched to a picture of the ocean and the horizon beyond. This was the forward view from ATS-01 as it approached the target.

Suddenly, in the distance, the pointed end of a massive cone-shaped object shot up out of the water. It had a sharp and distinct outline, yet, upon closer examination, appeared to be composed of nothing. As empty as this cone seemed, you couldn’t see past it. It was as if the essence of existence had been erased within its bounds. More than a vacuum, it was utter nothingness.

The cone arose from the depths at a greatly accelerating rate, exposing more and more of its enormous height and girth. Although this gigantic mysterious form was expelled at tremendous

speed, no water was displaced. There were no splashes and no ripples. It was as if it didn't exist, yet it was there.

The pilot must have sensed this thing was going to pose a threat to the aircraft because he made a quick, steep bank to the right and turned away from its rapid encroachment.

As the plane raced away at what I would gather was top speed, they switched to a rear camera. It panned up and down and back and forth. The cone's tip reached an altitude of a couple of miles. The diameter was twice that distance. It continued to rise and spread at a breathtaking rate.

The cone had grown by several more miles in each direction when a ponderous catastrophe took place. A bulge several hundred feet high and wide formed on the surface of the ocean at the center of the cone's base. This mound of water now breached the nothingness.

I felt something terrible was about to take place; in the next instant it did. The nothingness imploded with a monumental onrush of water sucked out of the sea. The cone filled instantaneously; then grew even more rapidly than it had before.

The camera pulled back as far as it could. In a matter of seconds the spire of water grew so large that it exceeded the lens's field of view.

The crew of the other aircraft, ATS-04, arrived later and didn't have the opportunity to view this phenomenon develop. When they broke out of the clouds, what they saw out the front cockpit window completely disoriented them. There was only ocean: up, down, left, and right. It looked like they were plunging "down" into the sea.

What they couldn't fathom was that a vast portion of the ocean was raised in front of them. They were headed toward a gigantic wall of water that extended as far as the eye could see in any direction.

In my mind I heard the old fisherman, "It's the spook of the moon ..." and realized the mysterious cause of the "devil's tide" had been revealed. But what exactly was happening? Was the ocean being emptied? Where was the water going? Would it eventually crash back into the sea? Whatever happened, the degree of potential destruction was inconceivable.

The pilot had more to report.

"Weapons Control, Alpha Tango Sierra Zero One."

"Go ahead, Zero One."

"There's ... ah ... one other thing."

The dispatcher's stress was evident in his exasperated tone. The words he spoke were, "Go ahead, Zero One!" but it sounded more like, "Now what?"

"We're experiencing some equipment malfunction. Our chronometer has been running forwards and backwards since we shot those images so we ... uh ... we don't know what time it is."

"Roger, Zero One." He sounded relieved that it turned out to be such a simple matter. "It's coming up on 2021 hours Zulu time on my mark ... Mark!"

"But that's impossible! That's what *our* chronometer reads."

"Then you don't have an equipment malfunction after all."

"Weapons Control, we started shooting that surveillance footage when the weapon was fired at 1757 hours Zulu time. That was about 15 minutes ago."

"Negative, Zero One. We show an elapsed time of ... 2 hours 24 minutes."

The pilot was getting noticeably more rattled, "That's impossible! It was 15 minutes ago. Tops! All six of us on board are clear on this."

He was momentarily distracted by something.

“What?” he snapped to someone on board.

Then he reported to Weapons Control, “Our chronometer has stopped again. That’s what it did twice already just before it started to go backw—”

In the middle of his word, ATS-01’s signal went dead.

The dispatcher tried to raise the aircraft again, “Alpha Tango Sierra Zero One, Weapons Control.”

We heard him cry out to one of his colleagues, “Did you see this? They just vanished off the radar screen!”

Malcolm rushed in to report the gist of the phone call he had just taken from the White House. “They’re completely onto him now. They’re going to take Breck into custody. Those men who came in a few minutes ago were FBI agents.”

The TV picture turned to snow and then switched back to Breck, who stood dazed and speechless. The press went wild again, hollering questions at him. Suddenly he looked wild-eyed and darted his gaze to one side of the podium and the other. Several husky men in dark suits had sprung forward and were rushing him. Breck bellowed in protest. They quickly dropped him to the ground, put on handcuffs, and carted him off. A distinguished looking gentleman emerged from a side door at the front of the room and passed them on their way out.

The reporters were stunned and had fallen silent.

Breck cried out to the man, “I would have told you, but I needed to get it to work first. Then we had to rush to get it done ... because of her. It’s *her* fault.”

The chief Sesavan entities that had used Breck for so long as a medium for their tyranny, broke away immediately and set out to seek new hosts, leaving only the few minions necessary to control him. Now that he was captured and stripped of power, he was no longer useful, so, without delay, they discarded him.

The moderator hesitantly approached the podium looking as bewildered as the rest of the press. Walking briskly, the gentleman got there first. He was in his 40’s and had soft, wavy, sandy hair parted in the middle. He wore an impeccably tailored dark tan suit, crisp white shirt, and light brown and amber tortoise shell eyeglasses.

With a straightforward air of authority he waved reassuringly to the moderator, signaled him to take a seat, then introduced himself to an audience that already recognized him. “Good afternoon. I’m Monty Buchanan, Deputy White House Press Secretary. The President asked me to represent him here and convey to the press and the rest of the world watching, that any programs conducted by the Academy for Weather and Resource Evaluation or the Directorate for the Advancement of Geophysical Research that have included anything other than passive, peaceful research have been done without the approval or knowledge of the Executive Office or the Congress.

“It is of grievous concern to the President that such extensive programs were able to have been conducted surreptitiously ... and for so long. At this moment he is personally contacting other world leaders and assuring them of the following: 1) all such unauthorized programs violate United States government policies and shall be terminated at once; 2) a thorough investigation will begin immediately; and 3) all those involved will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

“Dr. Benedek von Hass has been taken into custody and will be charged initially with the abduction and attempted murder of Dr. Aubrey Manning.”

This revelation caused the press to rumble in astonishment.

“Early this morning, police officers in Oceanside, California arrested three accomplices

whose written confessions stated that Dr. von Hass hired them to commit the murder. Based on a tip, the crime scene was under tight surveillance and the three suspects were caught red-handed.

“The President has just received confirmation that the AWARE transmitter facility in Alaska, their headquarters in Menlo Park, California, and the DAGR offices here in Washington D.C. have been seized and locked down by FBI agents working in conjunction with state and local law enforcement. We have teams on the way to dismantle the equipment.

“Regardless of the means Dr. Manning has utilized and the philosophy which forms the basis for her approach, she has proven herself to be consistently correct and precise in her evaluation of the science and technology employed in the operation of this transmitter and its dangers.

“At all times she has served her country and the global community with honor, courage, and forthrightness, undeterred by enormous opposition and difficulties. The President believes she is the person best suited to lead the response to this momentous world crisis and we are coordinating our government’s efforts with her and her staff.

“Although the President is fully confident Dr. Manning and her associate, Dr. Skirtlandt, will be cleared of pending criminal charges, he is issuing a blanket pardon so they have the immediate ability to move about and act freely.”

At that moment the concussion of a violent earthquake shook the house. It felt and sounded like bombs exploding. For a couple of minutes, each successive jolt gathered strength. Although the convulsions eventually diminished, they didn’t stop. A constant motion and rumble continued.

Washington D.C. was struck at the same time. We saw Mr. Buchanan lose his balance and stumble backwards. There were anguished screams from the people there. Dust filled the air as pieces of plaster fell from the ceiling.

The Sesavah, already frustrated and angry that its efforts to destroy me had failed, was infuriated that the only progress it had made was just reversed. It unleashed a wrathful blast of resentment that literally shook the earth.

Master Armaton clutched his scepter firmly in his right hand, bracing it on the floor. A white-hot glow flashed like a strobe light from its tip crackling sparks in every direction. This time the energy flowed from the ground up, as if it was being extracted from the Earth.

Those of us in the room couldn’t help but shrink back in awe at the tremendous power coursing through his staff. I was struck by what I could discern between the near blinding flashes. A sphere that varied between eight and twelve inches in diameter had formed on top of the scepter. It appeared to be composed of the same nothingness as the cone we had seen emerge from the ocean.

Through a thin smile, Armaton offered an explanation, “Here and in Washington, I am siphoning off the energy Mother Earth has absorbed from the Sesavah’s attack and directing it out of the third dimension to the higher realms where it will be dispersed. It is what we Folk can do for Her in this extreme emergency: help neutralize and balance the toxic impact of lower consciousness while She is overwhelmed by its effects.

“This is a dangerous procedure, for the energy generated by fear-based thought is utterly incompatible with the realm of Love to which I am sending it. If not carefully disbursed, concentrations of this energy can create interdimensional tunnels through which the essence of each realm would leak into the other. Without the natural dimensional separation, existence in each would cancel the other. Once a tunnel has completely formed, the mutual annihilation might be impossible to arrest.

“The Queen has instructed me to take this grave risk in order to protect and maintain thy link of communication with Mother Earth’s peoples. The last chance for salvation depends upon it.”

Despite the severity of the quake, there was no damage at our place and minimal damage at the press conference site. We remained on the air.

Hardly a minute had passed after the heavy shaking when we heard a clatter coming from the roof.

“What the hell is that?” Harold shouted.

It was huge drops of rain from a sudden deluge. Then the clatter got abruptly more harsh. Looking out the window confirmed my suspicions. Hail the size of walnuts was coursing down out of the sky striking the house, bushes, trees, and ground with tremendous fury.

We heard Mr. Buchanan again. “OK, calm down! We’ve still got some tremors but the brunt of it is over.” There were some muffled shouts from the press to which he responded, “It’s OK. It’s just a hailstorm. It’ll pass.”

“Mr. Buchanan, this is Aubrey Manning. Can you hear me?”

“Yes, Dr. Manning. Go ahead.”

Malcolm motioned to me by pointing back and forth between the monitor, me, and the phone he was calling out on. I took it this meant he was going to be more proactive in coordinating the broadcast, which was exactly what I needed him to do. I nodded and gave him a thumb’s up in assent and gratitude before I spoke.

“First I want to thank you, Mr. Buchanan, you and the President for all your efforts.”

“Of course. And the nation and the world owes you a debt of gratitude.”

The television was now showing alternate shots of him and me as we talked.

“That’s very kind. I need to tell you that we got hit by a major earthquake the same time as you and now we’re *also* having a heavy hailstorm.”

“I take it this isn’t a coincidence.”

“No, I’m afraid not. I’m wondering if we can get some remote shots from other locations to show what’s happening elsewhere.”

Malcolm already had it handled. The image onscreen shifted to a correspondent hunkered down inside the back of a TV van. The rear doors were wide open behind him, revealing a wide expanse of farmland enveloped in thick black clouds. He was shouting into his microphone over the clamor of hail smashing down, and could barely be heard.

“Riley County was just hit by the strongest earthquake since the magnitude 5.1 temblor struck the area in 1867. According to officials in Topeka, the quake was felt across the state. There are scattered reports of minor injuries, downed utility lines, and moderate structural damage. No fatalities have been reported as yet.

“Emergency crews are running into problems with weather. The clouds that have pelted the area with a downpour for the past several hours are now dumping hail the size of quarters. The accumulation is making roads extremely hazardous. The Department of Transportation has issued a travel warning. Unless you have an extreme emergency, remain indoors until the roads are clear.

“With photojournalist Brandi Stroud, this is Martin Hackworth, KBSD-6 Eyewitness News, reporting to you from Manhattan, Kansas.”

One after another, reports were shown that dramatically illustrated rapidly deteriorating conditions around the world. Each case was overlaid with a grim commentary. The situation was getting worse by the minute. I wondered how much longer this could go on before turning unthinkably lethal. The Arctic transmitter array might have been shut down, but the

repercussions of its use were escalating; and there was no known way to countermand them.

Seeing all these cataclysmic events only heightened the fear and tension of the television audience, which, in turn, made things worse by further energizing the Sesavah.

I slowly closed my eyes and took a deep breath. When they opened, I was outside my physical body in different surroundings. Master Armaton and I were standing face to face a few feet apart on the Future Aspect—the Rays of Hope—of the Great Plane of Knowledge. Our eyes were locked in a mutually loving gaze.

His mind spoke to mine. “This is thy time, Aubrey—this precise moment—when all thou hast experienced, all thou hast learned and developed, is called to action. It is a moment of complete creative expression, when thy Soul is unveiled; when It must call upon other Souls to unveil and join in the deliverance of Mother Earth’s beloved children.

“Thou hast demonstrated that thine intuition runs deep, that thou art capable of accessing higher vibrations and infinite realms. Now let go the final vestiges of attachment to physicality in order that thou might become fully identified with thy true Identity. It requires no more than the blink of an eye.

“Let go and discover that thou no longer needest the tools of man to see or to know. Thy sight is clear and without limit. There are no realms, no hidden corners into which thou canst not peer. Thy consciousness encompasses all knowledge. Thou hast but to claim thy Oneness with It. Do so at all times, even when immersed in thy physical body; *especially* then. Tell what you see. Share what you know.

“Thy Spirit flies free. Sing thy Soul call. Others will sing with thee and all who listen, they, too, shall fly free.”

He gently tapped his fingertips just above and between my eyes. His touch did not transform me; it merely beckoned me to emerge from the cocoon in which I had already completed my metamorphosis.

I felt my being turn inside out. What had heretofore been outside my periphery was now within and of me. No longer constrained by perceived boundaries, I was one with all matter and space, encompassing all infinity.

Through Armaton, I said to myself, “Return now to thine earthly destiny.”

I blinked and was back in the confines of my office and physical body. All seemed as it was before, yet all had changed.

*Chapter 49*  
*It Starts With You*

A satellite image of the Northern hemisphere filled the TV screen. In the lower left hand corner a small inset showed the anchorman who was providing commentary,

Despite all efforts to conceal his fear, he appeared nervous and spoke in a quaking voice, “You can see the enormous rise of water there in the middle of the North Atlantic ... below Greenland.” He pressed on his earpiece to better hear the information being fed to him. “They’re saying this thing has reached a diameter of approximately ...” He hesitated in disbelief. “They’re saying a thousand miles!”

He struggled to regain some of his composure and continued, “Looking at this view from space, perhaps we can get a perspective on just how big that is by comparing it to land masses we’re familiar with.

“If we glance over to the western European continent on the right of your screen, we can ... dear god! The coastlines have all changed!”

He gasped in shock, then became motionless and silent, staring wide-eyed with panic. After several awkward seconds, other voices, barely audible whispers, could be heard urging him to continue. He could only manage short percussive uneven breaths. Finally, they collapsed the inset showing him, leaving only the haunting satellite image.

I blinked again. At first, when my eyes reopened, everything appeared the same as it was before closing them. But I quickly discovered that if I extended my attention, I could see what was at the outer edges of my peripheral vision as vividly as what was right in front of me.

The more I saw, the more became available to see. My range of focus continued to expand until it wrapped completely around, over, and under me. As this was happening, my depth of focus sharpened and lengthened. Objects at great distance presented themselves with the same level of detail as if they were close by.

I felt my Self diffuse into an ever broadening span of time and space. The distinction between present, past and future melted away, allowing me to recognize the continuum of time and engage the all encompassing now. I was able to perceive matter at the most fundamental level—the thought energy which comprises it—as well as the objects it formed. Multiple layers of dimensions unfolded before me offering insights and perceptions otherwise impossible to grasp.

Nothing was happening that I hadn’t experienced before in one way or another. But before, the experiences were fleeting. Now, I was firmly anchored in this expansive state. Maintaining my grasp of All Knowledge became second nature to me. Peering across the Universe—or into other universes—required no more effort than glancing outside my window.

I was aware of the Cosmos in the same way that I was aware of my office: I was present in it, but not intimately connected to all the details; only those upon which I focused my attention.

I recalled how Aerial described this aspect of his own unfoldment:

‘Twas in that moment’s fleeting pass,  
I understood: Omniscience comes  
As needed—never all at once—  
According to each circumstance.

What struck me most profoundly was that these capacities seemed so completely natural;

that they had always been mine. The only thing “missing” had been my attention paid to them. It truly was an unveiling—the term Master Armaton used—more than a transformation.

From the boundless palette of possibilities, my concern and attention remained focused on everyone and everything affected by the cataclysm taking place on Earth and on the wicked forces of the Sesavah fanning and directing the flames of misery and fear, orchestrating the calamity.

It had secured a tight grip on the thoughts and emotions swirling around the planet. It seized and channeled waves of terror in ways that best served its depraved purpose.

As I settled into my newfound state of being, I found myself gazing again into the loving eyes of Master Armaton, who now stood across the room from me. He closed them briefly, placed his clenched right fist over his heart, and bowed slightly in honor and recognition of my Soul realization. Then he stood erect, extended his opened right palm, and nodded several times inviting me to proceed.

Without him speaking the words, I heard, “Thine expanded capacities and insights shall serve our cause well.”

I no longer required a picture on the television to observe the anchorman. Merely shifting my attention to him revealed aspects of his being.

Lurid Sesavan entities inundated him with their terror. He had surrendered his will and become no more than a pliant instrument of their torturous pleasure. They had used him to great advantage, driving millions of viewers further into their own worst fears.

My newly enhanced perspective showed me much more. I fully understood the entire situation and how it had come about—without having to hack into a computer. Of course, the outcome was unknown: how the Great Shift would be resolved. That was yet to be determined for this particular ray unfolding on the Great Plane of Knowledge. But I did know what needed to be done.

The chain of emotions and circumstances escalating the Sesavah’s dominance had to be broken—quickly—because a point of no return was rapidly being approached. Fearsome events were generating fear which fed the ravenous Sesavah, creating even more fearsome events, which generated even more fear until terror and catastrophe burgeoned worldwide.

The number, variety, and intensity of incidents were swiftly increasing. Another report blared from the television. A reporter was standing against the backdrop of an airport. “... has aviation officials in a panic. Compasses have been rendered useless by sporadic fluctuations of the planet’s magnetic field. Flights around the world have been grounded until further notice.

“An aviation triage of sorts has been set up to guide aircraft in flight to safe landings as quickly as possible. We’ll have more on this as soon as details are available, but now we’re going to go to Gerald Lansing in Jakarta, Indonesia for another breaking story.”

One after another, the reports continued. Ferocious storms unleashed great floods. Furious winds tore apart homes, businesses, and entire towns and villages. The ground shuddered violently as Mother Earth convulsed out of control. Lightning struck ceaselessly in a constant sinister current that seared the planet’s surface. Shorelines drained while a stupendous volume of water raised from the sea.

This had to stop.

I switched off my microphone, leaned toward Malcolm and affirmed, “This has to stop ... now. We have to break the cycle of fear. We can’t do anything about the events, but what every single person on the planet *can* and *must* do is exert their will and *choose* to let go of the fear *now* ... *right* now. Malcolm, get me on the air ... I need to reach as many people as possible and



talk them through it—without being interrupted—until we turn this around. We don't have much time. Hurry. *Please!*”

He relayed my request over the phone to the media control room. Because this was a time of global emergency, all the television outlets had pooled their resources and were airing the same broadcast.

They were feeling very responsible to the audience and their reaction was accordingly cautious, “Malcolm, we can't stop covering the biggest story with the biggest audience in media history and turn our air over to just a talking head ... one that's not even a journalist. During the delay from the power outage, we picked up close to 1.5 *billion* people! That's a lot of word of mouth in an hour and forty minutes. People want to know—they want to see—what's going on.”

Malcolm was resolute, “My staff in London is tracking the audience. They're telling me what every instinct I have is telling me: people want to hear from Dr. Manning. We even have reports from third world countries that tribes of natives with ad hoc translators are gathered around single television sets chanting her name. They say she speaks the truth and it calms Mother Earth and comforts them.

“The President of the United States has asked us to coordinate the government's response because he feels Dr. Manning knows best how to set things right.

“And to set things right she says she needs to get on the air ... now! And quite frankly we *don't* have time to fart around. ...” After a pause, “Alright, I'll hold.”

While Malcolm waited, he dialed out on his second phone. “Hello, Monty? Dr. Manning can help ratchet this dreadful business down, but she's got to have immediate uninterrupted access to the airwaves. This is our last chance. Can you grease the wheel, Monty?”

He responded without hesitation, “I'm on it.”

While we waited, the image on the TV screen switched to another location. A commentator described the scene. “It's rush hour in New York City and Times Square is at a standstill. Thousands of New Yorkers have gathered in the street in a heavy downpour to watch the news coverage together on the Jumbotron.”

When they saw themselves on the giant screen, the crowd let out a yell and started shaking their umbrellas. Their exuberance vented and defied the fear that had gripped them.

One of the LED strips mounted beneath the screen scrolled this text, “The President pardoned Aubrey Manning from all pending charges. Dr. Manning is coordinating the government's response to the ...”

As the crowd digested this news, their random shouting coalesced into a word they repeated over and over, indistinct at first, but then unmistakably clear in their unique accent, “AW—*BREE!* AW—*BREE!* AW—*BREE!* ...”

They shook their umbrellas in time with their chant.

Malcolm grinned, “And that's what one of *our* tribes has to say!”

After a cliff-hanging delay, the media coordinator came back on the line. Malcolm listened, exclaimed, “Right!” and hung up.

“They'll put you on, Aubrey ... because of the President's backing. I know Monty leaned hard, but ... I'll bet a farthing the New Yorkers helped put it over the top.

“The thing is, they insist on keeping up their news coverage by at least *showing* what's happening. You'll be the only one talking—you'll have as much time as you need—but you'll be sharing the screen with remote visual feeds from around the world.”

“That's OK. Thanks, Malcolm. Good job! Alright, let's do it!”

Harold and Ashvin gave me their thumb's up.

In the next moment, a small inset of me live was superimposed over the New Yorkers. They broke into a lusty cheer just before the sound was cut and switched to me.

Then the coverage shifted to a somber picture of soot-begrimed people in Valparaiso, Chile. They were picking by hand through rubble from a building collapsed by an earthquake. The contrast between Times Square and this scene was dramatic. So was the change in the viewing audience's response. For a moment they had vicariously experienced the defiant courage that seems to be a part of the New York City character.

Seeing the fresh ruins of the most recent disaster catapulted them back to their reflexive reactions of sorrow and fear. This had to stop.

The full significance of what Armaton had said before was impressed upon me: everyone was poised at a threshold leading to the fulfillment of a destiny for which we all had long prepared. I had never been more calm. I looked directly into the camera lens and peered into the hearts of the people watching. I spoke from my Soul.

"Hello. I'm grateful to have the chance to talk to you now and share what I know about what's happening. Some of what I have to say will make sense; some may seem a little strange ... OK, maybe a *lot* strange! ..."

I spoke with a lilt and laughter in my voice. Some viewers might have perceived this to be incongruous with the tragic events taking place; but it was how I felt; and it was absolutely necessary.

Prior to this, every news report was framed with mournful commentary that intensified the anguish and fear. The media did it out of habit. The public expected it and considered it to be appropriate. But all that did was play into the hands of the Sesavah: misery piling misery upon misery.

"... so I'd like to ask you to keep an open mind. Don't take what I say strictly literally ... because I don't necessarily mean it that way. The *point* is what's important, not the details.

"And the first point I want to stress is how essential it is for you to restore your calmness; to grab ahold of the terror that wants to run away with you, that seems like it's what you *should* be feeling given the circumstances, and put your attention not on what you're afraid of, but on getting out of this safely.

"No matter how bad things seem—and even if they appear to get worse—do *not* lose hope and do *not* give up. There are powerful forces at work on our behalf. I've written about them, the Society of Folk. They *are* real and they *are* here—*now*—fighting this battle with us.

"The part of you that knows this is true is likely being drowned out by the part of you that's so scared. Try to relax a little. Be deliberate about what you're thinking. Focus on the Folk and the Love and healing they bring to Mother Earth each day.

"And here's what I mean about not taking what I say so literally. By now, most of you know about the Society of Folk; either through what I've written or Aerial of Darluse's book *Sacred Memories* or what you've gotten through the media.

"Let me say this: when I talk about the Folk, I'm basically describing spiritual beings who live beyond time and space, who have an unending capacity for Love and compassion, and who watch over mankind—each and every one of us—and Mother Earth. To call them 'the Folk' or get into any detail about who and what they are is to put *finite* human labels on what are *infinite* Beings.

"Do you understand that no matter how thoroughly we described them—or any of the other Infinite Beings that our various religions venerate—that could only be one small and *incomplete* aspect of who and what they are ... because they're *infinite*? As long as we live and think in finite

ways, no matter how complete any one religion or philosophy considers itself to be, it can *never* do more than *inadequately* describe ... the *Infinite*. It can never be more than just *one* finite version of what is—by definition—beyond finite description.

“So, please, don’t listen to me say ‘the Folk’ or anything else I may bring up and reject the *essence* of what I’m talking about—the *point*—because *my* terminology is different from what *you’re* accustomed to. Just put it—translate it—into your *own* terms. Don’t shut it out, *embrace* it from the perspective of your viewpoint, religious or otherwise.

“Ultimately, the challenges that face each of us today must be dealt with on a nonphysical level—a spiritual level. Using the context of the Folk is just one way to do that; a neutral way that neither favors nor disrespects any religion. Since this concept is new to the world, it’s equally available—and strange—to everyone. If you can accept me talking about the Folk as a symbolic way of expressing the universal spiritual principles that are the foundation of all religions—yours in particular—then we *all* have a way of joining together.

“The *point* we all need to get—right here, right now—is that we all—without exceptions—have far more cause to love each other than hate each other ... and we have a lot more cause for hope in this crisis than fear. But for that hope to yield its promise, we *need* to come together, to see the reality of our common ties and the illusion of our differences.

“Get out of your head and get into your heart. Feel what I’m saying. Feel the Love behind it. Feel the Love within yourself. You do that and it will wash away the fear.”

I could feel the tension in the world release as I was talking. So could the Sesavah. The calmness and Love I expressed was contagious. If it took hold, the siege of fear would be thwarted. The beast responded with violent counterattacks.

An immediate assault was launched against the five of us in the house. Three phalanxes with 22 Sesavan entities in each penetrated the protective shield put up by the Golden Warrior Guardians. Once through, they conjoined briefly and then redeployed in six equal squads. Five of them attacked each of us individually. The sixth struck our equipment.

Searing pain ripped through our abdomens. Harold and Ashvin doubled over in agony and cried out; Malcolm clutched his midsection and grimaced through clenched teeth. All the electrical connections on our equipment hissed and sputtered; sparks flew everywhere.

At the same time, another shock wave of convulsive force wracked the planet with even stronger earthquakes. As a backdrop for a report on hailstorms striking Mexico City, the TV screen had been showing a reporter standing in front of two exquisite, thirty-plus story glass-walled buildings at Paseo de la Reforma. When the shaking began, windowpanes started to crack. The reporter fell to the ground. Somehow the cameraperson remained stable enough to continue shooting. Glass shattered out into the sky. Thick clouds of dust spewed out the openings. The buildings swayed, contorted, tottered, then crumbled to the ground.

Neither Armaton nor I was incapacitated by the excruciating pain the Sesavans inflicted during the attack. We understood its essence. It was not ours; its cause was not physical.

I started to perform a healing technique, but it wasn’t necessary to complete. As soon as the intent formed to clear the energy, it was accomplished instantaneously and all five of us felt immediate relief.

During the attack, Master Armaton had never flinched and continued to wield his scepter, siphoning off the brunt of the blow to the equipment. Once the Sesavans realized their attack had been neutralized, they withdrew. The five of us recovered completely. The equipment stopped sparking and continued to function normally.

The larger attack had been more successful. The small semblance of peace that had begun to

settle was shattered as viciously as the glass.

I resumed speaking to the television audience, “Stay calm. It’s going to be OK. The quake is over and ... we’re still here ...” I smiled and patted down my body. “... all in one piece. OK?”

I said what I knew to be true, “Those buildings were empty. They had been evacuated a little while ago when a lightning strike caused the fire alarms to go off.

“You’re still OK ... just like you were before the quake. Allow yourself to settle down again like you started to before. This will be over soon. And I promise you, it’s just as likely to have a happy ending as a bad one; *more* likely the more you calm down. In a minute I’ll explain why, but for now you’ve got to get ahold of yourself again.

“While you’re listening to me—right now—take some deep, cleansing breaths. ... Feel your body fill with peace as you draw air in through your nostrils. Exhale sharply through your mouth and visualize the tension and fear being rinsed away by the rush of your purifying breath.”

I could feel peace being sucked in and fear being released around the world.

“That’s good. Keep doing it. You know, just because all these bad things are happening doesn’t mean we aren’t on the verge of something wonderful.”

I paused and repeated, “Something wonderful,” nodding my head for emphasis. “What lies between this moment and that is your understanding and what you choose to do with that understanding inside your own head.

“Believe it or not, that’s mostly all that’s necessary—understanding—to dissolve your fear, return the world from calamity to calmness, and open the door to a new and wonderful way of life.

“It doesn’t matter what’s happened or what’s happening. It’s not too late to completely turn things around.” I nodded again. “It starts with you.”

## *Chapter 50*

### *The Weapon*

“You hold the power to restore the world. First you need to get the full picture. Then I think it’s a lot more likely you’ll feel that power and use it than be frightened by what you see and shrink from it.

“Here’s what’s going on. The ionosphere is inherently highly unstable. Applying a small amount of energy in the right place at the right time can unleash vastly larger amounts of energy. This is the principle behind the DAGR weapon. It’s how enough power was generated not only to destroy the target, but also to cause all the things you’ve been seeing on the TV screen behind me.

“The enormous force of the blast shifted the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. That was the beginning of a chain reaction that spread to all the other plates, causing worldwide swarms of earthquakes. It also destabilized the atmosphere and started other chain reactions that caused violent weather conditions all around the world.

“The formulas derived by Dr. von Hass’s father that were used to manipulate the electromagnetic beams emitted by the transmitter took only three dimensions into account. But, as theoretical physicists have shown, certain phenomena can’t be accurately or fully described from a strictly three dimensional perspective. The workings of the transmitter array are among them.

“Dr. von Hass failed to consider a critical factor: that firing the weapon would reverberate throughout *all* the dimensions; that it would breach the natural separation between them and subject the planet to destructive forces of a type and power never experienced before. He didn’t take into account that in the higher dimensions, time doesn’t flow in the linear way we’re accustomed to.

“I don’t need to go into complicated details to explain what’s happening. The simple fact is, although the weapon was fired only briefly here, in the eleventh dimension it’s being experienced as a continuous and intensifying flow; like the transmitter was turned on and then cranked higher and higher and higher.

“Another critical factor that wasn’t revealed by the von Hass formulas was that the weapon would open up a ‘feedback loop’ between the eleventh and the third dimensions. It doesn’t matter that power to the transmitter has been cut. The force it unleashed is being continuously amplified and fed back to us. That’s why everything is getting worse.

“The fortunate thing is, I understand the process and I know that it can be stopped ... with your help. So stay calm while I explain what you need to know.

“There’s yet another factor in operation that has to be dealt with ... the Sesavah. Aerial and I each wrote about this creature, the intelligent, nonphysical entity that embodies the consciousness of misery and fear.

“Again—please—don’t miss the point here because you’re not used to the name I’m using and the way I describe it. If need be, consider what I’m saying to be symbolic ... and transpose the concept into whatever context is comfortable for you.

“Plain and simple, the Sesavah is an intelligent force of darkness that feeds and thrives on fear and all its associated qualities: hatred, anger, greed, jealousy, selfishness ... to name a few. The Sesavah cares for and serves only itself. Its only objectives are self-preservation and glorification. It is dedicated to feeding its gluttony and preserving its dominion by manipulating us with our own fear in order to produce even more. Right now it is cajoling you to feel helpless,

out of control, and terrorized by what's going on around you.

“All of this trouble happened as a result of its influence: gradually, person by person, moment by moment, over centuries. Throughout history it has made tremendous strides through the actions of certain individuals: small men it prodded to think were so big they could impose their way on others with an irresistible force; men so convinced their way was the right way that they were willing to let the end justify the means—*any* means.

“If you let it, the Sesavah will lure you into serving its purpose as it did most recently with Dr. von Hass. Just as he once was, you are now in a personal standoff with the beast.

“And by *you* I *mean* you; not somebody else who's more qualified to fight it ... or more in trouble ... or more—or less—*anything*. If you are receiving this information it is intended for you specifically. I don't think I can be any more clear on this.

“Regardless of your present circumstances—whether you feel safe or in danger—you *are* toe to toe with a cunning bestial force who knows your weaknesses and won't hesitate to use what it knows to bludgeon you into submission.

“Whether you acknowledge it or not, you are in a battle for your life and your freedom. Whether you choose to fight or not, you *are* being attacked. Your choice is simple: fight and win to live a life that will reward you to no end for your effort ... or shrink in fear or ignorance and surrender to an enemy that will enslave you through that fear or ignorance to a life of misery.

“Remember this: it will pursue you relentlessly with ever increasing intensity; it will never back off ... until the day you choose to fight. I say, what better day than today?

“If you feel helpless, that's only because you haven't yet recognized and brandished a mighty weapon ever at your disposal. And you haven't acknowledged or joined with invincible allies who are already and always in battle on your behalf.

“The weapon is your will and the allies are the limitless legions of Golden Warrior Guardians the Folk have deployed in your service. To defeat the Sesavah you must seize the mind with your will, take action to restore calmness and order, and call upon your allies to help you. The only limit to their power and number is the degree of conviction and passion with which you call them.”

What I was saying was getting through again. I could feel tiny ripples of peace trickle out from those whose minds had calmed.

But the Sesavah would not desist. Mother Earth, inundated by Her children's accumulated fear, could no longer contain Nature's forces, now running rampant. The beast seized the opportunity to stoke the fear prompted by increasingly bizarre and disconcerting events shown on the television.

There was a picture of a city besieged by a ferocious blizzard. You could make out the shapes of buildings in the background and cars piled with snow. The text scrolling across the bottom of the screen identified the unlikely location. “Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city, is under seventeen inches of snow with drifts up to four feet deep. Guayaquil is less than two hundred miles south of the equator and normally has a tropical climate. Temperatures rarely dip below 80° F.”

The next shot was of a containership facility identified in the text as the Port Newark/Elizabeth Marine Terminal in New Jersey. Hundreds of cargo containers were stacked in neatly aligned rows. Behind them you could see huge ships docked in the adjacent harbor.

At first everything seemed normal, especially in comparison to the calamities being shown elsewhere around the world. The only odd thing was that in one area the stacks were higher and uneven. When the camera zoomed in, the reason for this became apparent. These containers were

not resting on top of each other as it had seemed. They were suspended above the ground and each other, floating freely, separated by a one to three foot space between them.

They were also in motion, gradually rising higher. The camera pulled out just in time to catch a wide shot of them sailing up into the sky. The scrolling text indicated that "... similar pockets of zero gravity have been reported in 17 other locations including Dallas, Moscow, London, and Beijing.

I just kept talking. "What's going on around the world seems so strange ... surreal ... beyond comprehension. I know you feel disconnected ... that things are happening *to* you ... outside your control ... and there's nothing you can do about it.

"But that's not true ... not at *all* true. There's a way out of this ... and definitely something powerful, effective, and *necessary* for you to do.

"Stay calm. Take deep cleansing breaths from time to time. Stay with me and what I'm saying. Don't let your mind drift further into fear. Stay with me and you *will* feel the fear relax its grip. Relief and peace will gradually take its place as I explain—and you understand—what's happening and how—together—we can not only get through this, but create a new and better life for each of us and a new and better world for all of us.

"But right now—before we can achieve that—we've got a fight on our hands. The worst threat is taking place at the target area; and I don't mean just the huge volume of water suspended over the ocean. Before I get to the specifics, I need to explain more.

"The common belief is that civilization—technology, culture, and so forth—has progressed in a linear way; that we had a primitive beginning and gradually advanced to this higher point in our development. But that belief is based on a limited perspective.

"There is a cycle to human consciousness. It rises and falls. Over periods lasting many thousands of years, higher consciousness—the predominance of wisdom and Love—alternates with lower consciousness—the predominance of ignorance and fear—in alignment with cosmic order.

"Although this *isn't* common knowledge, it has been *well* known to our ancient cultures—and also to the Society of Folk, all of whom share a timeless perspective.

"According to the cosmic order, we're at a time right now—in fact we're overdue—for a higher state of mass consciousness to be in place than what we have; for our lives to be influenced more by wisdom than ignorance; more by Love than fear.

"The delay has occurred because of a concerted effort by the Sesavah. Little by little, one person at a time, over centuries and centuries, it has patiently and relentlessly plied the minds of men—one thought, one situation at a time—to serve its purpose; to remain under its influence, in ignorance, and continue to choose fear over Love. In this way it has been able to maintain dominance beyond its time through the present day.

"On the surface, this might not make sense. We surely don't *look* ignorant; and, except for this terrible crisis, we don't often *feel* afraid. Look at what we've accomplished with our technology and how it's impacted our lives. Look at the resolute way we handle our responsibilities day in and day out.

"But then, look *again* at what we've *done* with our technology and how we *live* our lives. Clever inventions don't mean ignorance has been conquered and fear doesn't only mean trembling with fright.

"Does it seem wise and loving or ignorant and fearful to have made weapons with the power to annihilate life on the planet many times over; to rely upon the concept of 'mutually assured destruction' to prevent their use?

“Does it seem wise and loving or ignorant and fearful to remain in a relationship or a job that stifles or abuses you because you’ve grown accustomed to it, it’s safe, and you don’t know what else to do?”

“It’s in the events of individual lives—even the most inconsequential events—that the Sesavah makes its greatest inroads and establishes its influence and dominance.

“We may have gotten more and more intelligent—clever—in making and using complex devices, but many of us are still steeped in ignorance when it comes to knowing—understanding—our true essence: as individual expressions of a Cosmic creative intelligence. So many of us are so steeped in what we fail to see as the manmade dogma of religion that we fail to truly see—to *know*—the God we profess to love.

“Who is it that provokes us to despise—or at the very least feel superior to—someone who follows a religion or philosophy different from our own?”

“Who influences us to believe that God would prefer any one of his children over another? Who would have us think that God would wish anyone to suffer at *all*, much less forever? Who would convince us that God would reject or condemn *anyone*; especially someone who worships Him, though in a way a certain few do not?”

I could feel the Sesavah stiffen; feeling gravely threatened at being exposed so bluntly to so many. It tightened its grip on those it controlled: people who were so attached to their own point of view that they perceived anyone who disagreed with them to be evil; people it could dupe to hate in the name of love. It unleashed their venomous thinking. Prodded by the Sesavah, they attacked me viciously with self-righteous judgment.

Fully identified with Love, I was impervious to their attack. Ironically, each attacker released and consequently attracted fusillades of barbed astral darts and whirling spurs like the ones the squabbling crowd in the crop circle field hurled at each other. Each attacker inevitably suffered the destructive consequences of his attack.

This further energized the Sesavah and contributed to the world calamity that threatened the attackers along with everyone else. They didn’t realize how profoundly the principle of mutually assured destruction applied to their own thought processes.

The battle was rapidly approaching its climax, when all would be decided; when the ultimate outcome of the Great Shift would be set in place. The Sesavah sensed this as well. Now that I was exposing details of its involvement, the beast had to stop me; especially before I exposed its vulnerabilities. It prepared to launch a devastating strike. There wasn’t much time.

A concentrated effort by many of the people watching would be required to fight off the attack. For them to know what to do, I had to finish what I was explaining.

“If the Sesavah maintains its domination past a critical point in the cycle of consciousness, this will severely disrupt the cosmic order, threatening the fabric of creation in the third dimension. Because all dimensions, like all life, are interconnected, there would be disastrous multidimensional repercussions.

“We’re at that point right now, a moment for which the Sesavah has thoroughly planned and prepared. Ages ago, it sensed a day could come when mankind might be so out of balance that the scale could be forever tipped in its favor.

“At first it didn’t know quite how to accomplish this. But the mere possibility was enough to motivate it to unrelentingly ply its influence over the minds of men. The creativity and actions of many, unwittingly dedicated to the Sesavah, helped it know and do *precisely* what needed to be done.

“Some have been duped and used more than others. The Sesavah was able to blind Breck



von Hass's father, Kalman von Hass, with excessive pride and ambition. He was so intent on achieving status and world recognition from the spectacular impact he thought his conclusions would have that he wasn't able to see that they were incorrect. He was completely unaware that the Sesavah was using him to develop formulas that would eventually lead to uncontrollable destruction.

"Breck von Hass was driven by an even more intense ambition, complicated by the relationship he had with his father. He was an easy subject for the Sesavah's manipulation. Because of his choices and toxic thought patterns under its influence, Breck placed himself in a position to deliver the fatal blow.

"The Sesavah deliberately and precisely skewed the formulas in order to bring about the two simultaneous interdimensional rifts taking place right now. It knew one would be caused by its continued dominance; the other by the weapon Kalman and Breck von Hass created. The Sesavah anticipated that with this combined destructive power, it would be invincible. But it isn't."

The Sesavah felt the grave and imminent danger of my revelations. It amassed all the power and resources at its command in preparation for a merciless onslaught, the battle that would ultimately decide the day.

The horrific destructive force of the DAGR weapon continued to build as it was fed back from the eleventh dimension. The structural integrity of the third dimension degraded closer to a collapse. The TV showed pictures of objects—cars, buses, freight trains—floating about like helium balloons. They cut to a home improvement store where stacks and piles of lumber, stone, brick, tiles, and sand eased up from the ground. As they rose, each cluster spread out and spiraled upwards.

There was an aerial shot of Las Vegas, with its countless multicolored lights glittering starkly in contrast to the dark shadow cast by the cloud-filled stormy sky. Sectors of lights flashed on and off throughout the city. It shortly became apparent this was more than a fluctuating loss of electricity.

The camera zoomed in to a group of five hotels. Not only did the neighborhood lights disappear, so did the hotels. All that remained visible was raw desert, as it had been before the city was built. Then different, much smaller structures appeared in the same location; ones that had been torn down and replaced by the hotels. Then they disappeared and the desert came back. Then the hotels reappeared.

The breakdown in the structure of time that ATS-01 encountered had spread out from the target area. We were very close to the dissolution Master Armaton had warned about. One way or another, this would soon be over. I pressed forward.

"The Sesavah wasn't the only one who anticipated this situation. Long, long ago Folk prophecy foresaw the possibility that mankind might one day be in a race for survival; that our consciousness might not keep pace with our intellect; that we could fall victim to the Sesavah. They immediately embarked upon a mission dedicated to preparing for this day, if not preventing it.

"As relentless as the Sesavah has been so have the Folk been. As tenacious as its grip on mankind has been, so have their efforts been to help us free ourselves from the tyranny of the beast.

"The Folk realized that if we were going to win the race for survival, we had to accelerate our development. Because they respect our freedom of will so deeply, unless we ask first, they cannot help us directly. Unfortunately, human consciousness plunged so low during the last dark

age that no one was able to even *see* the Folk, much less ask for their help or receive their healing, transforming Gifts of Love.

Undaunted by this, they surrounded us with Love every day by delivering it to all the facets of Nature on the planet. *Indirectly* in this way, they helped nurture and catalyze the raising of our consciousness.

“Behind the beauty and serenity of Nature, one person, one moment at a time—with great patience and compassion—they have encouraged us to resist the Sesavah’s lure and claim our divine birthright.

“Aurial was the last one to be aware of their presence. They instructed him to document their disappearance, his knowledge of their realm, and certain of their prophecies so that one day, when we were ready—when we needed it most—we could be reminded of them ... in time to learn what we must do ourselves ... and in time to ask them for help ... to save us ... from ourselves.

“Without our cooperation, the Sesavah could never have gotten so far. Without our continued cooperation, it cannot go any further. Without the power it gains from our fear, without the abandonment of our will to helplessness, it cannot win.

“Right now, Golden Warrior Guardians—brandishing their protective shields—are amassed everywhere around the planet. But they cannot act on your behalf unless you make the choice to take a step beyond your fear, to exert your will, and call upon them. Do it! Do it *now!*”

A different rumble shook the planet; not an earthquake, but the clatter of golden mail worn by the myriad Warriors shifting into position as they were being called to action. By the will of those who invoked them, the gathering troops were now more potently energized than they had ever been before.

The Sesavah had just completed priming its forces for the ultimate deathblow. To press its advantage it had to attack before the Warrior Guardians were fully assembled. I had had all the time I was going to get for explanations. I prayed it was enough. The time had come for action alone: the moment of Truth.

With a fury more wicked and formidable than had ever before been known, the Sesavah struck.

## *Chapter 51*

### *The Deciding Moment*

Teams of Sesavan entities riveted to each human that had given them entre maliciously ravaged their prey. The deepest, most agonizing, crippling fears were ripped loose and scraped raw. Hatred, guilt, resentment, self-pity, regret, prejudice, lack, discouragement, inferiority, judgment—a host of putrid thought patterns—were triggered by the onslaught.

Vicious Sesavan projectiles slashed through the astral air, a dark and dense profusion of misery. Many people were wracked by intense pain.

Some suffered from the brutality of the Sesavan attacks, which they attracted by refusing to let go of old, habitual dark thought forms. Beyond that, these unfortunate people identified with the pain. This made it their own, intensified it, insured the attack's debilitating effect, and completely incapacitated them. They further fed the Sesavah, and entrenched themselves in its grip.

Some people felt pain as a result of the Golden Warrior Guardians' compassionate intercession. Now willing to change, they were helped to release ancient putrefying energy that had built up from old dark thought patterns they were willing to leave behind. The Warriors pressed their shields against the remaining morbid Sesavan entities and expelled them.

These people's pain was short-lived, a temporary effect of the healing and release process. Extricated from the Sesavah's grip, they were now shielded, free to fight it and further energize the Golden Warriors.

Other people experienced no pain because they had long ago released fear based thought patterns and cleared their energy. They attracted protection, not attack. Their dynamic exertion of will added potent force to the Warriors.

Now the lines were drawn and the sides were chosen. The only question was: who held the critical mass of consciousness, the Folk or the Sesavah?

The beast's battle plan was intelligent, methodical, and ferociously executed. Its ground forces seized enormous reserves of power from the victims they had ravaged. The energy drawn from them was consolidated with the rest of the power it controlled into the titanic strike now unfolding.

The Sesavah was as deft as it was diabolical. Although it had suffered a prior setback, the beast made a quick recovery, which led to this second major offensive. It had every chance of proving fatally effective.

Its original battle plan called only for the three coordinated attacks that had taken place on Washington, San Diego, and the North Atlantic. They were intended to achieve immediate and complete victory.

The beast had carried them out with chilling precision.

It knocked out the equipment in Washington and San Diego knowing that if I continued talking, its power would be drained as the audience gained understanding and calmed down. This was also meant to divert attention from its main thrust: the simultaneous surprise attack that overwhelmed the Golden Warriors at the target site.

The objective there was to take advantage of the interdimensional rift caused by the weapon. When it was fired, two ends of a tunnel were formed between the third and eleventh dimensions. They were connected only tenuously by the feedback loop between them amplifying and recycling the weapon's power.

The "empty" cone over the target was one end of the incomplete tunnel. The cone had not

emerged from the ocean, as was our original impression; it formed over the water's surface and rapidly grew larger. The Sesavah blasted into it with tremendous force, intent on ripping an unobstructed channel through to the other end in the Folk realm.

But the attack was not a surprise. Folk prophecy had anticipated this possibility and a plan was prepared for it. The Warrior Guardians had deceptively allowed the Sesavans to break their ranks and stream into the tunnel opening.

Sensing imminent and overwhelming victory, the Sesavah immediately dispatched an armada assigned to ravage through the Folk realm.

The Guardians let it through as well. Carefully, deliberately, they kept close track of the invaders' growing strength in the mouth of the tunnel. The precise instant before the dimensional partition would have been breached, the Folk launched a coordinated countermeasure, much to the Sesavah's surprise.

The Golden Warriors closed ranks around the perimeter of the tunnel opening. Using his scepter, Master Armaton moderated the intensity of the attacks in Washington and San Diego and prevented the destruction of the communications equipment and our computers. At the same time, in his capacity as Special Envoy to Queen Veridia, he channeled her guidance into Mother Earth through the scepter.

The planet was shown how to take advantage of the enormous atmospheric and gravitational instabilities created by the energy discharged at the target site and turn the power of the weapon back against the Sesavah. Basic laws of kinetics, thermodynamics, physics—all natural laws—had completely broken down. The slightest force, applied the right way at the right time, could release tremendously greater forces. A willing and loving servant of humanity, the planet expended the last reserves of her vitality in our defense.

Under the Queen's direction, Mother Earth manipulated the instabilities with unerring precision. Sacrificing her lifeblood, the planet projected her healing water into the mouth of the rapidly developing tunnel and filled the cone. Although it continued to expand, she was able to prevent it from fully forming.

The salinity of her water completely drained the power of all the Sesavan forces in the tunnel opening—including the great armada—and expelled them. Once their energy was removed, the shear mass of water in the mouth of the tunnel was enough to arrest the acceleration of its growth; but barely enough.

Although this was an immense and shocking defeat, the Sesavah didn't pause for a moment. It regrouped immediately and launched several strategic thrusts in preparation for another all-out rampage; the one that had just erupted.

Knowing this would be the deciding siege, it held nothing back. The beast struck with unfathomable brutality; equal to all the destructive force man had unleashed since the beginning of the last dark age: the World Wars, every battle between every nation in every war, every murder, every fistfight, every rape, every incident of physical or emotional conflict and abuse.

It was all concentrated into one cursed deluge and directed at one precise point: the mouth of the tunnel. The instability that Mother Earth had taken advantage of was now put to use by the Sesavah. The already ponderous force of its attack was magnified many times over; far more than necessary to overcome the hold Mother Earth's water had on the growth of the tunnel. The beast was on the verge of irreversibly bridging the gap to the other side in the eleventh dimension.

There had never before been an occasion of such misery, depravity, and ruination. The planet started to come apart at the seams.

The tectonic plates began separating and rising from the earth's core.

Huge areas—thousands of miles square—started to drift in and out of their time. Soon they would disappear, possibly forever.

At the target site, an astronomical surge of pure evil heaved into the atmosphere with the fury and power of a nuclear blast. With intensifying strength and gathering speed, it spread in every direction, annihilating every molecule and atom in its path.

In a matter of seconds, my link to Earth's peoples would be severed; this was the final moment for action, the last chance.

As I looked at Armaton, he turned to me. We both knew that the critical mass of consciousness still belonged to the Sesavah; that ignorance prevailed. Fear was still the dominant force on the planet. The beast had succeeded in maintaining the widespread perception of separateness in defiance of the truth: that we are all interconnected with each other and all life, all creation.

The Folk had done all they could to stave off such dire circumstances and help even the sides. Despite their efforts, we were outnumbered and overpowered.

Armaton and I smiled at each other as we exchanged a thought, "Yet we have not been outwitted."

I took a deep breath, tightened my diaphragm, and, in a strong, clear voice, uttered a pure and penetrating tone. A shaft of intense, unfathomably beautiful white light from the infinity above me, coursed down through my body causing every cell to glow.

The light passed out my feet and penetrated the depths of Mother Earth, causing every particle of matter in its path to blaze with vitality. A chain reaction of revitalization radiated everywhere through Her.

Unable to see the supernal light, many of the people in the television audience had no idea what I was doing. Nonetheless, my intoning imparted a deep sense of relief and release so they joined in. As they did, the feeling grew even stronger.

Native peoples, healers, students of Yoga and metaphysics recognized this to be a powerful healing technique and smiled as they chanted tones unique to their particular practice.

Other people of varied beliefs and cultures perceived this to be a sacred act of Love and healing and vocalized tones or phrases from sacred music familiar to them.

The Golden Warrior Guardians intoned their battle cry; not a shriek of aggression, but a stirring rhapsody of Love.

Everyone gave their all. It was a masterful counterstrike fortified by the sum total of every kindness, every inspiration, every bold and gentle act of creativity and selfless, unconditional Love that had been experienced in each person's life. Power was drawn from every genuine spiritual master and sincere seeker that had walked the Earth; every artist, writer, and composer who opened a channel to the Divine and gave expression to Its beauty.

There had never before been such an outpouring of Love and healing.

We joined in a Cosmic chorus, integrating and emanating the fundamental elements of the primordial essence: sound, thought, and light. The effect of our combined intonation and intent reverberated through all dimensions on all levels.

Shafts of the same transcendent light streamed down through everyone around the world chanting. We were all channels from an infinite Source into the heart of Mother Earth. Where all the beams met at her core, they coalesced into a glowing ball that grew in size and might until she was filled and restored by it. An excess of monumental power built up extraordinary pressure that couldn't be contained much longer.

The light enhanced the intuitive connection between the audience and me. As I extended my arms in front of me, they all followed suit.

I called upon Mother Earth to release the light. Instantly, it burst forth up and through each of us. With synchronized intent, we directed it out our fingertips across the girth of the planet into the mouth of the tunnel.

This was the ultimate and deciding moment of the battle, when and where the opposing forces had committed all their effort and resources.

At first, there was a tremendous strain, neither side yielding sway. Suddenly, with an explosive crack, the feedback loop between the third and eleventh dimensions was severed. The Sesavah screamed with fury as the only route for its incursion into the Folk realm was cut off.

With shields at the fore, the Golden Warrior Guardians immediately sealed off the tunnel opening. Now trapped, the Sesavan hordes were inundated by the light. Their battle array collapsed; their lifeblood evaporated.

The annihilating blast of evil spewing out of the target site withered and died. The treacherous instabilities there, around, and above the planet were equilibrated by waves of harmony, balance, and order that exuded from the light.

As healing illumination streamed into the last vestige of the tunnel opening, Mother Earth and the Folk directed its closing. They delicately managed the remaining instabilities so that her waters were returned gently into the ocean, causing no damage or upset.

In places where the force of gravity had dissipated, it was restored gradually so that all objects that had floated up, smoothly eased down to the ground. The tectonic plates quietly settled back in their normal positions.

An irresistible wave of tranquility encircled the planet, calmed the turmoil, and cut off the Sesavah's remaining power at its source: the frenzied, fearing minds of men.

Nothing remained to beget harsh conditions. Pressures, temperatures, and weather rapidly returned to normal. Sunshine prevailed where it was daytime. Where it was night, the skies were crystal clear, the stars vivid, and the aurora absent.

Everyone continued intoning. As soon as we had started, Malcolm arranged for audio feeds from around the world to blend with mine on the broadcast. That way everybody chanting was able to hear his own voice linked with many others. The way our voices resonated together and with our surroundings made it possible to feel, in a tangible way, our interconnectedness.

A shot of Yosemite National Park was on the TV screen behind me, looking east into Yosemite Valley. Whatever disaster that was being shown before, had passed. No longer a setting for fear, it now conveyed only its natural splendor.

The cameraperson luxuriated in the peaceful scene and slowly panned from left to right. Everyone watching was totally absorbed.

The slow, smooth motion of the camera was suddenly interrupted as it jerked back to the left and zoomed in quickly to a grove of Ponderosa pines; then to one specific tree. A tiny glimmer of light sparkled in one of the upper branches.

Then another a few feet below.

And then others.

The camera zoomed out just in time to capture a growing cluster of lights that spread through the pines, cedars, black oaks, and underbrush all across the valley.

So many people were so intensely focused on Love, healing, and intoning the sacred sounds, that the combined concentrated effort of a minority had raised the overall mass consciousness.

And so, the Folk returned. Not that they had ever left. They simply were restored to view.

And in the same way, the Sesavah was turned away. Although it held the critical mass of consciousness among all the individuals on the planet, when united, the combined power of a minority was enough to win the day.

The vista of Yosemite was magnificent. Countless pinpoints of luster radiated from El Capitan, Cathedral Rocks, and the other majestic granite formations in the distance. The Folk danced with the sunlight sparkling in the flowing water and darting mist of Bridalveil Fall.

The scene lingered several minutes longer. Then, abruptly, the coverage cut to Times Square, at first glance not in keeping with the placid mood that had been set. I smiled knowing the reason for the switch.

The crowd was still gathered, most of them holding their arms outstretched; no longer chanting my name, but each his own sacred sound. A few were looking up and pointing, a gesture common to tourists, something native New Yorkers are usually loath to do. They elbowed the others to take notice until all of them were looking and pointing at the same thing.

The camera zoomed in on the crowd and then panned away from them in the direction they were indicating. It stopped at three adjacent windows on the fourth floor of a nearby building.

There were a variety of potted plants on the windowsills inside that office. They included several tall ferns and a variety of culinary herbs: basil, rosemary, and such.

Amongst them was a profusion of brilliant minuscule white lights.

The Folk could be seen in the Big Apple, too: in these houseplants as well as trees lining the avenues, throughout Central Park, and in humbler places.

One man in Times Square was pointing down at the ground to something no one else had noticed yet. A single blade of grass had recently sprouted out of a crack in the sidewalk. The Folk celebrated its determination for life with a visit from Weysala, the Chief Gift Bearer, himself.

## *Chapter 52*

### *A Call to Action*

I looked out the airplane window and reflected on the last flight I had taken, my return trip from England. Since then, so much had been accomplished, so much had changed; yet so much remained to be done.

Master Armaton, Harold, Ashvin, Kamala, Malcolm, and I were on our way to Washington D.C. to attend ceremonies observing the end of the world crisis. I was scheduled to give a press conference. We had spent the last 24 hours decompressing, catching up on sleep, and then packing quickly for a weekend stay.

The White House had dispatched a military transport for us and a few guests we requested permission to invite; people who had played key roles in helping us. They included Wil Hampton and his fiancé; Shandra, her husband, and six year old daughter; Lieutenant Monahan, his wife, and teenage son and daughter; Audrey Reyes with her husband and three young children; and Larry and Dan.

The mood was light. Shandra's and Audrey's children played together, running gleefully up and down the aisle. The rest of us snacked, chatted, and laughed; at times all together and then in smaller groups.

A little while before landing, I withdrew from the merriment and returned to my assigned seat.

When I leaned back and closed my eyes, the Royal Council concluded with a final comment from the Queen, "And even if that day is won, lo, thinkest not there couldst not be another day when foes are met in yet another battle grand. Until mass human consciousness forswears attraction to its sway, no battle fought shalt e'er suffice to hold the Sesavah at bay."

I opened my eyes and looked at Master Armaton who was thoroughly engaged in a raucous game of Rock Paper Scissors with the four children.

His sideways glance conveyed the thought, "There's much—yet naught—to celebrate."

Agreeing, I nodded grimly, then grinned and shook my head in mock disapproval that an omniscient being would take advantage of young innocents in a guessing game.

His eyes twinkled back, "But I'm losing!"

Several black SUV's were waiting when we touched down at Andrews Air Force Base. They whisked us to our hotel, where we quickly settled in for the night. Prabhas and Nirmala had arrived from England earlier in the evening and were already sound asleep.

Early the next morning we all met for breakfast in a private area of the hotel restaurant. It was a sumptuous, joyful, noisy feast. We ate and laughed heartily. Old ties were renewed and new ones were formed among those who had just met.

Just as we finished our meal, several very serious men wearing dark suits, sunglasses, and barely visible earpieces strode in with a now familiar figure in their midst.

"Monty, old boy! Good show! Good show!" Malcolm and his onetime protégé both beamed and clamped each other in a rugged bear hug.

Introductions were made, though Monty already knew the names of everyone there, including all the children. He greeted us warmly.

When we shook hands, he turned serious, "Dr. Manning, it's an honor."

"Mr. Buchanan, thank you. I'm honored to meet you, too."

"And the President is *eager* to meet you. Shall we go?"

Master Armaton, Malcolm, Harold, and I joined Monty in his car. The others followed in a



motorcade. We talked affably during the ten-minute ride. Monty pointed out the historic landmarks and buildings along the way.

When we arrived at the White House, he escorted us to the Oval Office, while the rest of our group was greeted by the First Lady and taken on a special tour.

The President was seated at his desk when we were brought in. He got up quickly, walked over to us, and warmly shook our hands as we were introduced.

We sat down in tan suede chairs arrayed around the Presidential Seal on the carpet in front of his desk. After some small talk, we discussed some of the events that had occurred and went into a few details regarding what led up to them.

From the moment we came in, the President was distracted by Master Armaton and had a hard time not staring at him. Being in the presence of an embodiment of the Folk fascinated him.

After an hour, the First Lady joined us with the rest of our group, all of whom were thrilled to meet the nation's chief executive. He posed for pictures and then bid us farewell.

We returned to the waiting vehicles and drove back to the hotel where a televised press conference and reception was about to take place in the grand ballroom. Several thousand people were buzzing with exuberant expectancy. Reporters filled the first dozen rows in the center section between two aisles; the rest of the audience were dignitaries and invited guests.

Monty and I entered from a front corner of the room to an immediate standing ovation. We climbed several steps up the side of the stage, walked to the center, and stood next to the podium.

Armaton, Malcolm, Harold and the rest of our guests were escorted to reserved seats in the first two rows of the side section to my right.

Monty extended his arms toward me, deflecting the applause in my direction. I nodded my thanks to the audience and pronounced to them repeatedly.

After a few minutes, he stepped up to the microphone and tried to quiet down the room, "Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you. ... Thank you." He raised his hands to shush them. "Thank you. ... Thank you very much. ... I know that ... Thank you."

He smiled broadly at them and then at me and then tried again. "Thank you very much. I know that ..." They finally started to settle down. "Thank you. Please, be seated."

After the rustle of people sitting ceased, he spoke again, "Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I know that Dr. Manning deeply appreciates the warm greeting you've given her and in a few moments she will address you and take questions.

"But first I want to introduce myself and make a few comments. My name is Monty Buchanan. I'm the Deputy Press Secretary for the President of the United States and I extend greetings to you on his behalf.

"I'm told that the television audience around the world is the largest in history. There are even more people tuned in right now than were watching two days ago during the height of the crisis. Thank you all for joining us.

"Now, to the first order of business. I want to assure you that the DAGR/AWARE equipment was completely stripped down yesterday. It's been removed from the Alaska site to a secure location and will be destroyed as soon as our investigation is completed.

"We expect charges will be filed against additional DAGR and AWARE personnel as well as individuals in other organizations—including several universities—whom we suspect were complicit in the operation.

"Again, I want to reiterate that there will be a thorough investigation into this matter. Once the results are in, the President will lead a bipartisan effort to create the appropriate reforms for preventing this from ever happening again. You have the President's assurance that the abuse of

power and dereliction of duty and principle that led to this near tragedy will *not* be repeated.

“As incredible as it may seem, as of ...” he looked at his watch, “... twenty-two minutes ago, *no* fatalities have been reported as a direct result of the events that took place on Thursday.

“We have accounts from people all over the world who were in life threatening situations and somehow made it through safely. Some of them say they felt an inexplicable urge to leave or move away from buildings that collapsed soon after they got clear. Other people were actually *buried* under tons of rubble, but the initial debris fell *around* them—not *on* them—forming a cave of sorts that prevented them from being crushed.

“What makes this even more astounding is the sheer number of these and other similar incidents: hundreds of thousands of them. Thursday was a day of disaster that turned into a day of miracles.

Monty paused, glanced at me, and then continued, “Now, I have the great pleasure and honor of presenting the one person—more than anyone else—who is responsible for turning the tide of events and leading us from peril to safety.

“Despite being wrongly accused of a crime and enduring the contempt of all those who turned against her, she fought to protect all of us. With great perseverance and dedication, she eventually exposed the truth ... and the real culprits.

“In the days to come, as we settle back into our lives as they were before all this happened, let us not forget the debt of gratitude we owe her. So without further ado, Dr. Aubrey Manning.”

The crowd was on their feet again, clapping, whistling, and hooting. The ballroom resounded with jubilation. I shook hands with Monty, stepped up to the podium, closed my eyes, and pronounced to the audience until they quieted down.

“Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Buchanan.

“It’s good to be with you all again. We’ve been through quite an experience together. I do appreciate Mr. Buchanan’s sentiments regarding my involvement. The thing is though, past a certain point I didn’t have any more to do with the way things turned out than each of you who joined in. It was *all* of us—each *one* of us—*together*.

“And ... well ... there are a few other points I want to clarify. The first has to do with me exposing the ‘real culprits’ as Mr. Buchanan put it.

“While there’s no denying that there were people involved with DAGR and AWARE who were primarily responsible for this calamity, we all have some measure of responsibility, too, because the way we think helps sustain a world that has a place for such people and events.

“If you settle back into your lives the way they were before, as Mr. Buchanan suggested, we will have learned nothing, changed nothing as a result of this experience, and the world will remain the same.”

I looked at Monty apologetically for contradicting him. He raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders as if to say, “Just tell it like it is.”

I continued, “Something *else* will happen to threaten us because nothing was done at the deepest level—the core level of thought—to prevent it.

“With all due respect, there’s only so much a President or a government can do to legislate or otherwise hold back the tide of mass consciousness and the upheaval ... or upliftment ... naturally left in its wake.

“No one person or group holds the ultimate power. We all do together; each of us, equally. We wield that power and influence over the world around us by what and how we think. We exercise our influence to the extent that we exercise control of our thoughts.

“If nothing changes, *no* one can assure us that something similar will never happen again.

No person, no government can stem the tide of mass consciousness; it's too strong.

“This was not a decisive battle, but a wake up call; a call to action. The Sesavah didn't win; but it wasn't defeated. The fight continues: a series of smaller battles; hand-to-hand combat; it against each of us, one at a time, day after day.

“It will tempt you with your greatest weakness and attack you where you're most vulnerable. You may think you have it licked, only to have it show up again in a different guise, cloaked behind different circumstances. If it cannot attack you with your vices, it will try to twist your thinking and turn your virtues against you. It's very sneaky in all these ways.

“Each time it wins it grows stronger. If we let it, one by one, the Sesavah will work on each of us until it produces another groundswell great enough to cause more disaster. So don't let it; because you have the wherewithal to prevent that from happening. And each time *you* win, *you* grow stronger.

“You have your judgment and your will and the Love that's inherent within us all. *That's* what you put your main focus on, the essence of Love within you, *not* the Sesavah.

“This past battle proved you have a lot of allies: in each other and the Folk. It showed how much power we have when we're truly united: when we focused our thoughts and our intentions together, the world was healed.

“There's a lot of power in group action; knowing you're joined with others at the same time. There were millions of us together that day. Hang on to that experience. It holds throughout time.

“When you're alone, you may *think* you're alone, but you're not. Not in thought. Never forget, there are good people everywhere who are together with you, working for change. Though you may not know or even see each other, your thoughts know each other and they act together to create a powerful vibration of healing.

“And, of course, the Folk are always here to be with you—the Gift Bearers, the Golden Warrior Guardians—at the behest of their queen and king, Veridia and Robaniel. The Divine Spirit is always with you in the form most dear and familiar to you. You are never alone and you never act in isolation. But remember, the Sesavah lurks near you, too. Consciously or not, you *choose* your company.

“I've told my part of the story in *Sacred Mission*. In order for it to have the impact necessary to help achieve a stable elevation in consciousness, you've got to take ownership of your part.

“The story hasn't ended because *your* experiences are a part of it. Express them in whatever way suits you best, not necessarily just in writing. Speak them into an audio recorder; simply talk with each other. Sketch, draw, paint, sculpt ... whatever suits you best.

“Tell what happened to you during what Mr. Buchanan called the day of miracles. What did you see? What did you learn? Did you see the Folk? Do you still? What does the world look like to you now? As time goes on, how does the world around you and your perspective of it change as a result of changing your thinking?

“Use our website to link yourselves to each other. Post your impressions there and discuss them. Get together with each other online, by phone, in person ... and act together. Organize yourselves. Support each other in moving the world from ignorance and instability to wisdom and balance ... one person, one thought at a time.

“Take advantage of the extraordinary technology, the means to communicate, that can help us—we, the people—unite as we never have before: worldwide in real time.

“Take advantage of what the Folk have given us. Aerial wrote *Sacred Memories* for you to enjoy as a story. When he takes you with him to Folk Space, you'll get as close to experiencing it as you can from the third dimension.

“But he had a deeper purpose, too. *Sacred Memories* is a primer to positive change and higher consciousness. While you’re enjoying it, it will elevate your vibratory rate as well as help you understand some of the things I’ve talked about and you witnessed the last few days.

“The *Book of Symbols* wasn’t intended for just me to interpret. I was honored to receive it, but it was intended for you, too. The Folk prophecy, the histories and mysteries the Symbols reveal, weren’t meant for any one person or group more than another. What they contain can be accessed by anyone—by everyone.

“I encourage you to see what they inspire in you. You’ll enjoy doing it for one, and you may be surprised at what flows out of you when you just sit back, relax, and focus on whatever Symbol appeals to you in the moment.

“If you know a technique of meditation, practice it to calm the body and the mind. If you don’t know any techniques, just sit in a relaxed, comfortable position and call upon Spirit in whatever form is most dear to you. Take a few deep abdominal breaths, then let go of the breath and simply observe its flow—in and out—as you concentrate on a Symbol.

“Close your eyes and see the Symbol in your mind’s eye. If you need to, look at it every now and then to refresh your recollection. When you feel prompted to, open your eyes and start writing. Don’t force it; just let the words come *to* you. You’re not thinking here so much as you are allowing free flowing unedited, unanalyzed thought stream through you onto the page.

“This may seem strange at first, completely different from how you’re accustomed to writing; yet, after time, you’ll find that it’s one of the most natural and wonderful experiences in your life. Allow the expression to take place in whatever form it comes: words; music; if you get a visual impression, draw; whatever.

“If you feel stuck at first—nothing comes—then call upon the Gift Bearers to inspire you and start writing anyway. Just let whatever gibberish that comes to your mind flow onto the paper: random words, letters, syllables, whatever. Keep invoking the Love that surrounds and permeates you. It’s crucial that you let the writing, the gibberish, flow freely: no judgment, no analysis. Just write and don’t stop.

“Don’t be surprised if, after a few lines or it may take a few pages, you can’t help but notice—even though you aren’t consciously analyzing—the gibberish begins to coalesce into what could possibly be comprehensible expressions or even sentences and paragraphs. As tempting as it is, don’t pause to verify this. Just keep going until you come to a feeling of completion.

“Only then go back and read it over. If it makes any sense at all, regardless how little, when you finish reading, continue the flow of thought and write more if you like. Just be free and loose. Don’t actively think thoughts when you are in this receptive state; just let them flow. Through it all, feel your connection to the Folk, to the Divine, and your gratitude for the experience.

“This is a time when you *don’t* want to control your thoughts. Simply establish yourself in the presence of Love, then let go and—as the saying goes—let God. This is one way of consciously and deliberately opening the gates to your creativity and letting Divine inspiration flow through you in the form of ideas, guidance, artistic expression, and so forth. It can help you improve and uplift your life and the lives you touch.

“Well, this might be a good place for me to stop and take your ques ...”

The press section, so calm a moment before, was now on its feet shouting out questions. I smiled at their enthusiasm and intense drive. But, of course, it was impossible to respond with such a ruckus.

Monty proved himself equal to the task of quieting them down. His powerful presence commanded their attention and they responded quickly.

Once order was restored, I responded by pointing to one of the journalists who then stood and asked, “Dr. Manning, isn’t it a bit incredible that no one died during such serious and widespread upheavals? How do you account for the reports Mr. Buchanan mentioned?”

The crowd murmured in anticipation. They were in awe of these extraordinary events.

“During the crisis, especially during the worst of it when we were intoning together, powerful waves of love and healing were broadcast across the planet. This energized the Golden Warrior Guardians and the intuition of the people in danger.

“The Guardians whispered to the minds of those who were threatened. Some people saw and heard them directly. Those less attuned to the Warriors felt vague, yet very strong ‘hunches’ to flee or shift their positions to what turned out to be safer places.

“In cases where the warnings went unattended, the Warrior Guardians resorted to intervention on the physical plane. For example they maneuvered falling debris in such a way as to avoid harming anyone.

“It surely was a ‘day of miracles,’ but remember: this kind of help is available to us *every* day. The Folk—the Gift Bearers and Golden Warriors—are never more than a thought away.

“Do we have another question? Yes, over there; yes, you.”

The reporter stood up before speaking, “After the television coverage showing the Folk in Yosemite and Times Square, sightings were reported across wide areas of the globe. Now the number of these claims is greatly diminished. Can you explain what’s happening?”

I answered, “During the TV coverage, we were so intensely focused together that in many ways our minds were linked. The intoning intensified our focus even more and strengthened our link to each other and the Folk. Its healing quality—among other things—promoted relaxation of the tremendous tension that had built up and, of course, there was another release of tension after it became clear the crisis was over.

“The combination of these factors—concentration, relaxation, intoning, directing our attention to the Folk, and their unceasing willingness to reveal themselves—accounted for so many people seeing them close by.

“Afterwards, several things happened. Without the broadcast to focus on and the more tangible link it provided between us, it was hard for many people to hold on to the support and inspiration they felt from the group. Left to themselves, some wondered if they would be able to see the Folk again ... *especially* on their own. Some people thought *I* was responsible for what they were able to see and became convinced they *couldn’t* do it on their own. These were all false, but self-fulfilling prophecies.

“Basically, doubt and other varieties of toxic thinking got in the way. The point I need to stress is that *whatever* anyone experienced—however sublime, unanticipated, or uncharacteristic—you did it, certainly not me. We all have the capacity to see the Folk; the trick is believing that and getting out of our own way.

“Each of us is more powerful than most believe. And, as I’ve already said, we’re linked to each other at all times, so the power of our unity is always available.

“You can see the Folk any time; Lord knows they’re always around, patiently waiting to respond to your attention. Just Love and they *will* respond to you, if not visibly, then in thought.

I gestured to another reporter, “Do you have a question?”

“Dr. Manning, you never expressed any vindictiveness toward people who attacked you and ruined your career. You showed extraordinary calmness in the middle of what panicked the rest

of us. I'm convinced there were miraculous events that happened because of you that day. Are you a saint?"

I laughed heartily. "Oh my! Now, wouldn't that be convenient? Then it would be easy to put me up on a pedestal, attribute anything I've done or said to my special status and convince yourself that 'only *she* can do what she's talking about.' Then it would be easier to play it safe and maintain the status quo.

"Whose hands do you think *that* would play into?"

"Let me assure you, I'm as human as the next person; but consider this: *each* of us has the same Divine spark as we imagine of our most venerated saints.

"And there is no 'rest of us.' Even the highest who have walked among us never separated or distinguished themselves that way.

"Another question. Yes?"

"All this talk about the Sesavah, these dark forces having the upper hand ... Are you saying that humans are inherently evil, that we have to change human nature?"

"I'm not saying that at all; I'm saying quite the opposite. Humans are inherently ... *Love*; Love that has become buried beneath layers of fear. I'm not saying we have to change our nature; just uncover more of who and what we are. The Folk could never be so drawn to us if our nature wasn't the same as theirs."

I scanned the room for the next question. Malcolm caught my eye and drew my attention to someone. I laughed happily in agreement and pointed to the short statured journalist.

He stepped into the aisle and started talking, but I was so surprised and pleased to see him, I interrupted.

"Dr. Manning, when ..."

"Artie! It's good to see you! How *are* you?"

"Fine, Ma'am. Um ... shouldn't you be calling me Mr. Compton here?"

I wondered if he still represented Junior Scholastic or if he had moved on to the New York or London Times. Having been properly admonished, I quickly returned to the appropriate professional demeanor, "You're absolutely right, Mr. Compton. What would you like to ask?"

"Well, there's something you talk about that a lot of my friends don't get and when I try to explain it, they just tell me, 'What do you know?'"

He sighed in frustration, then continued, "You say we should control our feelings, but my friends say that—like—when different things happen that makes them mad or sad or—you know—whatever, they say they can't just stop it. They say it's too—I don't know—too strong, too much and that it's just what *happens*.

"And then they say that if they let it out—like yell or cry or something—then it feels better. But they say *you* say *not* to do that; to just—like—*stuff* it. I mean *I* don't think so, but they do. So could you please explain this so maybe they understand it better and I know how to say it better?"

Artie hit on a key point I was very pleased to clarify. "Well, you're right, Mr. Compton. That's not what I mean at all. Aurial dealt with this in *Sacred Memories* ..."

Artie interrupted, "I *read* that book! I *really* liked when they went through the portals and stuff ..." He caught himself going off track and stopped. "Um, I'm sorry."

I picked back up, "At one point when Aurial had lost control of his emotions and it led to some serious consequences ..."

Artie interrupted again as he rustled frantically through the pages of a book, "I know which part. You quoted it in *Sacred Mission*."

While he rustled more, I waited with proud and patient anticipation.

Before long, he celebrated his find and then read from it, “*Alright!* I got it! This is what Master Armaton says first to Auriel:

Thou wilt endure what few could bear:  
Great fears and joys and sorrows deep.  
Use temperance with each extreme.

“Even though he was still upset, Auriel got it, ‘cause he wrote:

I understood the irony  
That all emotions are the same,  
Are but a means unto this end:  
Great misery, if not controlled.

“Then Master Armaton says:

It matters not that feelings come,  
That they are felt as good or bad.  
The matter is: art thou proclaimed  
A magistrate or slave to them?

If not controlled, then habits rule.  
When habits rule, there is no Peace.  
Without the saving grace of Peace,  
A soul of Destiny is lost.

“That’s the part, right? That’s the part that explains it. I had to look up some words, but I figured it out.”

“Yes, it is. What did you figure out, Art ... um ... Mr. Compton?”

“You want me to ...?”

“Yes, would you?”

“OK. Um ... well ... This is what I told my friends. It’s not like you shouldn’t feel stuff; a lot of times you just can’t help it. The thing is, though, if you *stay* mad or sad, *that’s* not good ‘cause if you keep doing it, then it becomes a habit and then you get kind of ... stuck. Right?”

“You’re on the right track, Mr. Compton. Suppressing emotions isn’t healthy. The tricky thing is, some people confuse suppressing them with transcending—rising above—them. Getting caught up in them—the highs as *well* as the lows—puts you at their mercy. And if you do that, you’re probably miserable. But there’s more.

“Emotions come with information about where we’re at on the path of our destiny. If you learn to temper them, understand their higher purpose and take advantage of it, then you are ‘magistrate,’ not ‘slave’ to them.

“When you’re on track toward your life’s goal, the highest expression of your life’s purpose, your emotions are, for the most part, positive. You feel an overall sense of fulfillment even while you’re doing rote or otherwise disagreeable tasks that aren’t directly related to the process.”

Artie chimed in, “Like even brushing your teeth or taking out the garbage.”

I laughed, “Precisely. You operate from a base of satisfaction and you’re *naturally* motivated to keep going; to keep on keeping on, as the saying goes.

“When you experience negative emotions, as everyone does from time to time, there’s a good chance that’s your internal guidance system at work, telling you you’re off track. If you analyze what you’ve been doing or considering, recent actions or choices you’ve made, how you’ve been thinking, you might come up with a course correction that when you take it, that emotion fades away and you return to your calm and happy base.

“The wonderful thing about this process is that it works even if you have no idea what your life’s purpose is. It still keeps you on track; in fact it will eventually help you realize what that purpose is.

“Essentially, emotions provide a litmus for whether you are in Love or in fear. When you are in Love, you are in Truth; you are ‘to thine own self’ being true. Truth will always reveal more of itself to the willing, receptive mind. That’s how you discover your highest purpose: it’s a key component of your Truth that will naturally reveal itself. Relax, stay in Love, take it day by day, moment by moment, and all else will follow.

“Contrary to what many people believe and accept about themselves, *everyone* has a life purpose, that path which best expresses the creative potential of an individual. Those who claim they have none simply haven’t found it yet. They’re probably just too tense about it, trying too hard to figure it out. It’s not something you work out like a math problem. It’s something that’s discovered, revealed to you; that you *relax*—not force—your way into.

“It is *not* a special gift only for exceptional people. It’s *everyone*’s birthright; without exception. To some people it comes with more difficulty or later in life than others, commonly because family members, teachers, or other influential persons guide them in the wrong direction, despite best intentions; or situations occur that diminish their self-confidence or belief in their dreams; these types of things.”

I paused, looked around the audience, and then directly into the camera speaking directly to the heart of each person listening.

“Never think that your life—how you live it—isn’t important and, what’s more, that your dreams don’t matter. Live your highest aspiration. Believe—*know*—you can accomplish it. Take action, move toward it, each day. Don’t let your destiny—your life’s work—be trampled by the limited vision of those dedicated to playing it safe and maintaining the status quo.

“Don’t succumb to the reasons you can’t succeed. *Everyone* who has achieved success—especially *great* success—has had *many* reasons not to.

“Don’t let passion be replaced by the uneasy contentment that you feel at 5 o’clock or Friday evening or two weeks in August working at a job that doesn’t fulfill you.

“No matter how far away you feel from your dream, don’t give up on it. Don’t believe that you should, that that’s what responsible adults do, that that’s what everyone is *supposed* to do. Don’t accept anything but the promise, joy, and manifestation of your dream. Remember: a safe life is rarely a victorious life.

“Probably the worst thing is to become numb to your emotions. Then you’ve cut yourself off from your natural intuitive guidance. If that’s where you find yourself—numb and hopeless—then you’ve got to *do* something. Take some action—the most positive thing you can come up with even if it could be wrong. Stir things up. If you’ve made a bad choice, it will instruct you to a better one. At least you’re in motion.

“While you’re on the way to finding your life’s purpose—and afterwards, too, for that matter—there are techniques you can use to clear any unhelpful emotions or negative energy that



may be influencing you, either from the past or in the present, your own or from others.

“As I’ve said, we’re all linked on the thought level. And by ‘all’ I *mean* all: those who operate in Love and those who operate out of fear. Just as you can be energized by the empowered loving thoughts of others if you tune in to them, you can be depleted by exposure to someone else’s fear-based thinking, especially if they are bombarding you with the barbs of worry, anger, resentment, envy, and so forth.

“It’s important to clear your being of extraneous, debilitating energies. Beyond feeling better in the moment and preventing the development of corresponding diseases, when you clear out the heaped up junk from your past and from others, you have—pardon the pun—a clearer picture of what guidance your present emotions have for you.

“Many healers operate in the realm of thought and can help clear you. Find someone who will show you how to do this for yourself ... and others. Some wonderful techniques came to me through interpreting the Symbols; they’re included in my *Known and Knowable* writings.

“There is no one technique superior to all the rest. Just choose what feels best to you. It’s neither a difficult nor mysterious process. We are all possessed of the same potentials and abilities. Any open-minded healer with integrity will agree.

“If you need help, ask for it; and I don’t just mean from people. Call upon the Gift Bearers, use the Symbols for inspiration. Call the Golden Warriors to help you sift through your feelings and cast out the Sesavah, who will use any weakness or sensitivity to get to you.

“Pray for guidance, not as a beggar, asking Spirit for favors; ask what *you* can do in the *name* of Spirit.

“Believing in your life’s purpose, finding out what it is, owning it, and following its path—*that’s* the way of Love, the way to higher consciousness. Sorting through and clearing negative emotions, using them to prompt you in a positive direction—*that’s* the ultimate clean-up, the ultimate recycling. Raising your own consciousness, living responsibly and in balance—*that’s* the most powerful way you can impact the world.”

I returned my gaze to Artie and smiled.

He smiled back. “I get it. Thank you, Dr. Manning.”

“You’re welcome, Mr. Compton.

“Another question. You, Ma’am?”

“What you’re suggesting, Dr. Manning, may be good advice for an individual who wants to improve his or her *own* life, but what impact—*really*—can only *one* person have on the rest of the world, unless they’re in a position of power or prominence? Each of us is only one drop in a bucket with 6 billion other drops.”

I nodded in acknowledgment of her point as I answered, “If all you’re counting is the drops, then that’s it: 6 billion to one. But consciousness doesn’t add up arithmetically because positive thoughts and empowered, higher consciousness individuals are *far* more powerful than negative thoughts and disempowered, lower consciousness individuals. And when there are two or more gathered together, there’s an even greater impact.

“The positive influence of *one* person who has modestly raised his consciousness above the present average level can summon tens of thousands of Golden Warrior Guardians from Folk space, energizing and deploying them to counterbalance the negative influence of equal their number in people who are below the average level.

“Each of us who makes the effort wields the power to mobilize an army. In the conventional military, directing a force this large would merit the rank of General. *That’s* the impact one person can have.

“We’ll take one more question.” I made my final choice with great care. “Yes, you, sir.”

This was someone who needed to be dealt with.

“Isn’t it a little simplistic: your message, the CUE Principle? What you’re saying, essentially, is, ‘Change your thinking, make your life better and that makes the world better. Follow your bliss and everything will fall into place.’ It strikes me this is an overly simplistic, unrealistic, thoroughly impractical, irresponsible and narcissistic point of view that leads people nowhere but down the road to la la land. Would you care to comment?”

Armaton and I exchanged amused glances, acknowledging together the proof that cynicism was still alive and kicking: the Sesavah was hard at work.

I laughed as I responded, “Well, you’ve got the message right; in fact, I like the way you put it. I’m going to quote you. But I do take exception to your conclusion, which reflects a traditional paradigm of thinking, the very one I’m suggesting we move on from.

“CUE Theory *is* quite simple; yet it has to do with a complex and elegant construct, a reality behind the one that’s most apparent to us.

“We are living in—we *are*—a sea of thought waves. As remote as that level of reality seems from this one,” I rapped my knuckles on the podium, “it constitutes the ultimate foundation of all matter. On that level, we’re linked to each other and all creation.

“Everything ultimately operates on the level of thought. After the fall to the Dark Age, mankind’s awareness operated only on the *surface* of reality, limited to what could be experienced by the five physical senses. Now, at the dawn of an Age of Light, we’ve evolved to the point where we can apprehend the more subtle realms or at least accept their existence and impact. The more enlightened among us have a facile understanding and the most enlightened consciously function there.

“When we delve deeper into how this all works,” I gestured with a sweeping motion of my hand, “we see the interconnectedness and how *it* works. We see the powerful waves of thought emanating from each individual and how they add to or cancel out other thoughts from everyone else.

“The energy pattern that results from the totality of these waves—all our individual thought patterns—is what constitutes mass consciousness. Only conditions that resonate with that pattern will prevail. This is the genesis of all conditions: how leaders, governments, weather, accidents, disease—all local and global conditions—are created. Aerial explains this in *Sacred Memories*.

“Our heads of government are a direct reflection of where we cast our minds and how we live our lives, far more powerfully—and accurately—than how we cast our votes. If you want wise, honest, forthright, highly principled, compassionate, selfless, courageous leaders, then sow wisdom, integrity, forthrightness, high principles, compassion, selflessness, and courage in yourself.

“Nothing happens on a national or global scale that’s out of synch with the dominant mass consciousness. Tragedies and triumphs are the direct result of what each of us contributes to the overall pool of thought.

“That’s how changing our thinking and making our lives better makes the world better. Now, about following your bliss and everything falling into place ...”

I looked at the reporter who asked the question.

“Your implication is that as soon as you choose and commit to your life’s purpose, you set some kind of domino effect in motion.”

He acknowledged smugly, “Yes, exactly.”

“Well, you know what? That’s not that far from the truth. Sometimes the dominoes are all in

place—because, consciously or inadvertently, we’ve already set them up—and they fall easily and in order when we push the first one with our commitment.

“Sometimes some or all of them are missing or out of place. Because we’re on a path that’s inherently inspiring—doing what we love—we have the motivation and determination to set up the ones we can. We don’t think about the effort it takes or concern ourselves about how many are missing; we just take action.

“*Always*, there’s a third element in operation. When you accept and commit to your life’s purpose, the Truth of your being, you align yourself with Universal Truth and powerful forces come into play. Magic happens as resources, events, and people are drawn to you and you to them.

“At least it *seems* like magic from the limited perspective of the third dimensional old paradigm. Actually, it’s simple cause and effect taking place across the interconnectedness of the subtle thought realm, following the laws of attraction.

“Missing dominoes and ones you never even considered show up; in the right place at the right time; sometimes just in the nick of time.

“W.H. Murray, a Scottish writer and mountaineer, described it this way,” I closed my eyes while reciting one of my favorite quotes, “... the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves, too. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.’

“*This*, my dear friends, is reality; every bit as much reality as the restrictive, disempowering thinking of the Old Way. You choose which one operates in your life by the way you choose to think. Choose wisely.”

I sensed a familiar loving presence and greeted her in thought as I brought my remarks to a close.

“Queen Veridia has some parting words she wants me to convey to you. I’ll open my receptivity to her the same way I described doing it with the Symbols and let her words flow through me.”

Eyes closed, feeling her Love and Wisdom brush my mind. I began, “When you pursue your Destiny, you are on the most direct path to realizing your true Self, your Soul. You attract and energize the Folk and attune yourself to our help.

“Our Golden Warrior Guardians stand, ready at your side, to protect you from the intrusions and attack of the Sesavah. When in need, call them to action.

“Our Gift Bearers will visit you repeatedly, delivering their liquid jewels of dew, our treasured gifts of Love. When your world is troubled, they will rouse and instruct you to seek a world that’s beautiful, to share a Love that’s bountiful, to work for dreams till they’re fulfilled.

“Still thy beating heart and bleating mind and sip the elixir of inspiration we deliver daily. Ideas and guidance are in constant flow to you. Pay heed to still, small whispers; feel our loving presence leading you on the path of your highest, best destiny.

“Know that difficulties are not obstacles, but steps along the way; not testing your mettle, but proving your commitment. Allow them to drive you not to fear, but closer to the Love ever within and all about you.

“Smile in the face of adversity; make it your friend. Return always to the Love within and you will struggle no more to find a level of happiness and success that has eluded you.

“Unlike the musk deer who perishes in the frantic, confused chase after the intoxicating fragrance of his own scent gland, *you* will discover that the nameless something you have always

sought, but could never quite grasp, is—and has always been—there, just waiting for your attention. Dive within and recognize your True Identity.

“Sparkle in your flight from night. Open your eyes and you will see; once you were lost and now you’re free; free in your mind, in your heart, and your Soul; free to succeed in whatever your goal; free to believe that all your dreams will soon come true.

“Love each other and thy blessed Mother Earth as she loves ye—ceaselessly and without conditions. She nurtures ye even when she is forsaken. Understand as she understands, trespasses come from ignorance, not malice. The worst of ye simply know not what ye do.

“Forgive. Love. Be happy. Lift the world as you lift yourself from ignorance and misery to wisdom and bliss.

“Rejoice, but in rejoicing, do not ignore pain. Many remain in ignorance and misery. You need not spill your joy over their suffering. That is the Old Way. Sweeten pain with compassion. Do what you can—and what they will accept—to relieve their pain. Help restore hope.

“Be ever willing to extend a hand of aid or friendship when a need you can serve comes your way. Your Earth Mother wants her children to get along and take care of each other. She intends her gifts to be shared, not hoarded. This is part of the balance.

“Learn more about each other. Find no contentment in judgment and self-righteousness. A sure sign ye tread the path of fear is thine intolerance or inability to see and respect the viewpoint of another, no matter how extreme. Ye surely need not agree or condone, but to listen is to build a bridge to understanding. With understanding, eventually, comes resolution, rendering conflict unnecessary.

“Learn more about your Mother Earth. Walk her woods and shores. Climb her mountains. Wade in her lakes and streams. Glory in her verdant abundance. Knowing her and the ways of her children—the rocks and the plants, the birds and animals, insects and fish, her waters and sky, thy brothers and sisters—thou wilt find it easier to live in balance, respect, and reverence for all.

“Live and rest in comfort, knowing that we, the Folk, are always with ye; ever guiding, ever protecting, ever loving ye. Many blessings.”

I paused and looked around the room at the crowd, then into the camera. I felt the promise of what was to come—what was already here—in bright, shining eyes and receptive minds before me.

I knew beyond any shadow of doubt that the world would change, that good would ultimately win over evil, that we would live up to our promise and fulfil our destinies. I knew that the Love that flowed through us would flourish and prevail against any odds and any beast. We would not be dismayed by obstacles or disappointments. We would not lose hope in the face of calamity or inhumanity.

We would always turn to Love, away from fear, because now we knew better; and in our knowing we were invincible.

## *Epilog*

This has been my story—told from my unique perspective—of one ray on the Great Plane of Knowledge. If what I've described of the last ten months differs from your experience, you are living a different ray.

You may not have encountered calamities of the nature, concentration, and severity as those I have chronicled. People, places, and events in the reality of your ray may not align with mine.

Curiously, even I may not exist in your reality. Perhaps now you have a wider grasp of the challenge it took to get this book to you. The amusing irony is that, from the strict and narrow perspective of your reality—your particular ray—this story may well be accurately categorized as fiction.

But don't conclude from this that the essence of our realities is different. Do not presume the CUE principle does not apply; that the Folk or the Sesavah do not exist. Do not surmise that the forces which nearly led to the annihilation of all but the simplest life forms on this planet are not in place all around you because their outward manifestations may look different or have not yet reached the same pernicious levels.

This has not been “a story told for story's sake.” *Sacred Memories*, the *Book of Symbols*, and my contributions, this book and the *Known and Knowable* writings, have been sent to you now as a call to action.

My challenge has been to get them to you. Yours is what you will do with them. My task has been to tell the story. Yours is to choose how it ends.