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This adventure is not for everyone. It does contain silliness, more than a normal obsession with the sound a duck makes, inside jokes and an occasional lack of cohesion. At no time were any septapi, platypus, or other semi aquatic poisonous egg laying mammals harmed in the writing of this story. Also, at no time while writing, editing (ha) or pondering what happens next was anyone involved wearing mukluks. So, if you are all good with that this is the story, read at your own risk, believe me it is only semi adjacent to perilous...

“This May very well be the biggest piece of nonsense written since Gertrude and I got our first blender.“ - Dr Matilda Bananapants

“We’ve got wicker, all kinds of wicker, what kind of wicker would you like?” - Wally from Wally’s World of Wicker

## **Not Sally - and the Agents of DUCK**

Chapter one - Awake?

Chapter two - Not Sally

Chapter three - Not Really a Road

Chapter four - Highway 1

Chapter five - The End

Chapter six - Utter Nonsense

Chapter seven - The Alameda Public Library

Chapter eight - It is too Early to Break into SNL, so we Waste Some Time

Chapter nine - SNL

Chapter ten - Enter the T-UBA

Chapter eleven - On Second Thought, Let's Take the Stairs

Chapter twelve - Aftershock

Chapter thirteen - Tranquility Base Here

Chapter fourteen - Hey, What Happened to the Nonsense?

Chapter fifteen - Really, you can do that at a Red Lobster

Chapter sixteen - A Lesson in Classic Literature

Chapter seventeen - Thank Goodness for Mass Transit

Chapter eighteen - The Bus

Chapter nineteen - Why Would we Think Twice About  
Climbings Down Into a Tunnel

Chapter twenty - Dinner

Chapter twenty-one - A Bedtime Story

Chapter twenty-two - How Good are You at Swimming?

Chapter twenty-three - Los Trampas Regional Wilderness

Chapter twenty-four - Really we are Just Borrowing

Chapter twenty-five - Class Project

Chapter twenty-six - Uhm, Could You Give Us a Ride?

Chapter twenty-seven - Hole the Nine

Chapter twenty-eight - The Envelope

Chapter twenty-nine - Mount Diablo State Park

Chapter thirty - Summit

Chapter thirty-one - The End, I Mean it This Time

Outro

## Chapter One - Awake

Light, except there is no light? Awake, am I awake? If this is a dream, I need better dreams. So let's take inventory of what I think I know:

I think of myself as I, so I must exist. I realize that is a great leap of faith in my existence, but I have to start somewhere or I will end up a jibbering mess and I still will not have inventoried what I know. And, there I go again thinking about I and at least lending evidence to the idea that I truly do exist and am not an unthinking lump of coal. I do apologize to any lumps of coal that may be listening in on my thoughts and take offense.

I am really not getting very far with this self reflection and inventory; so far I have established that I am not a lump of coal and probably do exist. I do not seem to remember having a name, but I believe strongly that all things must have a name or at least I think I do and let's not get into that again. Even a lump of coal has a name. I will call myself the Exalted Ismael Rasputin Maphuti Robinowitz the Third. On second thought, that would be extremely difficult to sign or even tell anyone at the grocery store, so I will call myself The Steve, no wait, let's just go with Steve.

I do not appear to be hurt. I say this because nothing hurts and seem to have all the requisite body parts, two arms, two legs, a torso and three heads. Just kidding, only one head, with the requisite number of eyes, ears, nose and mouth. I am not at all certain my eyes are working, maybe I am blind. Oh wait, I forgot to open my eyes. Blink, blink . . . blink. I can definitely blink and while it is not extraordinarily bright, it is taking some time for my eyes to adjust to the light.

Now that I have opened my eyes, this whole inventory thing should go much faster...

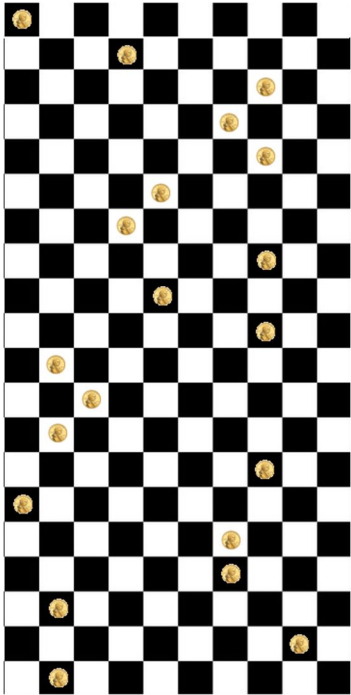
I do find it interesting that while I remember nothing specifically about myself, I still have the mental vocabulary to carry on a conversation with myself and remember the names of everything else. Or, I just think I do and if I climb down that rabbit hole again, I may never get past this and might as well be a lump of coal. Not that being a lump of coal is necessarily a poor existence, but I like to think I have more ambition than that. I just seem to have forgotten. Let's just say I have amnesia and not look too deeply into that.

I also apparently tend to ramble on a bit. Good thing the human mind moves extremely fast, so while it seems like I have spent the last ten minutes contemplating my existence and various states of being a lump of coal, it all happened in less time than it takes to snap my fingers, which for the record I have ten. Ten minutes, ten fingers, ten toes and if I go on for ten more minutes like this I will most likely begin to quack like a duck.

So, before I go on, let's summarize in case anyone is paying attention; I exist, am human, not a lump of coal or any other byproduct of millions of years of heat, pressure and the decay of prehistoric plants and dinosaurs, with appropriate appendages, have amnesia, but am fixated on calling myself Steve and it is not dark.

Continuing to survey my surroundings, I observe that I am laying on a tiled floor that makes a nice chessboard pattern. I should probably get up and look around. I am in a room with a skylight, which is why it is not completely dark. I surmise that it is night as I can see some stars through the skylight, so I also must not be in a big city or the stars would not be visible. The walls are a nondescript grey, or maybe it is the lighting or a sub standard interior decorator, but boring nonetheless. In addition to the skylight I can see a perfectly normal wooden door. I assume it is perfectly normal as there is a small

sign on it that reads “Perfectly Normal Door.” I think whoever put me here had a strange sense of humor. The room is about twenty feet by ten feet from counting the square tiles on the floor. There also are twenty Sacajawea dollars on the floor. I know there are twenty; I counted them each dead center in the middle of a tile. And strangely, they are glued to the floor. Apparently, in addition to all of my digits and appendages, I have a small notebook and mechanical pencil in my pocket and I drew this sketch in case the positions mean something later.



If I have pockets, that must mean I am wearing clothes. Apparently before I lost my memory I decided to dress for the 90s Seattle scene and am wearing jeans, a flannel shirt and some hiking books. In addition to the notebook and mechanical pencil, I also have a pack of gum and a generic Swiss army knife. I don't want to read too much into this, but apparently I am also cheap, hence the generic Swiss army knife. So, using my cheap or maybe frugal knife, I pried all the dollars off the floor. Twenty bucks and if I only had a small bag or sack, I would have a Sack of Jawa. Yes, I know bad pun, but I am pretty sure I make those all the time. Instead I put them in my pocket, hence a pocket of Jawa, thought it just does not have the same ring.

Well my self assessment and inventory of stuff took longer than it should have, but I think I am ready to see about getting out of this room.



## Chapter two - Escape

I really should get out of this room, it is rather boring in here and I have a nagging sense that there is a greater purpose for why I am here than just contemplating my existence and the retrieval of dollar coins meticulously glued to the floor. So, what are my options? That really is a silly question, I haven't even tried the door.

I walk over to the door, turn the knob and open the door. Well that was easy. Good thing I did not try to fashion a grappling hook out of my faux Swiss army knife and a rope woven of the fibers of my flannel shirt and escape out the skylight. That would have been a waste of time.

Looking out the door, I see that it is night outside and that I am not in the city. Not only is there no other building in sight, there are at least two dozen cows sleeping and dreaming of some tasty grass to munch. That is all except one cow who seems to be sleep mooing and I like to think having greater dreams of being the first cow superhero. Not that I have any idea what a cow superhero would do or that cows need superheroes, I just thought maybe one of them had greater aspirations than eating grass and making milk or becoming a hamburger. Cows are tasty after all.

Steve, Steve snap out of it, this is no time to contemplate cow dreams, aspirations and the evolutionary advantage of cows being that they are tasty. We really need to get out of here. Have I really started to refer to myself as we, on second thought, I take one step out the door and fall flat on my face. Apparently I forgot to look down and notice the unconscious person laying in front of the doorway on the ground. At least I hope she is unconscious and not dead.

I check her pulse and observe that she is still breathing. Maybe she just fell asleep in front of the door. Ok, I agree that does seem silly. I give a quick once over and it looks like she also has all of her proper digits and appendages. She does appear to have a bump on her head, hopefully that was not from me tripping over her when I stepped out of the room.

As I ponder how to revive her, I hear a girl's voice say, "Hey, did you just step on me?"

"Uh, what?" I respond hoping to not sound as guilty as I feel and add "Really, you had that bump on your head when I tripped over you."

"So, you did step on me." she said.

"Technically tripping over and stepping on are two completely different things, and can I ask your name so I can stop calling you she and her in my inner monologue or I will have to give you a name like Sally. Do you feel like a Sally?"

"How did you guess my name was Sally, I don't think I look like a Sally, I always thought of myself as more of an Emily. Just kidding, my name is not Sally or Emily."

"So then should I just call you: *Not Sally*?"

"Well, since you are a stranger and I am not supposed to tell strangers my name, you can call me Not Sally until I get to know you."

"Ok, but that will definitely get confusing. By the way, I am Steve or at least that is what I am calling myself since I do not remember my name or anything about myself. Don't tell anyone, but I have amnesia that only applies to who I am and what I am doing here. I have decided to not think too much about it and so far it is working for me."

“Uhm, ok Steve, I’m good. So what am I doing here and if you didn’t give me the bump on my head, who did and why am I in front of this what I can only describe as a shed talking to a guy who calls himself Steve and me Not Sally?”

“Not Sally or NS for short, can I call you NS?”

“Sure.”

“NS, not only do I not remember my name, I don’t know why I am here or even where here is.”

“So, let me get this straight, we are stuck here in the middle of nowhere,” pointing around her, “and, neither of us know where here is or why we are here.”

“Right, though I prefer to think of it being merely adjacent to nowhere as opposed to the middle, though I would concede slightly off center of nowhere.”

“Awesome, so let’s take stock of the situation and figure out what to do next.”

“No, I’m not going down that rabbit hole again. We exist, I am Steve, you are not Sally, I have amnesia and we are lost. I think that sums everything up perfectly; so no reason to bring lumps of coal into it.”

“Steve, I never mentioned lumps of coal, so I am not sure why your bring it up, but now that you do mention it I do have keys to an SUV, which runs on gasoline, which is also a by product of millions of years of heat, pressure and the decay of prehistoric plants and dinosaurs.”

“Exactly, wait, what? You have a SUV?”

“Not mine per se. But yes with a GPS and slushy machine.”

“A slushy machine?”

“Ok you got me just GPS, but a slushy machine would be nice don’t you think?”

“NS, you are right, I could go for a nice blue raspberry slushy right about now. Mmmmm, blue raspberry. Wait, what, so we have an SUV?”

“Yes, I think we covered that, with a GPS.”

“Oh good, let’s take a look around the shed here and see what else we can find out before we head out. Are you sure it is a shed, there is a real nice tile floor inside.”

“Steve, I have not been inside yet and have not seen what may or may not be a nice tile floor. So let’s split up; you look around outside and I will take a look at this tile floor you seem to be so enamored with.”

“Deal.”

NS headed for the tile floor and I start walking around the structure. Looking up in the Sky I can see the North Star which puts the doorway on the North wall. Even being out in the country without lights, it is pretty bright as it looks like a full or nearly full moon tonight. I hope there are no werewolves out tonight. Anyway, the North wall is about ten feet wide with the door in the middle of it and not much else. Moving clockwise around the structure, the East and South sides have nothing of interest, but I do see the SUV NS spoke of on the West side. Looks to be a late model SUV with tires and suspension that could do some offroading. Speaking of roads, I did not really see one, just some ruts with grass growing between them leading

up to the SUV. I will have to ask NS how she got here. I go back to the doorway just as NS was heading back out.

“Steve, looks like you were right. That tile chessboard floor is really nice, but it looks like someone left some nasty glue spots on a bunch of the tiles.”

“Right, the glue. There were a bunch of dollar coins stuck to the floor,. I pried them up, so in addition to the SUV, we have twenty dollars in Sacajawea coins.”

“Did you put them in a bucket? Then you would have a bucket of Jawaea.”

## Chapter three - Not Really a Road

So after NS and I finished debating the merits of keeping your Jawa in a sack versus a bucket, we headed for the SUV. Being that I did not know who I was beyond my hastily constructed Steve persona, where I was or what I was doing, I thought it prudent to let NS drive. After all, she did have the keys.

As we walked to the SUV, NS said, “Steve, you drive, I don’t even have my learner's permit yet.”

“Well, I guess that settles that, where are we going NS?”

“Being that neither of us know how we got here or where here is, I am thinking we punch in the coordinates for the nearest police station.”

“That sounds good to me.”

Before we get on our way, we looked in the back and found a couple of flats of water and what looked like military surplus peanut butter.

Thinking out loud, “At least we won’t dehydrate or starve, you don’t have a peanut butter allergy do you?”

“Nope, peanut butter is one of my favorite food groups.”

NS hits, well I guess taps the Points of Interest tile on the GPS screen and selects Emergency Services. The Mill Valley Police Department pops up showing coordinates Latitude 037.9051820 and Longitude -122.5440060, but it seems to be confused on the best route to get there. I am thinking this is due to us being on a rutted track in the middle of a field with a bunch of cows.

“NS, I think the GPS does not know the directions to the Police Station because we are on a rutted track in the middle of a field with a bunch of cows. Not that the cows are at fault or anything.”

“I agree, even though cows evolutionary trait that has allowed them to survive is that they are tasty, they really have no bearing on the GPS providing directions to the nearest Police Station. So, how about we head West as that is the way the ruts take us and see if once we hit a real road the GPS gives us directions.”

“My thoughts exactly.”

Bump, bump, bumpity, bump ... bump. “My this is not really a road, but we seem to be bumping along quite well. Good thing this SUV has a off road tires and suspension.”

“Steve, exactly, while we bump along can I take a look at your notebook and the picture your drew of the coins on the tiles?”

“Sure, it is sitting on the console.”

NS flips through my notebook and looks at the page with the coins drawn on it and writes numbers across the top:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

She then Writes the number corresponding to the tile from top to bottom:

03767437471217066181

Below that she writes the GPS coordinates of the Mill Valley Police Department removing the decimal points and the minus sign:

03767437471217066181

03790518201225440060

“Steve, stop a second and take a look at this.”

I stop the SUV and take a look, “I agree that they look very similar, Let’s put the decimals back in both and add in the minus sign for Longitude.”

Latitude 037.6743747 Longitude -121.7066181 ?

Latitude 037.9051820 Longitude -122.5440060 Mill Valley PD

“NS, we should be able to put in these Latitude and Longitude and come up with a place.”

NS puts in the coordinates, touches the search icon and sure enough those are the exact coordinates of the “Sandia National Laboratories.”

“Steve, are you thinking what I am thinking?”

“Maybe, I know you said you were not allergic to peanuts, but since I have amnesia, I don’t remember if I am?”

“Steve, no that is not what I am thinking, I am thinking we should skip the Mill Valley PD and head to the Sandia National Laboratories instead. It looks like it is only about 90 minutes further than Mill Valley.”

“Yeah, I was just kidding about the Peanut stuff, I definitely was thinking we should head to the Sandia National Laboratories, though can we call it SNL? I am wasting brain space thinking the whole name every time and think of the seconds wasted every time we say it.”

“Uhm Steve, sometimes you over think things.”



“Well if I did not have amnesia, I might remember that.”

So after we contemplate the depth of my overthinking, we decide to skip Mill Valley and head straight for SNL. We bump along for another twenty minutes before we run into California Highway 1 and head South. NS only had to yell “Watch out for the cow!” twice before we got to the highway. I only bumped one and it really was more of a tap since the cow didn’t even fall over and only moo’d once before mooving out of our way. I know, another bad pun.

## Chapter four - Highway 1

Not quite as historic as Route 66, California Highway 1 is one of the many highways that run through California. After 15 more minutes of offroading, NS and I were finally on regular paved roads heading South toward SNL. We are hoping to find out why I have amnesia, and how NS ended up unconscious outside the nicely tiled structure in the wilderness outside Mill Valley in Northern California. Luckily, I had my seatbelt fastened and made sure NS did likewise.

NS dozed off and we were doing about 60 when a black bear and its' two cubs lumbered out into the highway. I slammed on the brakes, sending bottled water, military issue peanut butter and my notebook flying through out the SUV. NS woke up and asked why I stopped. I pointed at the bears as they finished their leisurely stroll across the highway. Luckily neither of us was hurt, but I am definitely not allergic to peanuts as one of the containers opened dousing me generously with the gooey stuff. Yum!

“NS, I am pretty covered with peanut butter and it looks like we are running low on gas, better hit the next gas station.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

We made out pit stop at the gas station using the Gas Station credit card we found in the glove box to fill up the tank and added some donuts and coffee to our stores of goods. If anyone is wondering, the name on the gas card was “Robert Johnson” and “Sandia National Laboratories,” so I am pretty sure we are going the right way, but I am really wondering who this Bob Johnson is. Could it be me?

NS, almost reading my mind asked, “So Steve, do you think you might be Bob Johnson?”

“I’m not sure, it is a possibility, but I really don’t feel like a Bob.”

Sugar and caffeine fixes sated, I notice the sun rising. “NS, it looks like it is getting light, any idea what day it is?”

“Sure, I don’t have amnesia. It is Sunday July 3rd.”

“Thanks, I almost forgot I had amnesia until you brought it up again.”

“Uh, sorry Steve.”

We hit the road continuing on Highway 1 until we get to the Golden Gate bridge.

“Hey NS, do you ever wonder why it is called the Golden Gate bridge when it is really more of an red-orange?”

“Steve, everybody knows that the Bridge is actually named for the Golden Gate Strait, the narrow entrance between the Pacific Ocean and the San Francisco Bay. The strait was named by explorer and U.S. Army officer John C. Frémont, who marveled at its beauty in 1846—two years before the discovery of gold in California.”

“I knew that, I was just seeing if you knew that.”

“Hey genius, pay the toll, we can’t cross the bridge unless we pay.”

I hand over three of our precious dollar coins to the toll taker and continue on where Highway 1 turns into US 101.

## Chapter five - The End

Apparently the designers of the Golden Gate Bridge and the city planners of San Francisco did not have the slightly amnesiac driver in mind when laying out the roads from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Bay Bridge so one can get from point A to point B without having to get distracted by point C. We ended up at point C. No one wants to end up at point C.

“NS, I think we may have taken a wrong turn back there.”

“Why do you think that?”

As I point to a dead end sign on the right, “Well, I see a dead end sign right there.”

“Steve, that doesn’t look like a regular dead end sign.”

“What do you mean, it very clearly says dead end.”

“Uh, yes, you do have a point it does say dead end, but it is written in Crayon.”

“And, your point is?”

“It is written in crayon on what looks to be a flattened out Twinkie box taped to an old ski pole stuck in the ground.”

“Good point.”

“Hey, let’s ask the old guy what the deal is, he looks friendly enough.”

“Oh sure, I’m a stranger and still stuck calling you Not Sally, but this friendly looking old guy sitting in his lawn chair on what I can best describe some sort of false representation of a dead end is ok to talk to?”

“Well, I’m not going to talk to him, you are.”

“Oh, well I hope he doesn’t hit me over the head with that hammer sitting next to his chair, because you know to a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.”

“Steve, stop stalling and go ask him what’s with the dead end sign.”

“Fine.”

I get out of the SUV and NS promptly locks the doors, nice.

“Hi, I’m pretty sure I’m Steve, what’s up with the sign?”

“Hi pretty sure I’m Steve, can I call you PSIS for short, Steve is a really hard name to remember.”

“Uh, sure, what’s with the sign?”

“Too much traffic.”

“What do you mean too much traffic?”

“Too many people driving crazy down my road, so I put up a dead end sign and now no one comes down here except to ask me about the sign.”

“Your road?”

“Yes, I’m Ffred and this is Ffred Road, you know point C when traveling from point A to point B.”

“So you are saying, you are Ffred and this is a Ffred end?”

“PSIS, I never thought of it that way, but I do think I’ll just call you Steve, PSIS sounds too much like a slow leak in a bicycle tire.”

“Ffred, if I promise not to drive crazy, can I use your road to get to the Bay Bridge and head toward Livermore?”

“Yes, would you like me to tell you how?”

“That would be awesome.”

“Well, first you have to ignore the dead end and make sure you don’t stop to talk to Ffred, he is a little off his rocker if you know what I mean. Who goes around setting up fake dead end signs to stop people from driving down his street. And, don’t get him talking, especially asking for directions, because he will start telling you about how he survived the big one of 1989 by hiding in his neighbor’s bathtub with an old bucket on his head yelling ‘the end is near, the end is near.’”

Hoping Ffred will not notice, I slip away back to the SUV and knock on the window, because NS still has the doors locked and wait for NS to unlock the doors.”

Ffred still going on “and, you know a moose got in my kitchen once. Out at Yosemite, we were skipping through the woods, when a moose jumped out from behind a tree and followed me home. It got in my kitchen and was eating all my brussel sprouts. Mind you, the only way to get a moose out of your kitchen is to lure it with a bit of moose nip.”

NS unlocks the doors and I climb in.

“Quick, NS, let’s get out of here, that was a close one, we almost got stuck at a Ffred end, besides, if we take a left there I think I see the on ramp for the Bay Bridge. And, I am pretty sure Ffred is more obsessed with mooses than the guys from Monty Python.”

## Chapter six - Utter Nonsense

“NS, turn on the Radio, maybe we can catch the weather?”

Instead we get *Primus*, “Mr. Knowitall.”

Luckily, what I thought was the on ramp for the Bay Bridge was in fact an on ramp to the Bay Bridge.

“NS, even though I can’t remember my name I am pretty sure that song was about me, mostly because I can rhyme elephant with eloquent, so from now on you should call me Mr Knowitall.”

“Steve, I don’t think we are going to hear a weather report on this station and Elephant is a poor rhyme for eloquent, I think I will just call you Steve.” NS turns off the Radio and a small panel on the dash opens up.

“Fine, I was enjoying the music, but anyways, what’s in the dare I say secret compartment in the dash of the SUV?”

“It looks like a Flash drive and an electronic key card; both with the SNL logo and a punch card for Rasputin’s Visionary Coffee and Tuba shop, apparently if we get one more Grande Super Latte with sprinkles, we get a free tuba lesson.”

“Wow, a free Tuba lesson, I wonder if I play the Tuba, maybe I am a big Polka star lost from my Polka Tuba tour of the United States, Stan, Stan the Tuba Man.”

“Steve, snap out of it, I think it is more likely that you are a protoplasm named Chucky that ate Tokyo than a Tuba player named Stan and if I never have to hear about Stan, Stan the Tuba Man it will be too soon.”

“Point taken.”

“ I wonder what’s on the flash drive and what door the key card opens?”

“I wish we had a computer.”

“I wish I had million dollars and my own private condo on the Moon, where I could keep my moon cows and not have to listen to you ramble on about Tubas. And I guess a computer would be nice, you know so we could see what was on the flash drive.”

“NS, do you think the Alameda Public Library would be open on a Sunday Morning in July?”

“Why do you ask?”

“We, I am pretty sure they would have a computer and I see the exit coming up on the right for Alameda and I think I know how to find the Library.”

“Really, are you remembering stuff?”

“Uhm, no, we have GPS, we can just put in Alameda Public Library and it will take us there. See, I am Mr Knowitall.”

“Steve, you are an idiot, but I like the idea about the library, let’s take this exit.”

We take the exit, well not actually take as the whole exit would not fit in the SUV, but we do drive on it and head for Alameda.

Meanwhile, NS types in Alameda Public Library into the GPS. The

GPS says to make a left on Webster street in a quarter mile and the Library should be on our right.



We take the left and do see the Library on our right. I drive into the parking lot, grab my notebook and mechanical pencil. NS takes the Flash Drive and the key card and we head for the door. Lucky for us it looks like the Library is still open as there a bunch of cars in the parking lot. And, you thought I was going to mention cows.

## Chapter seven - The Alameda Public Library

The Alameda Public Library looks to be a fine example of your typical California Public Library, built of bricks and full of books. As we walk in, I notice a poster for a traveling exhibit coming next week for the Lebanon Mucka Mucka Man of greater Wisconsin.

“Similar to Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster and the Hodag of Rhineland, WI, the Lebanon Mucka Mucka Man is an urban legend. Descriptions from people who report seeing the Lebanon Mucka Mucka Man describe a strange man like creature with a ragged beard covered in muck, sticks and bits of shrubbery. Little is know about this creature other than his reputation for a grumpy demeanor and not liking to be disturbed. Over the years multiple people in Wisconsin have reported seeing the Lebanon Mucka Mucka Man.” - Urban Dictionary

“NS, I wish we were here next week so we could see that, I hear that in recent years the LMMM has taken over Sasquatch as the second most cited biped humanoid in Adams County, Wisconsin.”

“Hmm, I have not heard that, I but I have heard that if a dragonfly lands on your lips it will sew them together.”

“Well, I never.”

“NS, look computers, let’s worry about dragonflies and the LMMM later and find out what is on that flash drive.”

“Good point.”

We head over to the computers which have some form of electronic card catalog on them, I wonder if we will be able to access

the flash drive without having to hack the system. NS plugs in the flash drive and I hear the sound of a duck quack.

“Quack, goes the duck and moo goes the cow.” reads the librarian reading to a small group of children nearby.

“NS, it looks like nothing is happening with the flash drive, any ideas on how to read it?”

“Maybe if we put the on/off switch to off position and then back to on, it will boot up to the flash drive instead of the computer.”

“Great idea, let’s try it.”

NS power cycles the computer and I hear the sound of a duck quack. No, this time it did come from the computer and not the librarian. It looks like we need to type in a password.



“Steve, from the number of blanks, looks like we need 8 letters, any ideas?”

“How about Livermore? That is where SNL is located.”

“That has 9 letters. How about National, it has only 8.”

“NS, good thing you can count.”

I type in Livermore and we hear the duck quack again and at the bottom of the screen it indicates two more tries before the drive is wiped.

“How about Lawrence, SNL use to be called Lawrence Livermore Labs before it became Sandia National Laboratories?”

I type in Lawrence and we hear the duck quack again and at the bottom of the screen it indicates one more try before the drive is wiped.

“Let’s think about this a bit Steve, maybe something else we have found will give us a clue?”

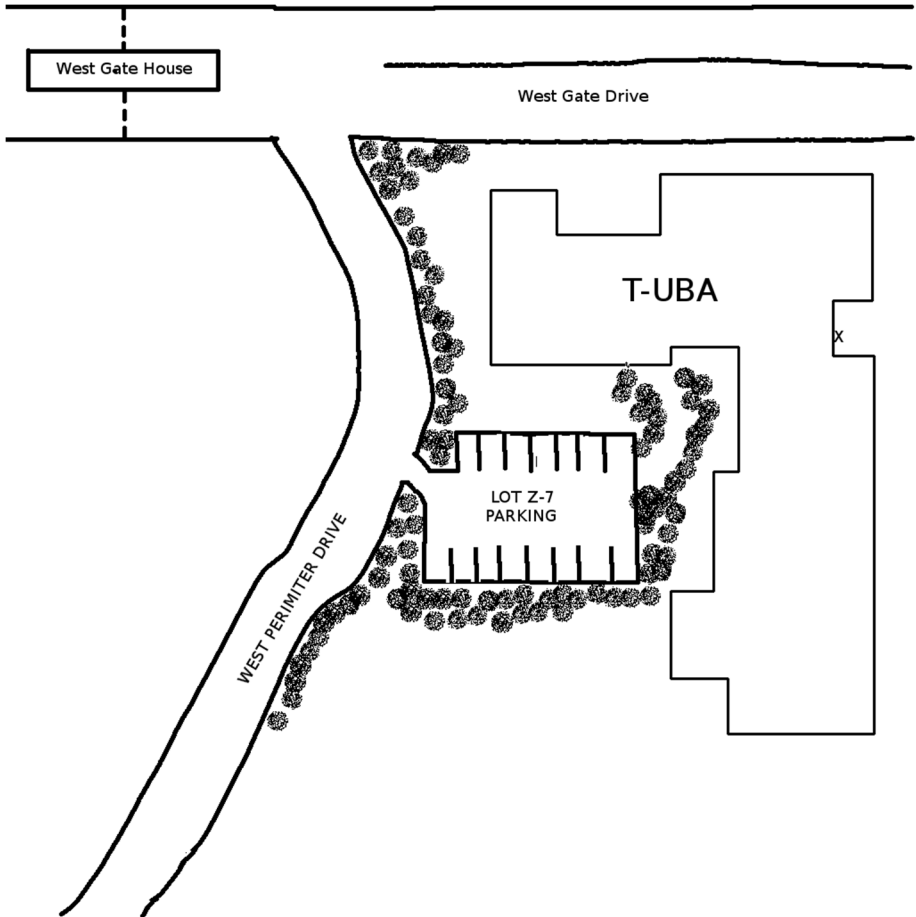
“That’s a great idea, we found that Coffee punch card with it. I really do think there is something important about the free tuba lesson.”

“Steve, I am not going to try TubaStan as the password.”

“No, not TubaStan, but what about TubaTuba?”

“I guess that is as good anything else, unless the password is Rasputin, as in Rasputin’s Visionary Coffee.”

We try Rasputin and do not hear a duck quack. I am guessing that is a good thing. On the screen we see what looks like a map:



“NS, I told you there was something to do with a Tuba, see right there in the middle of the map.”

“Also see there is an X near the Tuba building. I wonder if there is a door there that we can use the key card on.”

“I agree, but we need to get onto the SNL grounds first, I am guessing we can get in through the West gate.”

NS brings up an Internet browser and does a quick Google search for Sandia National Laboratories and sure enough, the public can visit the SNL grounds from noon until 5 PM on Saturdays and Sundays via the West gate.

“Steve, we can get in during visiting hours and then see if we can get to the back of the Tuba building.”

“Great idea.”

We print out a hard copy of the map and the visitor information, retrieve the flash drive, restart the computer so it is back to the card catalog and head for the door. As we exit, an elderly librarian quietly yells, “Make sure you come back next week for the Lebanon Mucka Mucka Man exhibit. The LMMM has taken over the second most cited biped seen in Adams County, Wisconsin.”

I quietly yell back, “We’re planning on it.”

## **Chapter eight - It is too early to break into SNL, so we waste some time**

We exit the Library and get back into the SUV. From the directions on the GPS, even with our detour to the Library we are still 45 minutes to an hour from SNL. It is still only 9 AM so we will need to waste some time before we head to the West Gate and can get in when visiting hours start.

“NS, check the GPS to see if there is anything like a park nearby where we can eat our nutritious lunch of military surplus peanut butter, stale donuts, left over lukewarm coffee and bottled water.”

“Steve, while that sounds wonderful, how about we just find a McDonald’s or some other fast food.”

“Yeah that does sound better. What is near SNL?”

“Looks like there is a McDonald's just off the interstate on the same exit we take for SNL.”

“Let’s lock it in and head for the Golden Arches.”

“Way ahead of you Steve, already done.”

“Let’s check the radio, maybe we can find the weather this time.”

Instead we find some sort of informational programming about what you should not put into the blender. We join two old English ladies, renowned blenderologist Dr Matilda Bannapants and famed contrarian Ernestine Krautcabin, with the show already in progress.

The old english ladies sound somewhat like Dan Akroyd doing

Julia Child on Saturday Night Live; coincidentally also referred to by the initials SNL. I am sure that won't make things confusing at all.

“Ernestine now, you can never put my keys in the blender, but if you want to put your keys in the blender, then I don't care. You'll ruin your blender and your keys will be all messed up and you won't be able to drive anywhere”

“But suppose, I lost my keys and then wanted to put them in the blender?”

“Well, that would be ok too, except you would have to find your keys before you could un lose them in the blender.”

“But suppose, I found my keys and then dipped them in chocolate first?”

“You know why you lost your keys, because I hid them in the blender.”

“But suppose, I had your keys?”

“You can't have my keys, I don't have a car or a house or anything that has keys.”

“But suppose, I took your piano keys.”

“Did you just say something about my nose? I'm pretty sure you are talking about my nose. I think I have a very nice nose.”

“But suppose I took your piano keys and I dipped it in cheese and then put it in the blender.”

“I don't even know what a key is.”

“But suppose, I bought you a piano.”



“You bought me a piano?”

“And I dipped the piano in cheese and then I put the whole piano in the blender.”

“You know what you can do with a piano, you can not put it in a blender.”

“Well, I never.”

The announcer goes on with, “For more revolutionary ideas for what not to put in a blender, find Matilda and Ernestine on you tube, search for Ffredend.”

Turning off the radio once again, “Steve, that is five more minutes you owe me. I will never get those back. What exactly is a blenderologist and why would you dip your keys in chocolate before putting them in the blender?”

“Well, I never.”

“Steve, there is our exit, I guess the one good thing about the radio is it seems to have made time travel possible since we seem to have traveled 45 minutes down the highway in five minutes of that nonsense.”

“NS, I try not to ask too many questions when these sort of things happen.”

“Look McDonalds, do you want to go inside or go through the drive through?”

“Let’s go inside, I want to see what the toy in the Happy Meal is; I hope it is something good, like spy glasses or a secret decoder ring.”

“Steve, what are you 7?”

“I have amnesia and don’t remember how old I am, thank you for bringing that up again, I was just starting to forget that I forgot everything.”

“Sorry, I’ll buy lunch and get you whatever Happy Meal you want.”

“Thank you, but how are you going to pay for lunch?”

“I have a credit card my parents gave me for emergencies and this looks like a hunger emergency to me.”

“Does it have your real name on it?”

“Of course it does, so tell me what you want so I can order the food without you trying to get a peek at the my name on the card.”

We get out of the SUV and head inside. Looking at the Happy Meal display I see that they do have spy gear for the toys and sure enough a secret decoder ring is one of the options.

“Sally, please get me the 6 McNugget Happy Meal with the secret decoder ring and a large Coke.”

“Seriously, ok.”

Sally orders the Happy Meal and a Big Mac value meal and we find a place to sit while we wait for our order to come up.

A few minutes later we hear “Nancy, order up Happy Meal and Big Mac Value meal.”

“Nancy, is that your real name?”

“Yes, fine, my real name is Nancy, let’s go pick up our food, I’m starving.

We get our food and I did get the secret decoder ring, though it is pretty basic, it just does a simple transposition cypher, A-1, B-2, C-3 etc.

“So, Nancy, is that a family name?”

“Yes, it came from my great grandmother Nancy Nickerson, but I am pretty sure her maiden name started with a D or something. Let’s finish eating, it is almost noon and SNL will be opening soon.”

We finish up the last of our food, bus our trash into the receptacle and head back to the SUV. Sally puts the SNL coordinates back in and we are on our way.

## Chapter nine - SNL, no not Saturday Night Live

Amazingly no mishaps or bizarre radio programming comes up, so we make it to SNL in record time without using the speed force or bending light or anything. We follow the GPS to the West gate and pull up to the gate guard.

The gate guard says, "Bob, what are you doing here on Sunday, I don't think I have ever seen you here outside of normal working hours and what is Nancy doing with you? Is it bring your daughter to work day?"

In my head, I begin to cluck like a chicken, apparently I know the gate guard and by his name tag, his name is actually Steve. My name is also Bob and Not Sally, I mean Nancy has some real explaining to do. Are you kidding me, what kind of teenage nonsense is Nancy trying to pull. Amazingly I recover quickly from the shock.

"Hi Steve, just bringing Nancy to see the public exhibits, she has a paper due in Chemistry on Radioactive Isotopes and I thought the information here really brings it to light."

"Bob, that's great, my teenage daughter barely speaks to me let alone letting me take her to work on a Sunday in the summer."

Good thing I remembered we have year round school in California and it was not weird that Nancy would have a paper due in the middle of summer. Apparently, I am quite good at making stuff up as I go along. Enough with mentally patting myself on the back, we need to get past the gate and onto the Tuba building.

"Good seeing you Steve, see you at the company picnic next week."

“You too Bob, always fun to catch up with the family.”

Steve raises the gate and I inch what I assume is actually my SUV forward until we see the turn off for parking lot Z-7 and the Tuba building. A sign out front says “SNL: Cryptozoology Field Study Building.”

I make the right turn and a quick left pulling into the Z-7 parking lot. Nancy apparently thinks this is funny as she is almost unable to control herself and is just about laughing hysterically.

“Nancy, what, cluck, cluck, cluck.” Apparently I am no longer just clucking in my inner monologue it has spilled over into my speech.

“Dad, I can explain. This weekend was our Girl Scout Daughter Dad camp out, but when we stopped for gas in Oakland, someone must have snuck up on us and knocked me on the head and drugged you so that you can’t remember anything. I was just playing along since you did not remember anything and I had always heard you did not want to shock someone out of amnesia or there is no telling what they might do.”

“Nancy, nice story, so what really is going on?”

“Dad, really no kidding it all happened like I said. I’m not sure where all our camping stuff went to, but I have no idea what we were doing in that building with the really nice chessboard tiled floor.”

Either I am gullible or I instinctually knew Nancy was telling the truth. “Nancy, I believe you, let’s see what the map and key are all about. “

“Yes, and let’s not forget about Stan Stan the Tuba Man, I mean the notation T-UBA on the map.”

“Good idea, I will figure out what to do about you not telling me who you were until now when we get home. We do have a home don’t we?”

“Yes dad.”

With the car parked, we sneak around to the back of the building avoiding surveillance video cameras along the way and arrive at what looks to be the correct door. Unfortunately it looks like the door is an exit only as there is no door knob on the outside, just a card swipe. Conveniently we do have a key card.

“Nancy, let’s try the key card on the card swipe and see what happens.”

Nancy swipes the card across the card swipe and we hear a reassuring duck quack and no there are no actual ducks around, so I am pretty sure it is directly correlated to the swiping of the card. In addition to the duck sound, the door has opened about an inch and I can just get enough of my fingers on it to tease open the door.

## Chapter ten - Enter the T-UBA

I open the door and slip in quickly with Nancy following right behind. There is a dull glow in the room from what looks to be fish tank after fish tank of photoluminescent fish. For those of you not aware, photoluminescent means the fish glow in the dark. Pretty cool if you ask me, though you probably did not as this is just some weird monologue going on in my head. Maybe this amnesia thing did more than erase my memory. Well, let's not think about that too much.

“So NS, I mean Nancy, any clue why the T-UBA door would lead us to a room full of glow in the dark fish?”

“Dad, you should say photoluminescent, it is the correct term, glow in the dark is so imprecise.”

Teenagers can be so snarky, I wonder how I dealt with that before the amnesia.

“Yes, I know, the point is, do you know why they are here?”

“Uh, no, though they are really cool. Do you think when this is all over you could get me a purple and yellow one, they are my school colors?”

“We'll see, you know you will have to feed them, I don't want to find them in an expired state like the turtle we got you last year ”

“Dad, dad!”

“What?”

“You just remembered that I had a turtle that did not make it past the expiration date. And besides I'm pretty sure the turtle was

dead when you brought it home from the Parrot Shop. Really, who buys a dead or living turtle for that matter from a parrot shop.”

“You’re right I did remember something, but nothing useful like why I did buy an ex-turtle from a parrot shop. It is also too bad I can’t remember anything important like in this building the floors are designated by letters instead of numbers followed by a dash and then the room number.”

“Are you sure you didn’t just remember that?”

“Nearly positive, oh wait, I did, I did, maybe the T in T-UBA is for floor T, not the T sound in tuba.”

“Right, where did you put that secret decoder ring you got in your Happy Meal?”

“It’s right here, let see U - 21, B-2 , A-1... that would be room 2121.”

“I wonder why they just didn’t put T-BABA instead on Rasputin’s loyalty card.”

“Dad, no one is going to buy 8 Grande Super Lattes with Sprinkles to get a free Tbaba lesson, that is just crazy.”

“You may have a point about the crazy.”

“Since we do not have a flashlight, grab a couple of those fish and put them in one of those bags over there and we will have our own Photoluminescent Fish Lantern, PFL for short.”

“Great idea, do you know that you are really obsessed with acronyms?”

“Was I this way before the amnesia?”



“Yes, yes you were.”

Nancy, gathers the fish to make our PFL and I examine the room for anything else of interest. All I find is a bunch of fish food and Mistaphel’s guide to Cheering up your Depressed Elevator. Who knew elevators could get depressed? I definitely did not, I like most people treated elevators as mechanical slaves thinking they had no greater desires than to see me safely up or down, never considering that maybe once, just once an elevator would like to go side to side or maybe even in a conical spiral dictated only by prime numbers and an overall whimsy to not go up and down when called to. I’m glad I didn’t read the whole book or I would mostly like would stop this Tuba nonsense and head out on a quest to free the enslaved elevator from its monotonous grind of up and down and up and down. Now, about my T-UBA, I mean floor T room 2121.

“Nancy, I think my mind has wasted enough time on elevators and don’t get me started on escalators, do you have the PFL all set?”

“Yes dad, I was just enjoying you beginning to cluck like a chicken while you were looking at that crazy elevator book.

“Good, let’s get out of here, it is starting to smell like fish.”

## Chapter eleven - On Second Thought let's take the Stairs

We listen closely at the door and hear nothing that makes us concerned that there is a Lebanon Mucka Mucka Man hiding behind it and open the door. I take one step forward and realize it is a mop closet, I normally would call it a broom closet, but since it contains mops and I seem to have stuck my foot into a bucket of old mop water, I am going with mop closet. I exit the mop closet and head to the other door marked EXIT.

Nancy opens the door and we step into the hallway only to realize the lights are on and we probably do not need the PFL after all, but out of sheer obstinance I say, "Nancy, do not set down that PFL, you never know when we might need the light later."

Nancy does not argue with me. Besides, I think she wants to keep the fish when we are done as she seems to have picked out only purple and yellow ones. Looking back on the door, I am pretty sure we are right about the room number as there is a placard above this door with A-2115 on it.

We follow the signage indicating that the elevator is to our left. I see the Elevator and it has a somewhat strange sign stuck to the front of it.

# ELEVATOR out of Order

## Please Knock

### OZ

**Please be patient with our  
Elevator, it is currently  
going through therapy to  
work on it fear of heights**

Good thing I had read the cover of Mistaphel's guide to Cheering up your Depressed Elevator or I might have been really confused. Not even thinking about who OZ might be and why we would Knock on an elevator, Nancy and I turn around and head for the stairs.

“Dad, I think someone in this building has a sense of humor. That sign is just like the one at the gates of the Emerald City in the Wizard of OZ: ‘Bell out of order Please Knock’ even though the bell worked. I bet the Elevator works just fine.”

“Nancy, you are absolutely right, on third thought let's take the elevator.”

We turn back once again and head for the elevator. Nancy presses the up button and sure enough the doors open. We hear a deep

voice coming from inside the elevator that says “My name is Bob, Bob Vator, Ella is working on her fear of heights and our son Darth is off doing some experimentation with a tuba respirator. What floor would you like me to take you too and if I am feeling up to it, I will take you there without delay, unless you would rather hear me sing ‘America’ from West Side Story. Ella says I am quite good. I have chairs so you could sit while I sing and then I could do a number from Spamalot, but that might be entirely too silly.”

“Nancy, on second thought let’s take the stairs.”

“Fine, if you don't like my singing, you can all just get out of me anyways, do you think I like taking people up and down and up and down, when all I really want to do is sing.”

Nancy and I exit the elevator quickly and head back to the stairs. “Dad, that was a close one, we could have been stuck their for hours listening to the Bobavater singing songs from musicals.”

“Right and no one likes that.”

We open the door to the stair well and luckily no weird voice offers to read poetry at us while we climb up to the T floor. Let me see T is 20 on my secret decoder ring, so T must be the 20th floor. Or, could it be the 19th floor, some buildings skip the 13th floor thinking no one would want to have an office on that floor as it might be bad luck. I guess we will just start climbing and look for the one labeled T.

We climb the stairs for what seems forever and do see a floor labeled M and per the decoder ring, M equals 13. You would think that a building for Cryptozoology would be more superstitious. Anyways, we are more than halfway to floor T.

Just as we continue on our journey upwards, the building shakes for about 30 seconds and the lights go out. Good thing we kept the PFL as the gentle purple and yellow glow illuminates the stairwell.

“Nancy, what do you think 5.1 or 5.2?”

“No more than a 5.1, but it was a pretty good one. Good thing we are in the stairwell as it is one of the safest places in a building during an earthquake. We just had an earthquake drill at school last week.”

“I wonder, is it safe to keep going up to T or should we stay here or go back to the ground floor?”

“Dad, I think we are ok to keep going up, the shaking has stopped, but it doesn’t look like the walls are cracked or anything.”

We venture on in the near dark and make it without further event to floor T.

## Chapter twelve - Aftershock

Strange, all the other doors in the stairwell had a regular door knob, but the door to floor T has a card reader and a door knob.

“Nancy, do you still have the keycard? Oh wait, I found it, I must have put it in my pocket.”

I swipe the card past the card reader and I hear the reassuring sound of a duck quacking once again. What is it with the sound of a duck quacking and why is it reassuring. It is almost as if the designer of these security features had some sort of unhealthy obsession with ducks. Enough about ducks, I turn the doorknob and slowly open the door.

Nancy whispers “Dad, what’s in there, I can’t see a thing?”

I really can’t see much since the lights are still out and all the light I have is the glow from a bag of photoluminescent fish. I do see that it looks to be some sort of a laboratory.

“Nancy, it looks like a lab. I wonder what it is for.”

“Let’s go in and find out.”

It looks like the stairwell was definitely one of the safer places to be during the earthquake. As my eyes adjust to the simple glow of the PFL I can see that most of the bookshelves have toppled over and much of the glassware is broken. Carefully Nancy and I look around for anything that would indicate why someone would have drugged me and knocked her out. All the clues have lead us here.

“Dad, look, next to the desk, I see a fire extinguisher with a sticker on it for Rasputin’s Visionary Coffee and Tuba shop. Why would someone put a sticker for a coffee shop on a fire extinguisher?”

“Don’t forget that it is also a tuba shop!”

“Ok, why would someone put a sticker for a coffee and tuba shop on a fire extinguisher?”

“Good question, let’s take a closer look at the fire extinguisher.”

I unstrap the fire extinguisher from the bracket holding it to the wall and get ready to set it on the nearest lab table when the walls start shaking once again. Amazingly the lights flicker back on. Apparently the aftershock shook things just right to turn the power back on. Lucky for us the book cases had already been knocked over or we might have been in for a bit of trouble. Really, who puts book cases on the 20th floor of a building built right on the San Andreas Fault. I thought these SNL guys are supposed to be smart, but whatever.

“Dad, take a look at this, the inspection tag has a last inspected date of July 21, 1969. That is the day Neil Armstrong walked on the moon.”

“Obviously that is not correct, it must be a clue. Anything else strange about the fire extinguisher?”

“You are not going to believe this, but the signature looks like it says Tuba Stan.”

“Seriously, I told you Tuba Stan was a real thing.”

“Just kidding dad, I think it was signed by you, look Bob Johnson.”

Sure enough it looks like I signed it, but why would I put the moon walk date and sign a fire extinguisher inspection tag. I am pretty sure I am not a fire inspector on the side. Also, while the signature looks like mine, the J is far too swoopy, when I put the J in Johnson I mean business.

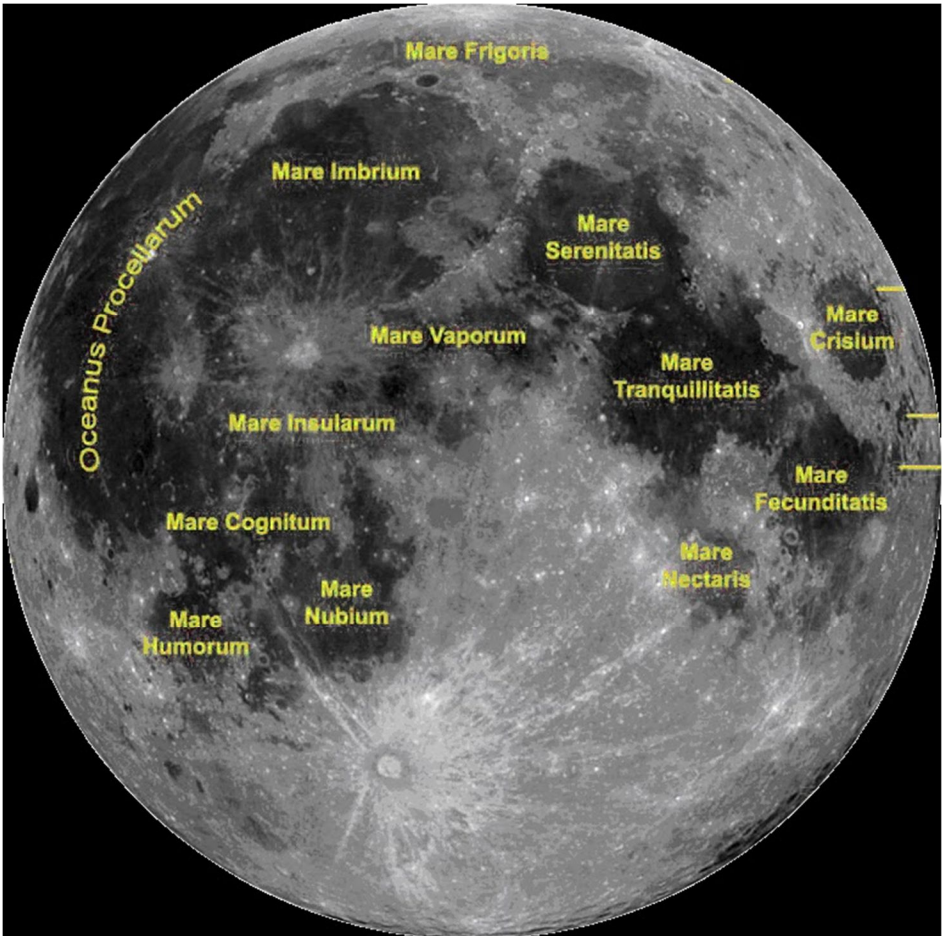
“Let me see that before you trick me with some other nonsense.”

I take a look at the fire extinguisher and notice in addition to what is surely a bogus inspection tag, that it is far too light to be filled with Sodium bicarbonate. It looks like the paint is chipped on the bottom, I wonder if the bottom can be unthreaded and come off.



## Chapter thirteen - Tranquility Base here

Sure enough, the base of the fire extinguisher could be removed and inside was a rolled up picture of the surface of the moon with Neil Armstrong's famous quote; "Houston, Tranquility Base here, the Eagle has landed."



<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/>-

YcPwA4uUiLc/Vdl6dia20HI/AAAAAAAAAPe/yrqT62S1ZJ4/s1600/Moon%2BMarias%2Baround%2BBuddha%2Bform.bmp

“Dad is there anything else in there?”

“Nope, just the Moon picture with the Moon landing quote.”

“Well that is kind of anticlimactic, I guess we can just go home and forget any of this ever happened.”

Stunned, “What?”

“Seriously Dad, you need to be able to figure out when I am kidding. We must be missing something. Is there anything else strange with the fire extinguisher or anything else that seems odd or out of place.”

“Well, there was just an earthquake and an aftershock, so most everything is out of place.”

“Point taken, I think you may have put these clues her for yourself as the keycard has your name on it and has gotten us this far.”

“Ha ha Nancy, good one, but you didn’t fool me this time.”

“No Dad, I’m serious, these clues have all been pretty weird and definitely setup in a way that you and I could figure them out relatively quickly. Even with you having amnesia.”

“You may have a point, but why not just do what I wanted to do without setting up this elaborate set of clues.”

“Maybe you were afraid someone was following you and you needed to throw them off your trail, though how you got amnesia and why I got conked on the head still does not fit it.”

“You know if you are correct, we may be in danger, let's grab the inspection tag, the picture and the PFL and get somewhere where we can think about this and maybe get something for dinner, all this stair climbing and thinking makes me hungry.”

“Right on Dad, how about Red Lobster?”

“That sounds great, but all you ever get is Chicken Tenders.”

“Dad, I grew out of that years ago.”

## Chapter fourteen - Hey, what happened to the Nonsense

“Dad.”

“What Nancy?”

“Look, there is a bucket in the corner, if you put the jawea in there, you would have a bucket of jawea.”

“What has come of our education system?”

“Seriously Dad, maybe we should get out of here.”

“Alright, grab the Moon map and let’s head back down the stairs and see how everything looks outside.”

The walk down the stairs back to Floor A was mostly uneventful other than at Floor G when Nancy noticed that there was a sign that indicated Floor G was dedicated to research of bipedal humanoid cryptozoological creatures, you know Sasquatch, Bigfoot, the Yeti and of course the Lebanon Mucka Mucka Man. Nancy wanted to stop and look around since we missed the exhibit at the Alameda Public Library by being there a week too early.

“Nancy, we can come back next week when we are not possibly being followed by someone who does not want us to discover what I had found and left clues for, fine I’ll say it on an adventure.”

“Fine, but that is not a maybe, that is a later right.”

“Yes, later, not maybe.”

So, after establishing that we will definitely come back next week to see the Alameda Public Library Lebanon Mucka Mucka Man exhibit, we finally get to the ground floor. Nancy and I check in on the

Bobavator and sure enough we hear Bob singing “Alexander Hamilton.” from the musical Hamilton.

“Nancy, Ella was right, Bob is pretty good, but I am not a huge fan of the Musical Hamilton.”

“Dad, what, do you want Bob to be singing ‘Greased Lightning’ from Grease?”

“Um no, I was hoping he could go for something old school like “Rock-N-Roll High School” with the Ramones.”

“Seriously dad, you’re going to try to compare the Tony award winning musicals like Hamilton and Grease with at best a B movie, though I do agree the soundtrack by the Ramones fails to disappoint. And, besides, aren’t we worried we are being followed?”

“Yes, we probably should exit and head for the nearest Red Lobster and figure out what to do next instead of debating the worthiness of Musicals across various genres.”

Without further nonsense, Nancy and I exit through the Photoluminescent Fish lab and see that the damage to the outside of the building was not too bad and it appears that our SUV is undamaged. We now hear sirens from various emergency vehicles as there always is after an earthquake.

We get back in the SUV and Nancy does a search for Red Lobster. Looks like the closest one is about 45 minutes away in Fremont.

## Chapter fifteen - Really, you can do that at a Red Lobster

We follow directions from the GPS and get on California Highway 84 and head West toward Fremont and the deliciousness that is Red Lobster. Nancy turns on the Radio, hoping to catch some news on the earthquake and maybe the elusive weather report.

Instead we get the Ramones “Rockaway Beach.”

“Now, that is what I call music.”

“Dad, I like the Ramones too, but I really was looking to hear something about the quake. Besides, why are they singing about Broccoli Beach?”

“It’s Rockaway Beach, not Broccoli Beach!”

“Got you again Dad, you are sooooo gullible.”

As the chorus winds down, the DJ comes on and announces, “Looks like that last shaker was only a 3.5 and it's looking like no more significant aftershocks are expected. And now a word from one of our sponsors; Come on down to Wally’s World of Wicker. Find us on old West 53rd street downtown San Jose. We’ve got wicker, all kinds of wicker, what kind of wicker would you like?”

“Nancy, do you think we could use some wicker in the sun room out back?”

“Dad, you really are starting to remember stuff, though maybe not all that accurately, because we never call it the sun room, we call it a three season room.”

“Right.”

Time passes rapidly and somehow we have traveled five minutes in real time, but ended up at in Fremont and I see the Red Lobster just off this exit. I really should see if I can get funding for the research of vehicular music and conversation based time travel. Is the controlling factor, the song on the radio or the relative silliness of the conversation being had while traveling. Anyway, I digress.

“Dad, I see the Red Lobster, were you paying attention, it looked like you were going to miss it.”

“Uhm no, I saw it, I was just contemplating the geographic topology of belly button lint.”

“Dad, you’re weird.”

We pull into the parking lot and head for the friendly familiarity of Red Lobster and its New England themed fish decor.

The greeter greets us and seats us off in a dark corner with menus. Luckily there is a nice candle in the center of our table providing soft light and ambiance.

“Hi, my name is Sally and I will be your server today, can I get you something to drink; lemonade, Pepsi products, iced tea?”

“I’ll stick with water, how about you Nancy?”

“Chocolate Milk please.”

“I’ll be right back with your drinks in a minute and then take your order.”

“Chocolate Milk, I definitely remember that, just don’t drink it all before your food gets here.”

“Dad, I grew out of that.”

We study our menus and I am pretty sure i will get the Shrimp special. Since that is out of the way, I think about the moon map we got from the fire extinguisher.

“Are you all set to order?”

“I’ll have the Shrimp special with the garlic mashed potatoes, how about you Nancy?”

“I’ll have the chicken tenders with ranch and the fries.”

After the server leaves, “Nancy, I told you so, chicken tenders.”

“Dad, just because I ordered chicken tenders does not mean that is all I ever order, remember you have amnesia.”

“Fine, I was thinking about the Moon map we found in the fire extinguisher.”

Nancy pulls out the map and we have a second look at and see nothing new.

“Careful Nancy, you’re getting it real close to the candle.”

“I know Dad, but I think I can see something faintly in the unlabeled part of the map when I get it close to the candle.”

“I wonder if it could be some sort of secret writing, you know invisible ink?”

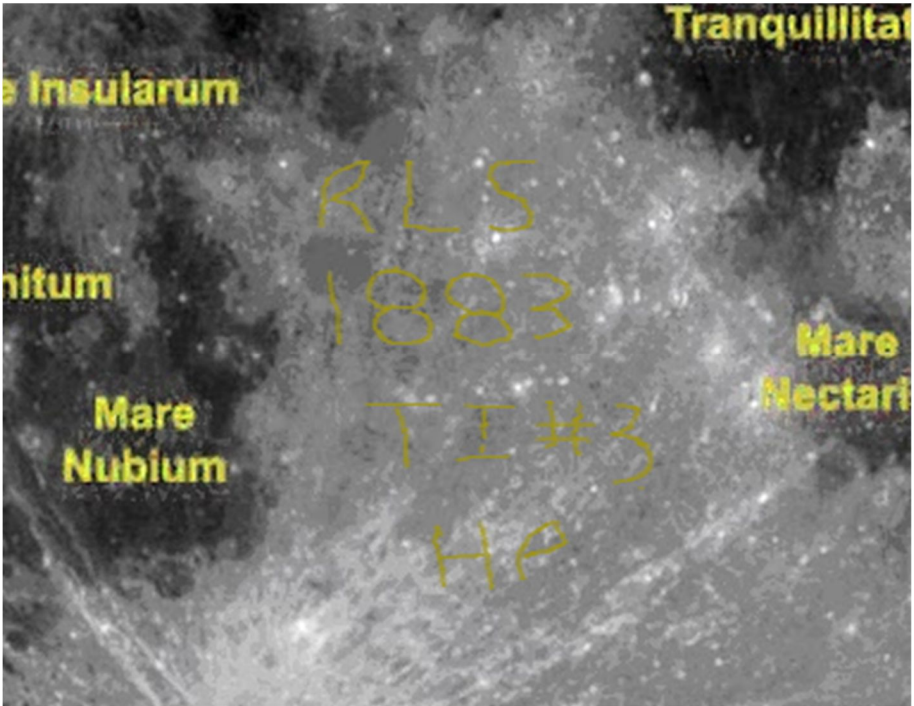
I take the glass shield off from the candle on the table and good thing we are in a dark corner, otherwise other diners might start looking at us funny.

“Dad, I am making something out in that unmarked section of the map, some letters are coming through faintly.”



I grab another candle from the next table over and pass it back and forth on the back side of the map and on that side it starts to get a little brown, but Nancy says to keep going.

“Dad, keep heating, I think it is almost through.”



“Hey, you can’t do that in Red Lobster, besides I have your food here.”

“I think we are done with the candles anyways.”

I quickly jot down what showed on the map while Nancy puts the map away:

**RLS**

**1883**

**TI#3**

**HP**

Nancy and I eat our food, she pays the bill and we head back to the SUV.

## Chapter sixteen - A lesson in Classic Literature

Back in the SUV, “Nancy, any idea what that was written on the map?”

**RLS**

**1883**

**TI#3**

**HP**

“I think 1883 looks like a year.”

“I agree, and the first three could be initials, not sure on TI#3, but HP may be Hewlett Packard.”

“Dad, let’s google RLS 1883 and see what comes up?”

“Great idea, but how are we going to Google, the library is closed and I don’t think we want to head back to the house if someone is following us?”

“I sometimes forget you have amnesia, I still have your old smartphone, it doesn’t work as a phone, but if we can get on WiFi, we can use the Chrome to get on Google and search.”

“Great idea, any signal here?”

“Nope, but I see a hotel across the parking lot and when we went to Green Bay last year to see Lambeau Field, I was able to get on the Wi-Fi in the hotel parking lot without a password.”

“Excellent, I’ll just drive us over there.”

“Dad, looking good, I can connect, but it wants a room number and a last name.”

“Try, 123 and Smith.”

“Perfect that worked, let me put RLS and 1883 in Chrome. Dad, I think it worked, the whole page came up with references to Robert Louis Stevenson and it looks like 1883 is the year Treasure Island was published.”

“Could it be that easy, Treasure Island, as in that old Navy base just off the Bay Bridge between Oakland and San Francisco?”

“Dad, I think you are correct, I bet TI#3 is one of the sports fields. Last summer when I played softball, we had a tournament on Treasure Island and all of the fields are identified as TI#1, TI#2, TI#3 etc. I’ll bring up google maps and we can check it out.”

“Nancy, I see it right near the Rugby Field, looks like it is on the corner of 9th Street and Avenue H. Can you put that in the GPS?”

“Sure, and I think I know what HP is: Home Plate.”

“I think you’re right, let’s head to Treasure Island and see what is at Home Plate.”

“Excellent, Looks like about 40 minutes on Interstate 880.”

“Atomic Batteries to Power! Turbines to Speed!”

“Dad, this is not the Batmobile and I am pretty sure you are not Batman, besides would you even remember if your were Batman?”

“Fine, as long as we can both agree Batman will always better than Iron man.”

“Yes dad, I know DC over Marvel, I’ve heard it a million times.”

“Batman is classic literature, and Iron man is a just a cheap knock off made by Marvel to ride the coattails of Batman and the rest of the Justice League.”

“All right, all right, just don’t let my brother hear that or he will never forgive you.”

“Yes, yes, just our little secret, it’s not like I would write it down and pawn it off in some dialogue with someone not named Sally.”

## Chapter seventeen - Thank goodness for Mass Transit

We take the on ramp for I-880 and head for Treasure Island.

“Dad, when we pulled out of the hotel parking lot, did you see that black sedan pull out a few cars behind us?”

“Uh, no, why?”

“Well, I just saw it in the visor mirror and the black sedan got on the ramp 4 cars back.”

“How can you tell, there have to be thousands of black sedans in this city?”

“This one has the license plate Batman, I mean it was 228626, which spells out Batman on the telephone.”

“Great Scott, I mean Nancy that is an awesome observation. How did you know that 228626 spells Batman?”

“It is the passcode on my smartphone, I needed something easy to remember and how much cooler could it be than Batman?”

“You’re right, that is an awesome passcode.”

“Well, cool license plate or not, let’s make sure we are being followed.”

Using techniques learned from watch classic spy shows like “The Man from Uncle” and “Get Smart,” I verify that we are being followed. The car always stays 4-5 cars back, but when I slow or change lanes, they do as well.

“Nancy, I have an idea, take the exit for the Colosseum BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) station and we can ditch the SUV and take the train into Oakland and then a bus from there to Treasure Island.”

“Great idea, can you gather up all our supplies and throw them into the bag of jawea?”

“Way ahead of you dad, we are all set. Drop the SUV in front of the train station and we can go through the rapid pass and get on the first train and figure out the transfers to get us down town.”

“Perfect.”

Our plan works perfectly. Nancy and I ditch the car, though we luckily got a spot in the front row and head into the station. Just as we enter, thousands of people are going the other way as it appears the “A’s” game just finished up and people are heading back to their cars on their way home. Looking back, I see the Batman sedan pull up right behind the SUV and ditch their car as well. It looks like a man and a woman are following us.

“Nancy, did you see the man and woman exit the sedan and try to follow us?”

“Yes, he is just over 6 feet tall and she is right around 5 foot 6.”

“How do you know?”

“Well, those cement block we ran past that make up the wall of the station and 2 foot by 4 foot and he was just over 3 blocks tall and she was right around 2 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  blocks tall, elementary my dear dad.”

We use our Sacajawea dollars in the rapid pass and jump on the first train leaving.

“Nancy, I do not see the man and woman on this train, I think we lost them.”

“I agree, no one got on this car when we did and I never saw them in the rapid pass lane, so I don’t think they could have gotten tickets fast enough to get on this train.”

“Let’s get off in three exits and then double back one just to be sure and then catch the bus to Treasure Island.”

“Great plan, thank goodness for mass transit.”



## Chapter eighteen - The wheels on the bus go round and round

Having executed a perfect train transfer and double back, Nancy and I use our transfer token to get on the bus heading to Treasure Island. It is the W bus, I think that is the one we would take if we were heading to Wally's World of Wicker. I think wicker really would look nice in the three season room even if Nancy doesn't agree.

“Dad, dad, are you thinking deep thoughts about wicker again?”

“How did you know that?”

“Well, we are on the W bus and we all know that is the bus you take to get to Wally's World of Wicker and you were also mouthing wicker, wicker, wicker for the last minute.”

“Good point, It looks like we are on the Bay Bridge now, I can see Treasure Island out the window and just past that Alcatraz.”

“Looks like we gave the man and woman following us the slip, I definitely did not see them on the bus.”

“Me either, we have to think of a better way to refer to the man and woman that were following us than the man and woman that were following us as it is getting tedious.”

“We should give them a cool moniker like “Chaos Agents” from Get Smart.”

“How about Dudes Undercover Chasing Kevin?”

“What? Who's Kevin?”

“I’m not sure; I really just wanted to make it spell Duck, so we can say cool things like we just gave DUCK the slip and beware the Agents of DUCK..”

“Dad, if I didn’t know you were this strange before you got amnesia, I would be worried about you, but this is actually pretty normal for you.”

“Thanks, I think. So are we good with DUCK?”

“Yes, that just sounds ducky.”

“It’s funnier when I do the bad dad jokes, you should stick to being snarky.”

“Fine.”

With no further discussion of Ducks or Kevin, we exit the bus at the Treasure Island Flea Market.

“Nancy, sorry about the snarky comment. If I remember correctly we should just follow California Avenue North East until we get to Avenue H and then follow that back North West until we get to the corner of 9th Street and we should be right at the TI#3 softball field.”

“Dad, that sounds right. And, I really do like the DUCK thing, I know calling it ducky was a quack too far.”

“Nice, love it.”

We walk for about five minutes on California Avenue and sure enough run right into Avenue H and I do mean run into, Nancy wasn’t looking where she was going and walked right into the Avenue H sign.

“Nancy, watch out there is the Avenue H sign.”

“Ouch.”

“Uh Nancy, I have a suggestion.”

“What dad?”

“Don’t do that!.”

“Uh, thanks dad. Great advice after I already ran into the sign.”

After a few more minutes walking, we end up merely adjacent to the sign for 9th Street.

“Look Nancy, I see the field.”

“Me too, looks like no one is using it, let’s head for home plate and see if there is anything interesting about it.”

We cross the field and head for home plate watching to see if agents of DUCK or anyone else is watching us.

“Nancy, see anyone that looks suspicious?”

“Nope, how about you?”

“Me neither. Let’s see what this home plate is hiding.”

Nancy and I get to home plate and it really does look like a normal home plate. It doesn’t look like there was a game today as the batter's box is all trampled and no one has swept off home plate as it has a light covering of dirt.

“Nancy, got anything to brush off the plate?”

“Yes, my hand.”

“Great idea.”

“Dad, on the edge of the plate I can feel a little slot that does not seem like part of a normal Home Plate.”

“Here, let me feel.”

I feel the slot on the base. I think it might just be the right size for a flash drive. Why anyone would plug a flash drive into a home plate is beyond me, but it must be there for a reason.

“Nancy, I think it is a USB slot, do we still have the flash drive that had the map with the back door entrance to the Tuba Building?”

“Yeah, here it is, let me try it in the slot.”

Nancy inserts the flash drive into the USB slot, a duck quacks and the ground starts to shake. Nancy falls back and I pull her away from home plate. Oh no, not another aftershock, I thought that radio guy said no more significant aftershocks. Well, I guess he is a radio guy and not a geologist.

“Nancy, it looks like it is not an aftershock, the ground only shook around home plate in the shape of a circle.”

“Yeah, thanks for pulling me away, it is still moving, I think it is making a way down, I can see rungs on the side of the hole. Yup, definitely a way down. The base slid to the side and I can see down about twenty feet. There are rungs all the way to the bottom and a faint glow to the North, maybe a tunnel.”

## Chapter nineteen - Why would we think twice about climbings down into a tunnel

“Nancy, I’ll go first, and then once I get all the way down, I’ll call up and you can follow.”

I climb down the ladder about 25 feet and reach a tunnel with about 6 feet of clearance under conduits, overhead red safety lights and pipes and an arm span across. The conduits are labeled with USN-1942. It appears this is some sort of World War 2 Navy access tunnel. I should probably call up to Nancy so she can get down here as well.



“Nancy, come on down.”

Climbing down the rungs, “I was wondering how long it was going to take before you called me.”

“Sorry about that, it looks like this is a WW2 era military access tunnel, the question is access to what?”

“Do you see a way to shut the home plate opening?”

“I think this might be it. This button is labeled TI Portal hatch with a red and green light. The Red light is lit, I think if I press this button, the portal will shut.”

“Sounds good, give it a try.”

Nancy presses the button and surprisingly we do not hear the sound of a duck quack, but the home plate hatch is moving back up to seal the top of the tunnel and the indicator light turns green.

“Nancy, let’s see where this tunnel leads to.”

“Great, from where we came down, it looks like the tunnel heads due east.”

We pull out the PFL to augment the light coming from the overhead safety lights. The tunnel has a slight downslope for about 1000 feet and then stops at what looks like a spiral staircase.

“Nancy, let’s head down the staircase and find out how far it goes down.”

“Exactly.”

I follow Nancy down the stairs for about 5 minutes. When we get to the bottom of the stairs the landing opens into a room about ten by twenty feet.

“Dad, how far do you think we went down?”

“Well, it was about 250 steps down, so about 250 feet.”

“That would put us about 100 feet below the bottom of the San Francisco Bay in this area. The bay is up to 300 feet deep at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge, but hear between Treasure Island and Oakland, it is only about 150 feet deep.”

“Well, thank you Wikipedia.”

“Nice dad, so I am chocked full of useless knowledge, but in there are a few nuggets of useful stuff.”

“You’re right, I am glad you remember everything you see and read.”

We observe a map on the wall showing a tunnel system that goes under the bay and heads past Oakland, Las Trampas Regional Wilderness and ends at Mount Diablo. The whole tunnel looks to be about 40 miles long with what look like two waystations along the way.

“Nancy, I think we can make it to the first star by tonight. I am hoping it provides a way to the surface or a place to sleep.”

“I agree, I think it is about 8 miles to the first star, and we should be able to walk that in about two hours as long as there is not too much up and down.”

Nancy takes a picture of the map with her smartphone and we begin looking around for the exit. On the East wall there is a military style water tight door.

“So, what do you say Nancy, do we open the door and see what lies down this tunnel, or head back up and catch the bus home?”

“Seriously dad, there is no way we are heading back now.”

“Just checking.”

On closer inspection of the door, there appears to have been a recent upgrade of a digital lock.

“So what do you think dad, tubastan for the code?”

“Of course not, there are 10 digits to the code and tubastan only has 8 letters and besides it is a number pad.”

“I will concede on tubastan only having 8 letters, but we can make letters into numbers with the phonepad.”

“Right, so we need to find something other than tubastan. Well, the door is labeled TI-10-19, I wonder if that has any significance?”

“Could be, didn’t we get Treasure Island from the clue on the moon map, do you think this might have something to do with Robert Louis Stevenson?”

“Good thought dad, maybe it is a book cipher, with TI being the book, Treasure Island, page 10 and word 19. I know this can be problematic if we don’t have the same copy of the book, but at least we know it needs to be 10 letters, so even if the 19th word does not fit, we should be able to find it.”

“Wow, that makes a ton of sense, if only we had a copy of Treasure Island.”

“Way ahead of you dad, when we looked up RLS 1883 on my smart phone earlier, I also downloaded an epub of Treasure Island. Let me bring that up.”



“Wow, that is awesome and you know what wow spelled backwards is, still wow.”

“We still do not know if it worked yet, so save your backwards wow for when we crack the code. Let’s see, page 10:

‘Before he went on with his talk to old  
Taylor, the gardener, on a new cure for the  
**rheumatics**. In the meantime, the captain  
gradually’

It looks like rheumatics is the 19th word.”

“Right, r-7, h-4, e-3, u-8, m-6, a-2, t-8, i-4, c-2 and s-7.”

Nancy tries 7438628427 on the keypad and nothing happens.

“So much for wow, backwards or forwards.’

‘Wait, did you hit enter after the combination?’

“Was I supposed to?”

“Yes, you always have to hit enter after entering a combination code on an electronic lock, well except for when there is no enter key.”

“There is an enter key.”

Nancy hits enter and as we hear that reassuring duck quack sound, the door unlocks. I spin the wheel to open the door and it looks like the tunnel follows the map on the wall and continues East.

## Chapter twenty - Dinner

Nancy and I follow the tunnel East, heading for the first red star on the map. I hope the red stars correspond to an exit or at least a way station with food, bathrooms etc. Every 15 feet there is an old light fixture, but the bulbs have been recently changed as they are all LED providing pools of light separated by concave regions of shadow between.

“Nancy, how long did you think it would take us to get to the first red star on the map.”

“Well being that we walk between 15 and 20 minute miles without much difficulty and estimating the distance at 8 miles, we should be there in 2 to 3 hours.”

“Excellent, see I told you math and story problems would be important some day. I just did not realize it would be while navigating a World War 2 era tunnel on the 3rd of July while being chased by agents of DUCK.”

“Did we really settle on DUCK for this clandestine secret organization.”

“Yes, and I do not care what Kevin has to say about it.”

“Who is Kevin again?”

“No particular Kevin, it could even be a Kris, as long as it spells DUCK.”

“Dad.”

“Yes Nancy.”

“Did I ever tell you that you are a bit weird.”

“Yes, that is what makes me interesting.”

“You have a point.”

So, after agreeing on DUCK once again, we have traveled five minutes down the Tunnel.

“Dad, I wish this was like Indiana Jones and we could just travel by map.”

“That would be awesome, just cut to a picture of the map and watched the dashed line continue from point A to point B and suddenly we would be at point B.”

“Unfortunately that only happens in the movies, so maybe when the movie of my life comes out, the director can do that part as a travel by map sequence.”

“Yes, and I want to be played by Benedict Cumberbatch.”

“Dad, but you are not British and the only British accent you can do sounds like an old lady.”

“Except, when I talk about kangaroos, then I sound Australian.”

“Uhm, no, then you sound like an old British lady doing a bad Australian accent while talking about kangaroos.”

“Well fine, who would play you in the movie?”

“Emma Watson.”

“Hey, you’re not british either and I don’t think she can play teen parts anymore, she has aged out.”

“A girl can dream can’t she.”

“All right Emma Watson can play you and Benedict Cumberbatch can play your dad.”

Our conversation about completely irrelevant things goes on for the next two hours with nothing of interest happening until . . . we see another watertight door up ahead. This door does not have a lock on it or at least no a lock from this side.

“Nancy, I’m going to listen at the door and see if I can hear anything.”

I listen at the door and either there is no sound coming from the other side or the door is also sound proof in addition to being watertight.

“I don’t hear anything, back up to the shadows a few steps so you will be invisible to anyone who may be behind the door when I open it.”

“Ok dad.”

I open the door and light streams into the tunnel. I don’t hear anything as my eyes begin to adjust to the brighter lighting.

“Nancy, come on up, I think it is safe. It looks like the door opens into a room.”

“Let me see.”

We open the door all the way and see a room twenty feet long and ten feet across. To the North are three passages, one marked as bathroom, the next sleeping quarters and lastly the kitchen.

“Dad, I’m hungry, I wonder if there is anything in the kitchen?”

“Let’s check it out.”

In the kitchen we find that it is stocked with canned good, enough to last a us weeks if not months.

“Look Nancy, canned chicken tenders.”

“Really, that would hit the spot.”

“Just kidding, I do not think you can make canned chicken tenders, the breading would get all mushy and disgusting.”

“Well, what do they have.”

“Hmm, boiled potatoes, boiled carrots, boiled fish, boiled eye of newt.”

“I am pretty sure there is no eye of newt, boiled or otherwise.”

“You got me there, but they do have boiled just about everything else, how about some chicken noodle soup and in that other cupboard I saw those oyster crackers you love.”

“Dad, that would be perfect, I found a saucepan to heat it up.”

Nancy starts cooking the soup on the stove and I go to get the oyster crackers and some bowls and spoons. Under the crackers, I find a note.

“Nancy, turn down the soup and come check this out.”

I show Nancy the note with the following:

UVYY GB PYVZO

GUR FCNAVFU QRIVY

FBYIR GUR EULZR

BHE QRFVTARE ARIVYYR

UBYR GUR AVAR

FRRX GUR XRGGYR

“Dad, I think it is some sort of clue.”

“Thank you captain obvious, though, yes I agree a clue.”

“It looks like it could be a simple substitution cipher, look at how 4 of the 6 lines have GUR in them. I wonder if that could be THE?”

We write out THE and GUR in my notebook and then add the text below it substituting accordingly with the substituted letters in red.

THE

GUR

**HVYY TB PYVZO**

**THE FCNAVFH QEIVY**

**FBYI THE EHLZE**

**BHE QEFVTAEE AEIVYYE**

**HBYETHE AVAE**

**FEE X THE XETTYE**

“Dad, I think the second word in the first line is TO.”

“I agree, let's substitute O for the Bs as well.”

**HVYY TO** PYVZO

**THE** FCNAVFH **QEIVY**

**FOYI THE** EHLZE

**OHE** QEFVTA**EE** A**EIVYYE**

**HBYETHE** AVAE

**FEEX THE** XETTYE

“I do not see anything else that is really obvious, let's write out the letters and see what makes sense.”

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
	O			R			U					
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
						G						

“Dad, I got it. It is just a shift 13 substitution cypher.”

“Lucky thing my notebook paper was narrow and we could only go 13 letters wide and it made the letter line up right above each other.”

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	Q	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M

“Exactly, let’s write out the whole message.”

HILL TO CLIMB

THE SPANISH DEVIL

SOLVE THE RHYME

OUR DESIGNER NEVILLE

HOLE THE NINE

SEEK THE KETTLE

“Ok, so I am pretty sure the first part refers to Mount Diablo and conveniently it at the far end of this tunnel, but what does that have to do with a kettle and who in the world is Neville?”



“Dad, I think he stole someone’s tuba.”

“What?”

“Just kidding, I just wanted to say tuba.”

“Right, maybe this will make sense when we get to Mount Diablo, but for now we need to eat our soup and get some sleep, it’s been a really long day.”

“I agree, soup and sleep and a bedtime story.”

“Aren’t you a little old for bedtime stories.”

“Dad, you are never too old for bedtime stories.”

We eat our soup and it is delicious with just the right amount of oyster crackers.

## Chapter twenty-one - A bedtime story

The bunk room is adequately furnished with four sets of bunk beds. Nancy picks a top and I choose the bottom below her. We get settled in and I begin Nancy's favorite bedtime story.

“Once upon a time in a kingdom far, far away lived a princess and she was the most beautiful princess in all the land, but this is not her story so two upon a time there was a kingdom of dwarf pygmy septipi. You may ask what a septipi is, so I will tell you. It is definitely not some poor old eight legged octopus named Hank that had one leg hacked off by a pirate and ended up in a Pixar movie. Septipi is the plural of septopus. A septopus is a single septipi that is part of a complete new species of seven legged aquatic creatures with six legs on the bottom and one on top just for waving. If a septipi has a baby, the baby is also a septipi, if stinky old Hank has a baby it is just a regular old octopus.

Steve, the septopus, as all good septipi are named Steve or Sally, was heading to marching band practice. All septipi love the marching band and all play trombone, in fact they all play two trombones at once. They march with two legs, play trombones with four more, two each and then the one on top does the waving. On the way to practice Steve runs into Sally. Literally, Steve runs right into Sally and they drop all four trombones. Luckily they are not bagpipes or it would have made the sound of a dozen cows being squished.

Steve and Sally do the traditional dwarf pygmy septipi greeting of singing:

‘Septa septa septopus septopus septopus

Septa septa septopus septopus septopus

Septa septa septapi whooo’

They then finish the greeting the by giving a high two with their waving legs causing their suction cups to stick together. Steve and Sally separate the arms making a popping sound similar to a suction cup being pulled off a window.

Steve and Sally head to marching band practice and see the evil Doctor Hexapus who wants to remove the waving arm from all good septipi and use it to poison the water supply of the dwarf pygmy septipi. Steve and Sally are very concerned that evil Doctor Hexapus had escaped from the prison of being licked by puppies. That is where bad septipi are sent; to be licked by puppies.

Steve and Sally prepare to sound the alarm by playing the septipi warning on their four trombones. But, just as they are about to bleat trombone the warning; they realize it is just Steve their other septopus friend wearing a hat so no one could see the waving arm.

And they all live happily ever after playing trombones, marching and waving. The end”

“Dad, you didn't tell it right.”

‘What did I mess up.’

“You forgot to tell the part about when they bounce up and down on the waving arm like a pogo stick.”

“Oh yeah, and what you said happened. The end.”

Nancy and I drift off to sleep dreaming the righteous dreams of dwarf pygmy septipi and the agents of DUCK.

## Chapter twenty-two - How good are you at swimming?

After a mostly restful night of sleep, Nancy and I awake to the sound of a blaring siren. It is so loud that I immediately cover my ears and still think it is the loudest thing I have ever heard in my life. I motion to Nancy to look for where the siren may be coming from and notice a red emergency light flashing and a siren horn next to it. Nancy sees it at the same time and hits the siren with a frozen herring. Just kidding, she presses the silence alarm button, but the whole frozen herring thing sounds much better,

“Nancy, any idea what the alarm was for?”

“I think it is the alarm indicating the frozen herring are thawing.”

“What?”

“Just kidding, a frozen herring thaw alarm sound more like an English police siren, you know bee bo, bee bo. This is more of a constant ear splitting banshee wail.”

“Oh, so does that mean a captured banshee is escaping on the back of a Whale?”

“What? No it is an alarm indicating the tunnel has water in it.”

“On a good bad scale, that would be pegging the bad end of the scale.”

“It shows that the water alarm is for the Treasure Island to Piedmont loop.”

“Let’s check the water tight door for that section and make sure it is shut tight.”

We check the door and it is shut tight. Looking through the high pressure glass viewing window I see that there is water in the tunnel and it is slowly rising.

“Nancy, let’s get packed up and head towards Los Trampas Regional Wilderness, it looks like it is about a ten mile tunnel walk to there on the map.”

We pack up the essentials, water, some ready to eat military rations, thankfully none had frozen herring in them. I pick a couple of the ones with a high energy protein bar, some dehydrated bananas, strawberries and pineapple, granola and an energy drink mix. Nancy picks the same and we both grab some water and two small portable oxygen tanks..

Nancy and I head East out the watertight door toward Los Trampas Regional Wilderness and close it tightly behind us. We still don’t trust the doors to hold up to the water filling the tunnel behind us, so we start walking at a rapid pace.

After an hour of walking, it looks like we have gone about 4 miles and expect to make the Los Trampas Regional Wilderness in another hour and a half.

“Nancy, do you want to take a short break, so far the tunnel has remained dry and I could use a protein bar and some water.”

“I agree, I think we are safe, but being in these tunnels so soon after the earthquake yesterday is making me nervous.”

After a short break with amazing no one mentions herring; frozen or otherwise, we continue heading East in the tunnel. Nancy

and I continue to make good time and after another hour and four more miles we take another break.

“Nancy, does it smell like sea water in here?”

“Now that you mention it, I do smell something oceany and I am pretty sure it is not a frozen herring.”

“Right, I wonder if that means we have some water coming this way. How good are you at swimming?”

“Yes, let's head out.”

As we turn to head west, water slowly trickles from the west and our shoes are wet on the bottom.

“Nancy, run!”

“You too!”

We run east hoping we get to the Los Trampas Regional Wilderness section of the tunnel and hope there is a water tight door or a ladder up to the surface.

After 5 minutes, we are running through water slowly rising to the depth of our ankles.

“Nancy, do you remember when you told me that math story problems would never have a practical application, well here is a prime example of how important math is.”

“What, seriously, we are running away from rising water in a tunnel that we hope has a working watertight door at the end of it and you want to give me a life lesson on the importance of math?”

“Well, we are traveling at about five miles per hour, in the last five minutes the water has risen six inches and the ceiling is eight feet

high. Will we get to the Los Trampas Regional Wilderness tunnel section before or after the water reaches the ceiling?”

“Ok fine, one time in my life I need to be able to answer a math story problem and we don’t even have the time to stop and figure it out, because that would slow us down and we definitely would be stuck in this tunnel.”

“Well, I just did the problem in my head while you were once again complaining about math. It will take us about 75 minutes to reach the watertight door at the end of the tunnel. In 75 minutes the water will be approximately 7.5 feet deep. I am guessing at that point we may be swimming and aided by the flow of the water, we should just make it.”

“I think I can run a bit faster, how about you?”

“I can try.”

After 30 more minutes I have a stitch in my side and think I must slow down my pace. Nancy seems to be having less difficulty.

“Nancy, rush on ahead, I cannot keep this pace. Get to the door and open it, this will slow the rise of the water in the tunnel and give me a chance to yet reach the door.”

“Dad, I can’t leave you behind, I won’t.”

“You ,must, it is our only hope.”

After another 30 minutes, Nancy must have reached the end of the tunnel as the water makes a sudden drop allowing me to pick up speed. Twenty minutes later I see the end of the tunnel and the watertight door. I make it to the door and go through. Nancy shuts the door behind me and we tighten the hatch together. Unfortunately, the door is leaking.

Calmly, ok maybe not so calmly after all the room is filling up with water, I take stock of the situation and survey my surroundings. Maybe I am over reacting, there is a ladder going up with a sign that indicates exit. I presume that means to the surface.



## Chapter twenty-three - Los Trampas Regional Wilderness

We begin climbing Nancy first and me following behind and yet another opportunity to practically apply math surfaces.

“Nancy, so we are climbing at a rate of about 2 foot per second and I estimate that the distance to the surface is approximately 1500 feet, how long will it take us to reach the surface.”

“Dad, I am going to drop this container of military issue peanut butter on your head.”

“Well, I never.”

Avoiding peanut buttery retribution, I quickly calculate that we should reach the top in approximately 12.5 minutes. Climbing silently, with no mishaps, we reach the top of the ladder in exactly twelve and a half minutes. My forearms and calves are burning, but take solace in that my story problem acumen is in tact.

“Nancy, do you see a latch or lever to open up?”

“I think I see something, it looks like another digital lock with a number keypad. I’m going to try 7438628427, it worked on the other one and I’ll remember to hit enter this time.”

I am amazed at Nancy’s memory, I know 7438628427 is the number we figured out for the last lock because Nancy said it, but she did not have to look it up or anything. As I look on still amazed, Nancy punches in the number followed by enter and sure enough we hear an audible click and the hiss of pressure changing. I see a sliver a light around the edge of the top of the tunnel.

“Nancy, can you push up on the hatch and see if you can get it open?”

“Sure thing dad, as long as you don’t try to get me to do anymore math.”

“Nice.”

Nancy pushes up and the hatch opens and we are instantly blinded. We have after all spent the last 24 hours in an underground tunnel with what I would say is sub standard lighting. Which reminds me, whatever did we do with the photo luminescent fish? I’ll wait to ask Nancy until after we have exited the tunnel, but first we wait a minute as our eyes adjust. Nancy, being in front climbs out first.

“Nancy, it looks like we are in a grassy clearing surrounded by a stand of *Quercus kelloggii*, the California black oak, also known as simply black oak, or Kellogg oak, is an oak in the red oak section (*Quercus* sect. *Lobatae*), native to western North America. It is a close relative of the black oak (*Quercus velutina*) found in eastern and central North America..”

“What? I mean, how do you know so much about trees.”

“Well, I would like to tell you that I am a walking talking encyclopedia of useless knowledge, but I actually just read it off that sign over there by one of the trees.”

“Dad, you are weird.”

“I will not dispute that, but you can still call me Mr. Knowitall. Hey, I saw that eye roll. By the way, how are the PFL doing? I hope they did not turn out like the turtle I got you.”

Nancy checks the bag and sure enough the little buggers are swimming and glowing as brightly as ever.

“I’ve been feeding them peanut butter.”

“What?”

“Peanut butter, you know the jar of military issue peanut butter I almost dropped on your head a bit ago.”

“You’ve been feeding the fish peanut butter?”

“Yes, sometimes dad you can be pretty dense.”

Not bothering to dignify that with a response, I make further survey of our surroundings and it looks like there is a path to the Northwest that does not look like it has been used recently, but has gravel mixed in, so more than just an animal trail.

“Nancy, I think there is a path to the Northwest, let’s close the hatch and see if we can find some transportation.”

“Before we close the hatch, should we find the locking mechanism so if we have to go back this way, we can get back in.

“Great idea.”

Nancy closes the hatch part way and notices that the top of the hatch blends in with the ground cover perfectly. We do not see anything on the top of the hatch that looks like a keypad for the locking mechanism.

“Dad, I do not see anything on the hatch, I’m going to leave it open for now.”

“I think I see something on the sign for the oak trees. It looks like it has a small solar panel on it, I wonder.”

Examining the sign more closely, I find a latch on the side which slides open a panel and sure enough there is a number keypad matching the others we have seen in the tunnel.

“Nancy, go ahead and shut the hatch, I found the keypad.”

Nancy closes the hatch and I secure the keypad on the sign so once again it is hidden.

“Dad, before we head on, let’s grab something to eat, I’m pretty hungry after all the running and climbing.”

“You’re right, I’m hungry too.”

We dig through the military rations, thankfully we did not bring any with the frozen herring in them. The protein bar was filling even if it did taste a little bit like sweaty chocolate mixed with nuts.

“Nancy, how’s your protein bar, mine tastes like sweaty chocolate with nuts, but not actually in an unpleasant way.”

“Mine has some sweaty fruit taste as well, but you’re right not completely unpleasant. At least there is no herring in it.”

“Exactly.”

“Finish your food, make sure we do not leave behind any wrappers or other evidence we were here.”

“Dad, you would have made an awesome Girl Scout, you know ‘Leave no Trace.’”

“I’ll take that as a compliment. So which way do you think we should go?”

“Let’s head South, it is as good a direction as any and it seems to be slightly down hill which I think would head towards a road.”

“That makes as much sense as anything.”

We head South and Nancy was right as we are going down hill and I can see what looks like a road off in the distance.”

## Chapter twenty-four - Really we are just borrowing

It really was a road we saw and not some sort of hallucination brought on by the eating of military ration energy bars that may or may not have been past their best if used by date. The road is two lane blacktop and looks like it needs some potholes fixed.

“Dad, which way South East or North West?”

“I think South East. from where we are I think the ranger station should be that way as it continues us down hill.”

“Once we get there, do you think there will be a bus to take us on to Mount Diablo?”

“I think that might be hoping for a lot, this park is pretty remote. We will figure something out.”

We walk on for about a half an hour when we do indeed see the ranger station looming off to the left and what looks to be a riding stables to the right.

“Dad, do you think we could rent some horses and ride to Mount Diablo?”

“That is a great idea. I wonder if there are trails that will get us there?”

We walk for another 15 minutes and head to the main office for the stables. There are about two dozen cars in the parking lot, so no one will notice we walked up and do not have a car of our own. It looks like they are open, so Nancy and I head in and look for someone to help us. A nice young woman greets us and asks how she can help us.

“How can I help you.”

“We are here to rent a dump truck and were wondering if you had any boa constrictors?”

“What?”

“Just kidding, my daughter and I would like to rent some horses?”

“Oh, that’s good because we just rented out our last dump truck.”

“Really?”

“No, we do not have any dump trucks, I also was just kidding.”

“Oh, good, I was really beginning to worry about where this conversation is going.”

“So, horses are rented by the hour with a minimum of two hours. You would also be eligible for our discount on a second horse, so for 2 hours for the both of you it will be ninety dollars plus tax.”

“Perfect, do you take credit cards.”

“Yes, but only if it has a picture of a boa constrictor or a dump truck on it, I might even consider frozen herring.”

I am starting to think this conversation is getting pretty weird, but I play along “It is the picture of an invisible frozen herring, so you will have to use your imagination.”

“Excellent, we almost never get those. Would you like a map of the trails or I could give you a gps that looks like a stuffed duck.”

I am certain something is wrong here.

“Dad, Dad!” Nancy is shaking my arm. I look around and we are still outside the stables, I wonder if I am still feeling some ill effects from that amnesia.

“Dad, you were making those quack sounds and starting to drool. I think we can only ride the horses on the trails in the park, how are we going to get them off site so we can get to Mount Diablo.”

“How long was I out of it and making duck sounds?”

“Just a second or two, why?”

“I’ll let you know when we get inside if the lady behind the counter offers to rent us a dump truck.”

“What?”

“Long story, just don’t ask about boa constrictors.”

“Dad, you are really weird.”

“I know, that is what makes me awesome.”

“Uh, ok.”

Apparently for real now we go into the offices for the stables. We see a nice young man arranging maps on the wall.

“Hello my name is Stewart, how can I help you?”

“Well, Stewart, I am Bob and this is my daughter Nancy. We were wondering if we could rent two horses for the rest of the day?”

“Let’s see, our half day rate which will get you to 6 PM when we need the horses back would give you about 4 hours of riding. For two horses, that would be \$120 plus tax. That includes saddle service.



For an extra \$25 we will add a trail dinner of Sandwiches, dried fruit and apple juice.”

“That sounds perfect, do you also have a map of the trails?”

“Definitely, cash or credit and we will need you to sign our participation waiver.”

“No problem, Nancy, let’s put it on your card.”

“Sure dad.”

After paying Stewart and signing the paperwork we head outside to study the map.

“Dad, there is no way we are making it to Mount Diablo and back in 4 hours, are we actually stealing these horses?”

“I would not call it stealing, really we are just borrowing. Besides, we can tell them we got lost when we do get back and tip the groom's really nice as well.”

“Alright, so how long is the ride?”

“It looks like there are trails most of the way, but we will have to cut across the Mount Diablo Golf Club and Golf Course to reach Mount Diablo proper.”

Stewart saddles the horses mine is an Arabian and Nancy’s a spotted Appaloosa. Lucky thing riding a horse is just like riding a bike as I have not ridden a horse in about two years when we took Nancy to a horse ranch for her fourteenth birthday.

“Nancy, remember when we went riding for your fourteenth birthday?”

“Dad, you are remembering everything.”

After getting some pointers and listening to Stewart tell us about the rules of the trail and showing us where our dinners, oats and sugar cubes for the horses were packed, we stow our remaining gear in the rest of the saddle bags along with two large bottles of water.

“Have a good ride and I’ll see you two in about four hours and if you lose track of time, just make sure you get back before dark as we will be here until about 10 PM taking care of the horses.”

“Thank you, we appreciate it.”

“See, we are just borrowing the horses, that gives us about seven hours instead of four. We should be able to make it to Mount Diablo, find what we are looking for and get back in time so no one gets in trouble for the horses being out past 6.”

“Dad, that makes me feel much better, I did not want to get Stewart in trouble as he seems like such a nice guy.”

“You think he’s cute don’t you?”

“Dad!” There was definitely an eye roll on that comment.

That seems to have killed the conversation for about ten minutes, but then Nancy get’s over it.

“Dad, I was thinking about the riddle and the line about ‘Hole the Nine,’ could that be about a golf course?”

We stop for a minute and take a look at the riddle again to make sure we have it right.

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THE SPANISH DEVIL

SOLVE THE RHYME

OUR DESIGNER NEVILLE

HOLE THE NINE

SEEK THE KETTLE

“You’re right, that could refer to the Ninth hole of a golf course and the kettle could be the cup, and they just wanted it to Rhyme with Neville.”

“That means Neville must have some significance, any chance the Mount Diable Golf course was designed by someone named Neville?”

“I think you might just have it, if we only had Google I bet we could look it up.”

“Well, we should know soon enough. It should be another hour ride on this trail and we should be right near the course.”

After an uneventful ride not interrupted by septapi or even regular old octopi, we get to the end of the Las Trampas Regional Wilderness trail and hitch the horses to the fence at the edge of the Wilderness.

## Chapter twenty-five - Class Project

After leaving the horses, we cross Diablo Road and head for the Mount Diablo Golf Club clubhouse.

“Dad, what are we going to tell them when we get inside, we are not exactly dressed for playing golf?”

“Follow my lead, I have an idea.”

“Uh, ok.”

We enter the clubhouse and see the reception desk to the right and thirty something woman looking bored. I wonder if I could build a bridge out of her?

“Good afternoon ma'am, my name is Steve and this is my daughter Sally, she is doing a project for school about the origins of some of the historic buildings of the Mount Diablo area and noticed that your clubhouse is on the local registrar of historic buildings.”

“Really, I thought our clubhouse was built two years ago.”

“Yes, yes, the main building is only two years old, but the original building which still stands as part of the bar was built in the 1850s when the gold rush hit this part of California. The infamous outlaw Black Bart once killed a man for looking at him funny in that very bar.”

“Really, Black Bart, that sounds exciting, I do not remember reading in that our brochure. Let me see what I have here. I do have a book about Jack Neville the designer of the golf course.”

“That would be perfect, do you have those for sale or would we need to do our research here?”

“Go ahead and take it, just bring it back when you are done with the project.”

“Thank you, I did not catch your name.”

“It is Jessica, and you are welcome. I am glad to see it go to use.”

“By the way, I noticed your duck lapel pin, that is something I have never seen.”

“Oh that is just our membership pin, everyone in the club has one.”

We head back outside and find a bench and page through the book.

“Dad, do you think that duck pin could be related to DUCK, could this be the headquarters of the Agents of DUCK?”

“I’m not sure, being we made up the name DUCK just so I could have the people chasing us make up the word duck, I think it is a long shot.”

“Yeah, but nothing would surprise me at this point and we now have a book about Jack Neville the designer of the golf course and the fourth line was ‘Our Designer Neville.’”

“Right, let’s go find the 9th hole and see what is in the kettle, I mean cup.”

“Dad, shouldn’t we come back after dark, I’m pretty sure the golf club would not look kindly on us messing around on the ninth hole while people are still playing.”

“Beside, then we could get the horses back to close to 6 PM and Stewart wouldn’t be upset with you!”

“Dad, Stewart has to be like 18, he is ancient.”

“Oh sorry, I’ll just have to tell you the story of when I invented fire as I must be beyond ancient.”

“Dad, that’s not what I meant.”

So, without having to regale the story of how I invented fire soon to be followed by the lever and the wheel, we head back to the horses. We still have two hours to get back by six, so we stop at some trailside picnic tables and eat our sandwiches, dried fruit and apple juice. I tend to the horses as Nancy pages through the Jack Neville book.

“Dad, It looks like the course was built in 1914 and the property was originally an 1874 country estate for the families of railroad barons and gold mining icons. Also, the Carriage Lounge and Bar does date from 1881, though I doubt Black Bart ever stepped foot in it.”

“Good thing Jessica did not know her Gold Rush Outlaw history, Black Bart or Charles Earl Bowles by his proper name was infamous for robbing Wells Fargo Stage coaches on the road from Northern California to Oregon and leaving poems at the scene of the crime.”

“Well at least he operated sort of near hear, you never know, maybe when he retired from stagecoach robbing, he settled down in

the San Francisco Bay area and would visit the Carriage Lounge and Bar for a sarsaparilla.”

“Fine , but he never killed anyone for looking at him funny, he was a stagecoach robber and a poet.”

After finishing with our dinner and the horses and a rousing discussion on Black Bart, we stow our gear and get back on the horses.

“Nancy, so being that the horses are walking and not running, would you consider this gait a canter or a lope.”

“I think the proper term is a canterlope.”

“Would that be any relation to the antelope or the spamalope?”

“Dad.”

“Yes.”

“If I haven't mentioned this today, I wanted to make sure I said that you are weird.”

“Yes, septapi have seven legs, one just for waving and your dad is weird, nothing new here.”

“Dad, uhm yeah, so tell me more about the spamalope.”

“Well, the spamalope is a perfectly evolved creature that conveniently comes with a tail that can be used to pull off the fur, legs and head leaving behind a can of fully cooked Synthetically Produced Amalgamated Meat product.”

“Delicios.”

So after uneventful horse riding and more in depth conversations on canned meats we make it back to the stables.

“Dad, how are we going to get from here to the ninth hole, we left our SUV at the bus station and I don’t think the bus comes out here.”

“I’ll think of something.”



## Chapter twenty-six - Uhm, could you give us a ride

We drop off the horses at the stable, noticing that there are only two cars in the parking lot. Nancy and I head into the office looking for Stewart. I see him straightening the trail maps in the map display and we walk over.

“Stewart, thank you for helping us today. We had a great time.”

“Awesome, is there something else I can help you with?”

“Well, we seem to be without a vehicle and was wondering if when you were done if you could give us a ride to our car at the Colosseum BART station?”

“Sure, I was heading that way anyways. I live in Pleasanton near Livermore and I go past the Colosseum BART station on my way home.”

“Thank you, we really appreciate it.”

“No problem, I was hoping to get to talk to you some more as I was hoping to get Nancy’s number.”

Awkward.

“Nancy, are you ok, I didn’t think a person could be that shade of red.”

“Dad, go over and look at some maps or something.”

Taking the not so subtle hint, I peruse the maps, trying to listen in on their conversation. All I pick up is that Stewart is apparently not ancient, only 17 and they both are going to Valley high in the fall where Steve will be a Senior and Sally a Junior.

After a few minutes of chit chat, Nancy and Stewart are ready to head out.

“Dad, stop looking at those maps, we are ready to go.”

“Great, I’m all set, Stewart, what do you drive.”

“I’ve got a 1967 Toyota Land Cruiser, my dad and I rebuilt the engine and all the mechanical stuff so it runs like new.”

“Sounds like a great project.”

We all head for Stewart's Land Cruiser. He of course drives and I even encourage Nancy to sit up front while I squeeze into the back seat.

“You and your dad did a great job restoring your Land Cruiser. It looks awesome all the way down to the old school AM radio.”

“I did manage to add in a Bluetooth sync, so when I put the radio to 1280, it actually plays off my smartphone playlist or streaming off the web.”

“Sweet, everything's better with Bluetooth.”

“Dad, not everything is better with Bluetooth, besides I want to talk to Stewart more, about Stewart.”

“Alright, just pretend I’m not here and you guys can get to know each other better, I’m still confused how you don’t know each other already being that you both go to Valley High.”

“We’ll, I actually don’t go there yet, I have to finish out the summer semester at Foothill High as my family moved just last month to the East side and I wanted to finish out the session at the old school before I transfer.”

“That makes sense, so good for you, now you will already know someone when you start at Valley.”

“Definitely.”

“Dad, Stewart said he thinks he can get me a job at the Las Trampas Stables so I could go to school and work with him.”

“We’ll see.”

Nancy and Stewart talk of all things teenagery, you know; cool bands, movies, horseback riding, etc. The rest of the ride to the Coliseum BART station was uneventful, so much so that I got bored enough to build a whole bridge out of me.

“Looks like we are here, I see the exit for the Coliseum BART station, hope the ride wasn’t too boring for you.”

“Was fine, it gave me a chance to calculate the square footage of the typical innie belly button. I approximate it at 0.016 Square Feet. You see take pi time 2 r, where r is approximately 0.5 inches to get the circumference of the belly button and then multiply that by the depth, also 0.5 inches giving 0.011 Square Feet and then adding in pi times r squared resulting in an additional 0.005 Square Feet.”

“Dad, I am pretty sure someone just a built a bridge out of me and Stewart.”

“Oh sorry, sometimes I get carried away with Math.”

“No problem Mr. J.”

We pull into the parking lot and see our SUV sitting right where we parked it. Nancy and Stewart exchange their good byes planning to keep in touch before the next session starts in August at Valley.

“Nancy, text me and we can go out soon and I’ll get Mrs. Bollinger to get you a job application for the stables.”

“That would be great.”

“Who is Mrs. Ballard?”

“She runs the stables and happens to be my Aunt, so I am sure she will hire Nancy.”

“Alright, that sounds real nice, we will have to figure out transportation, but I guess it would give you some responsibility and spending cash.”

“No problem, I can ride with Stewart at least until I get my driver’s license and you get me my own car.”

“We’ll see. Have a safe trip home Stewart and thank you for the ride.”

“No problem Mr. J”

## Chapter twenty-seven - Hole the Nine

Goodbyes completed, we get back in the SUV and put the Diablo Country Club into the GPS.

“Dad, it looks like there is a middle school right down the road from the golf course, we can probably park there and sneak in and check out the 9th hole.”

“Great idea, it is 9:30 now and a half hour to get back there, so we should arrive about 10 PM. It should be dark enough that we won’t be noticed sneaking around the course.”

“Right, I just checked and the PFL is still going strong, so we should have enough light to search around.”

“Perfect, do we dare listen to the radio or do you want to tell me more about how wonderful Stewart is?”

“Dad,” complete with eye roll.

“Radio it is.”

“Hombre secreto” by The Plugz comes on.

“Dad, was that just ‘Secret Agent Man’ in Spanish?”

“Yes, yes I do believe was.”

“So that was weird.”

“I still prefer the Devo version.”

“Hey look, I see the Los Cerros Middle School”

“Great, I’ll park and we can find the 9th hole.”

We park the SUV and make sure we have the PFL and head East toward the golf course. We enter the course at the 10th hole in a break in the shrubbery surrounding the course. Luckily they have scorecards in a box and we can see the layout. About fifty yards away I can see the flag for the 9th hole.

“Nancy, check out over there, I think that is the flag for the ninth hole.”

“How can you tell?”

“There is a 9 on the flag.”

“Dad, looks like there is plenty of tree cover from hole to hole.”

“That’s good, I wouldn’t want us to be seen sneaking around the golf course at night.”

“Good point.”

We creep tree to tree until we are on the 9th green. Getting on our knees, we inspect the cup and flag and find nothing.

Frustrated, “Dad, I don’t see anything, no pressure plates, switches or anything.”

“Yeah, I’m not sure, everything pointed to here, I wonder where we went wrong?”

“Let’s take a look at the deciphered cipher again.”

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HOLE THE NINE

SEEK THE KETTLE

“Nancy, I think it is still here. It has to be, but maybe not the actual hole. What is the kettle?”

“I just thought it was poetic license as the author wanted something to rhyme with Neville. What else could be a kettle?”

“A vat is a synonym of kettle and a vat is a large container, as in a tub or tank, used for storing or holding liquids: ie a wine vat. Also, in Chemistry it is a preparation containing an insoluble dye converted by reduction into a soluble leuco base. Also, a vessel containing such a preparation.”

“I am sure there is not a sign with that on it like when you knew all the stuff about trees.”

“It is true, I am chocked full of useless knowledge, but in this case, maybe not so useless. It looks like the water station here at the 9th hole is sitting on top of an overturned wine vat. Let’s investigate.”

“Dad, sometimes you are truly brilliant.”

“Well thank you, but let’s not get too excited, I could just as easily be totally off base.”

We investigate the overturned wine vat looking for pressure plates, switches or anything.

“Dad, it looks like on this side there is a depression that does not quite match with the rest of the vat coloring. And, it vaguely resembles the shape of a duck.”

“Seriously?”

“Yes, this time not kidding it actually looks like a duck.”

“Can you press it?”

“I’ll try.”

We hear a small click and a door 12 inches across by 6 inches high opens inwards on invisible hinges. Just as Nancy reaches inside and pulls out an 9 by 12 padded envelope, we hear someone shout.

“Get them, they found something.”

Not waiting around to see what it is that wants to get us, Nancy grabs the envelope and I grab Nancy’s hand as we run off across hole 10 to near the break in the shrubbery. Abruptly we change course as we see that the man and woman who were chasing us at the Coliseum BART station are blocking the way.

“Run, make for the club house, we can circle back around to the SUV.”

“Right dad.”

We make it to the club house and instead of heading back around to the SUV, Nancy heads North towards Mount Diablo. Not sure why, but trusting Nancy’s instincts, I follow as fast as I can. In the dark we quickly lose our pursuers. After five more minutes, Nancy



slows to a walk and takes cover behind a large Black Oak. I tuck in behind the same oak.

“So, what happened to circling back around to the SUV?”

“Dad, how did they know we were here, did they follow us? Were they waiting for us at the BART station the whole time? Or, did they put some sort of tracker on the SUV?”

“We should have thought of that. The SUV sat there all afternoon and they had plenty of time to put a bug on it.”

“So what do we do now?”

“I think they are waiting for us to head back to the SUV, let’s head a bit higher up into the Mount Diablo State Park and we can find a place to camp out for the night and then see about getting back to the stables in the morning.”

“And see Stewart!”

“Yes, maybe he can help us out again.”

“Dad, that is the best idea ever.”

We hike for another hour and find a nice copse of trees that will provides us shelter as well as shield us from prying eyes.

“Nancy, let’s stop here, this copse of trees is as good a place as any to catch some rest before morning.”

“Sounds good dad, and then we can open the envelope and hopefully figure out why we are being chased and everything.”

## Chapter twenty-eight - The Envelope

Nancy opens the envelope and inside is a letter and a rusty iron key. The letter reads:

“Dear Agents of DUCK,

Please allow me to introduce my self, I am Director Evet S. Johnson of the Secret Agents of DUCK. I ran the Agents of DUCK in the 1990s and we nearly caught Kevin, but he managed to elude us at every turn. As you know, the Mount Diablo Golf Club has been our secret headquarters since our founding in 1881. One summer lightning struck the old oak tree in the Club House yard and split it right down the middle. I thought we would have great firewood for years to come from the old oak, but what we found in the middle of the tree was better than firewood and far more mysterious. It was a small copper cylinder that had grown into the middle of the tree. We knew it had to be very old because the copper had turned such a dark green that it was almost black. Unfortunately, in 2002 the cylinder disappeared from it’s display case during a bizarre cleaning incident that involved way too much bleach, an agent named Sally and some marshmallow goo. But, that is not important as I do have a copy of what was inside the cylinder. It looks like it was a coded message and someone had started to build a key, but must have gotten interrupted and hid the message and part of the key in the cylinder and placed it in a crack in the tree trunk where over the years the tree simply grew over it. While I do not think this will get us any closer to catching Kevin, someone must have hid this cylinder in the trunk of the tree and I surmise that whatever is at the end of the search may be quite valuable. And, as you know these years and years of chasing Kevin are quite costly.

Sincerely,

Evet S. Johnson

The Message:

E TFEZC E MA LIEZG HYBBYQIJ, UY E MA QVETEZG TFEU  
AIUUMGI EZ KYJI. E FMRI HYSZJ TFI TVIMUSVI YH LBMKC  
LMVT MZJ FEJJIZ ET EZ TFI FEBBU YH AYSZT JEMLBV. HEZJ  
TFI JIJEKMTEYZ XBMWSI MZJ QETF TFI CIO, SZBYKC TFI  
JYYV TY TFI KVOXT.

Key

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
		K	J	I				E						Y											

“Dad, can’t we just have one clue where it has a map and it shows us with a big X, dig here for glorious riches.”

“I can’t believe I was right about the whole Agents of DUCK and how long have they been chasing Kevin? And, yes it would be nice to have an X marks the spot.”

“Dad, I think I figured it out, these people either need to make better ciphers or we are just way too good at it. It looks like a reverse alphabet with a split in the middle, so A-M are reversed and N-Z are reversed as well.”

“Nancy, I think you are just a natural, so what is the key, I am still thinking mostly about DUCKs.”

Nancy wrights out the Key:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
M	L	K	J	I	H	G	V	E	D	C	B	A	Z	Y	X	W	V	U	T	S	R	Q	P	O	N

She then quickly writes out the deciphered message. She really is good at this.

I THINK I AM BEING FOLLOWED, SO I AM WRITING THIS MESSAGE IN CODE. I HAVE FOUND THE TREASURE OF BLACK BART AND HIDDEN IT IN THE HILLS OF MOUNT DIABLO. FIND THE DEDICATION PLAQUE AND WITH THE KEY, UNLOCK THE DOOR TO THE CRYPT.

“Dad, this is it, we just need to find the dedication plaque for Mount Diablo State Park and use this rusty old key to find the treasure.”

“So, I wonder how this all relates back to you and I ending up in that building where I had amnesia and you were knocked on the head.”

“I’ve been thinking about that too. I remember a couple of weeks ago, we had a special guest in Mrs Pidwinkle’s Math class that talked about ciphers, encryption and puzzles. At the end we all took

sort of a test that had us solve a bunch of word puzzles, riddles and decode ciphers. I finished in half the time of the other kids and am pretty sure I figured them all out correctly.”

“Do you think the Agents of DUCK could have set that up to find someone to solve the riddles leading to Black Bart’s treasure?”

“It is as good an explanation as any and I am really good at this stuff and you aren’t too bad either. How about you dad, anything weird at work lately?”

“Well, they did switch the free coffee in the break room from Starbuck’s to Seattle’s Best.”

“Uhm Dad, not the kind of weird I mean, you know like testing you or encouraging you to solve puzzles or anything.”

“Well, they are testing a new medication for ADHD that is suppose to help a person with attention and focus. It enables someone to solve complex problems and to work issues to completion, but it had a side effect of temporary amnesia.”

“Uh Dad, temporary amnesia, focus to complete something, like say finding clues and solving them until the last clue is found.”

“You are right, we were both targeted. I bet they drugged me to provide us focus and you for your unique ciphering gift.”

“Well, that explains everything and it may even be right, so all that is left is finding the treasure. Well that and why have the Agents of Duck been chasing Kevin since 1881?”

“Wouldn’t Kevin be dead by now?”

“Unless Kevin isn’t a person, or it is a descendant of Kevin? As far as I know we don’t have any Kevin’s in our family tree.”

“Well, let’s get some rest and in the morning we can hike to the ranger station, I think I remember it is about three miles Northeast of the golf course and we went about a mile last night, so with the hills, maybe an hours hike.”

## Chapter twenty-nine - Mount Diablo State Park

“Dad, wake up it is almost 9 AM, who knew we were so tired.”

Yawning, “yeah, I’m still feeling groggy and wow, I am too old to sleep on the ground leaning on a tree.”

“You said it, I’ve still got a couple of the protein bars and some water. Let’s eat and head for the Ranger Station.”

“Good plan, but let’s be careful, I am not sure how much DUCK knows, at times it is as if they set this whole thing up and other times as if they are waiting for us to solve the next clue and then follow us, so they might be waiting for us.”

“Dad, I think if I borrow your glasses and put my hair up and wear your jacket inside out, I would look different enough that I could get in ask where the plaque is without being identified even if DUCK is watching.”

“Brilliant idea, we can get you disguised as we walk.”

After walking for twenty minutes in a Northeastern direction we come across a maintained trail heading in the right direction. Nancy has my reversible jacket and glasses on and has put her hair up into a bun.

“Nancy, you look older and nothing like yourself. No one will recognize you.”

Twenty minutes later, “Dad, I can see a sign up ahead. Hopefully it will tell us how far to the Ranger Station and we can verify we are on the right path heading in the right direction.”

“Good eyes.”

We get to the trail sign and sure enough it indicates the Summit Trailhead is 0.5 miles and the Ranger Station is 0.8 miles.

“We should be there in about twenty minutes at the pace we have been walking. I’ll hang back and you can find out about the park history and the dedication plaque.”

After twenty more minutes, I can see where the trail widens and find a convenient spot to wait in the dense shrubbery to the left of the trail.

“Nancy, I’ll wait here, if I do not see you come back in 15 minutes, I will come looking for you.”

“If I get into any trouble, I’ll scream so loud that I’ll raise Black Bart himself.”

“Good, be careful and hurry back.”

Nancy head off towards the Ranger Station and I contemplate what words would be like if the letter E was stricken from the Alphabet. Being that statistically over 11% of all letters used in the English language are Es and E is used just over 56 more time than Q, it would change the English language drastically. Maybe we are better off just keeping the 26 letters we have. Pondering this and belly button lint, it is as if Nancy never left as I see her coming back up the trail. I think she found something out as she has a big smile on her face.

“Dad, the plaque is at the Summit, apparently Kermit Roosevelt, son of Theodore, dedicated it himself in 1931 when the park opened. It is on the side of the aerial navigation beacon tower. Apparently the light was so bright ships could see it from 100 miles out at sea.”



“Well, the Summit Trailhead is just 0.3 miles back up the trail and from there a mile and a half to the Summit. We should be there within the hour.”

“Hopefully it is not another one of these crazy clues.”

“I agree, I’m tired, sore and haven’t had a decent cup of coffee in at least 2 days. I need to sleep in a real bed.”

“No doubt. Besides Mom and Ned expect us back today, it is the 6th and you have work tomorrow.”

“Who is Ned?”

“My brother, your son, maybe that amnesia thing hasn’t worn off.”

“Kidding, of course I remember Ned, we named you and Ned after your great grandparents. Ned and Nancy.”

“Dad, you are terrible.”

“I thought I was funny.”

“No, just weird, let’s go find Black Bart’s treasure.”

## Chapter thirty - Summit

We hike back to the Summit Trailhead and head Northwest towards the Summit Trail. We see very few people on the trail and no one who looks like they are Agents of DUCK. It may still be early for hikers.

“Dad, what kind of treasure do you think will be in the crypt?”

“I would think if it is Black Bart’s treasure, it would be gold and silver from the Wells Fargo Stagecoaches he robbed back in the 1800s.”

“So would it belong to Wells Fargo?”

“Actually, I think being that Mount Diablo State Park is Public Property and there may be no way to determine the actual origin of the treasure would therefore fall under the law of Finders Keepers.”

“Seriously?”

“Yes, being that we found it and unless it is stored in boxes or bags labeled with Wells Fargo on them, there is no realistic way to determine the origin of the loot. I believe here in California that we would need to turn it over to the police and they would hold it for 90 days allowing people to attempt to establish ownership. If no proof is brought to bear on ownership, then it would be returned to us.”

“Wow, and if it was established to be Wells Fargo, then what.”

“Well, in that case it would be returned to Wells Fargo with an expectation of around a 25% finders fee as reward for returning the money as obviously we were not the thieves who stole it.”

“Personally, I think much of it should go to a museum if it has historic significance.”

“That comes into play as well, so who knows, we may end up getting something or just an adventure out this.”

“I can live with that.”

So after another 45 minutes we are within sight of the aerial navigation tower and the dedication plaque. I can understand why ships could see the light for 100 miles at sea. We are already at the highest altitude for at least tens of miles around and on top of that the tower is at least 100 feet high.

“Dad, look at the tower, isn’t it majestic.”

“Most definitely. Do you see anyone suspiciously hanging around looking like an Agent of DUCK?”

“Looks all clear to me, so how are we going to do this? Do we just walk up to the plaque and look for a keyhole and open it up? Then what do we do?”

“Good point, I will create a diversion to attract everyone’s attention while you check out the plaque, if you can find it, get it open and verify the treasure, I think we need to bring a couple ranger’s up here to verify the find.”

“Dad, great idea, what are you going to do to distract them?”

“You’ll see, wait until everyone is around me on the other side of the tower and then go for it.”

I watch Nancy slip away to near the plaque and I find a park bench on the other side of the tower. I climb up on the bench and using

my unnaturally loud voice address the twenty or so people that are near the tower.

“Ladies and gentlemen, please let me distract you for a few minutes as I give you the true story of Black Bart the notorious stagecoach robber who lived and worked in these very hills. Black Bart was born Charles Earl Bowles born in 1829 in Norfolk England. Charles moved to the US with his brother and in the 1850s came to California for the Gold Rush. After a rather unsuccessful career as a prospector and unable to keep a job, he adopted the name Black Bart and robbed at least 28 Wells Fargo stagecoaches in the 1870s. What made Black Bart stand out from other stagecoach robbers of the age was he left poems at at least two of his robberies. His most famous reads as follows:

Here I lay me down to sleep  
To wait the coming morrow,  
Perhaps success, perhaps defeat,  
And everlasting sorrow.  
Let come what will, I'll try it on,  
My condition can't be worse;  
And if there's money in that box  
'Tis munny in my purse.  
— Black Bart

Bart was caught in the end, but the gold and silver he liberated from the stagecoaches was never recovered. While some of it was used up in supporting Bart, the mystery still remains as to where the rest of his treasure is buried. It is know that he hid out in the hills of Mount Diablo and legend has it he was thrown out of the Carriage Lounge and Bar in 1882.”

In response a man wearing a Ranger hat and what looks like an official uniform responds, “uhm, sir, I’m pretty sure Black Bart was in Jail at San Quentin from 1880 to 1884, so he could not have gotten into a fight at the Carriage Lounge and Bar which is now part of the Mount Diablo Golf Club.”

Producing the History of Mount Diablo Golf Club book, “I am sure you are mistaken, I have the official history of the Mount Diablo Golf Club and in the chapter concerning Black Bart it indicates he was incarcerated at San Quentin from 1884 until he got out for good behavior in 1888.”

“Oh, well, I stand corrected, who are you that is so wise in the ways of Black Bart?”

“I am but a simple elevator psychiatrist specializing in elevators that are afraid of heights and those obsessed with popular musical theater.”

“What?”

“Just kidding, I fix computers, but am an amateur historian with a special interest in the California Gold rush here in the San Francisco Bay area.”

“That makes much more sense.”

I see Nancy come around the edge of the tower and so make my farewell to the small crowd.

“Thank for listening to me this fine day, for more information about Black Bart and other tales of the Gold Rush in the area, please visit your local library.”

After a small round of applause, Nancy grabs my hand and pulls me toward the trail that heads back from the summit. Once out of earshot of other people Nancy says,

“Dad, I found the keyhole, it was covered over with dirt and rust, but I was able to fit the key in and it fit. I turned the key and the whole plaque was hinged. I took a quick peek and behind it was a space 3 foot by 3 foot and what I estimate to be 8 foot deep.”

“Sweet, what was within?”

“I’m getting to it. There was a leather bound journal, which I grabbed and what looked like a couple of boxes 2 foot by 2 foot by 3 foot. I tried to slide one just to see how much it weighed and I couldn’t budge it. I think it is locked, but I wasn’t able to reach the lock unless it was pulled out. So I closed the plaque and locked it again“

‘Amazing, I think we grab that park ranger and have him witness us pulling it out. If we get it open and there is treasure in side, he can radio down to get transport and the police to take possession.’”

“Great idea, where did he go off to, I last saw him when I was up on the bench telling the story of Black Bart.”

“I see him over by the Map display talking to, oh no, it is the man and woman from last night and at the BART station.”

“Quick, into the shrubbery, let’s figure out what we should do.”

## Chapter thirty-one - The end, I mean it this time

Good thing I do not think like Shakespeare or I would end up thinking outloud for the next five minutes while Nancy and the man and woman from the Bart station patiently wait for me to stop. Besides if this were Shakespeare, everyone would die in the end and I am pretty sure that isn't going to happen here. Though I do have many questions running through my head; what will Nancy and I do? How did the Agents of Duck know we would follow the clues to the end and how did they end up tracking us here? I could really go for a nice MLT, where the mutton is sliced just right. What is in that box Nancy found? Fine, maybe Shakespeare had a point.

“Dad, are you ok, you looked like you were drooling a little.”

“Oh, nothing, just thinking about an MLT.”

“Mmm, where the mutton is sliced just right.”

“Hey, now I'm not the only one drooling, so after we escape this predicament and secure the treasure, we go to Fezzik's for Sandwiches.”

“Deal, now what to do about the man and woman from the Bart station?”

“Right, I think I will go out and confront them, there are at least 30 people out here that would be witness to anything that happens.”

“What about me?”

“You stay here in the shrubbery and record what happens with your phone, so if anything happens we have video record.”

“Dad, be careful.”

“I will.”

Feigning more confidence than I really felt, I hope for the best and circle around the shrubbery and the aerial navigation tower so they do not see where Nancy is hiding. I walk up to the Ranger and the man and woman.

Reaching out to shake hands with the man, I declare “Hi, I’m Bob and I council depressed elevators, do you happen to know of any ducks around here?”

The Park Ranger responds, “I thought you said you really worked with computers and why would there be ducks around here? We are at an elevation of 3849 feet and it is nearly 100 degrees out and no natural source of water at the summit.”

“Uh, you are absolutely correct. I do app”

The woman interrupts, “I know of some ducks, if you and your daughter who I presume is nearby would like to go for a ride with us?”

“I think I will stay here, with this nice Park Ranger and all these nice people, I mean witnesses.”

“Quack!”

“Sir, I am not sure what you mean, Nancy and I have been hearing Quacks such as that for the last couple of days.”

The Ranger obviously confused, “What, that was the worst quack I have ever heard, you really need to be more breathy with it and hold the a longer, more like quaaack. See my grandfather use to make duck calls and you definitely need to hold the a.”



“Well that is enlightening. Man and woman from the BART station, do you have names so I can stop thinking of you in my head as the man and woman from the BART station? And, are you really agents of DUCK? And, who’s Kevin?”

The Ranger has given up understanding and starts to practice his long a quacks, “quaaaack, quaack, quaaaack, yes the one with the three extra a’s sounds just right. Now about my Oboe.”

“I think we should just ignore him, and you can call me Kevin and this is Bertha.”

“Hey, it is my turn to be Kevin, you get to be Bertha.”

“I think I should always be Kevin as I am a dude, while Bertha fits better with you as a female dude.”

“Well, Kevin, I will go along this time and remain Bertha, but I am going to bring this up with our most exalted DUCK leader.”

“Quaaaack!”

“I agree, we will ignore sir quacks a lot and I do appreciate how you both like being Kevin more than Bertha.”

Together Kevin and Bertha, “Yes, so please give us the treasure.”

“What treasure?”

Kevin exclaims, “You can’t fool us Bob, we know you and Nancy found the treasure.”

“Well, I already fooled you that I was an Elevator Psychologist, are you sure I found the treasure, if I even admit there is a treasure.”

Bertha explains, “We know about the treasure, we just needed someone to figure out the clues to find it. We had the clue we hid under the crackers in the tunnel and all the ones leading to it, it had stumped us for years.”

Kevin continuing, “You are not the first, but you are the first to solve all the clues we left to lead you to the tunnel. Think of it as a test to see if you were worthy of the ciphers and riddles left by our DUCK ancestors.”

“Seriously, you are the Agents of Duck, Nancy and I thought we made that up so we could stop referring to you as the people who were chasing us.”

At this point, Kevin and Bertha’s voices seem to just blend together as one; “Well, to be fair we use to be CHaps Undercover Chasing Kevin or CHUCK, but in the 30s we switched from CHaps to Dudes and became DUCK.”

“So who is Kevin?”

“I’m pretty sure originally someone really wanted it to spell CHUCK and later DUCK.”

Nancy having heard the whole conversation, leaves the safety of the shrubbery and approaches our conclave, “Dad, I will show Bertha and Kevin where the treasure is, I really enjoyed our Daddy Daughter adventure and it does sound like they have been looking for this treasure for ever and deserve it more than we do.”

“Really, you are OK with this, I was hoping to pay for your college education with what we found, not that I admit we found anything. Let me talk to Nancy for a minute.”

Nancy and I retreat a few feet from the Agents and the Park Ranger.

Whispering, “Well dad, I am not sure the treasure is what we thought it was. I did some calculations, I know Math, and figure that Black Bart was pretty much penniless when he died and I do not think it is because he squirreled away all the gold from the stagecoaches to hide for us or anyone else to find.”

Continuing the whisper back to Nancy, “You are right, he really wasn’t very good at getting away with gold, half the time he would accidently blow it up trying to open the chests.”

Continuing in a conversational tone to the Agents of DUCK, “So, whatever is in that big box can go to the Agents of DUCK with no claim from us.”

“Right Dad, Kevin, Bertha and weird quacking Ranger guy, if you would please follow me.”

Nancy brings us all over to where the plaque was in the tower wall.

Nancy, inserting the key into the keyhole, “I found the keyhole, but was not able to turn the key.”

I look at Nancy and realize something is up, so I keep my mouth shut about Nancy opening it previously and seeing what was inside.”

Kevin insists impatiently, “Let me try!”

Kevin turns the key and we all hear a loud click. The plaque hinges open and we can all see the opening and a pair of boxes inside. Kevin grabs the handle on the front box and pulls. It does not budge. I am not sure where Bertha was hiding it, but she pulls out a small

crowbar and gets a little leverage under the box. With a creak, the box lets loose and Kevin and Bertha pull it out together.

Nancy and I caught up in the mystery and excitement, “Open it, what’s inside?”

Kevin knocks the old lock off with the crowbar and lifts the latch. We see the sun glint off something metallic and Kevin finishes opening the box. We can now clearly see what look like old canning jars.

Bertha starts screaming, “No, no, no, it can’t be.”

I wonder aloud, “Can’t be what, what is in the jars?”

Kevin and Bertha together, “Jars of little pickles.”

Nancy exclaims, “little pickles, dill or sweet?”

I detect the snarkiness in Nancy’s voice, I think she knew this was going to happen and give a nudge to keep quiet.

Bertha snaps back, “What, it doesn’t matter, they told us it was just a bunch of jars of little pickles and we didn’t believe them. “

Kevin, almost in tears, “what are we going to do with a whole bunch of finely aged little pickles, do you think we could sell them to hipsters at the Jack London Square farmer’s market as Classic Finely Aged Black Bart Signature Little Pickles or CFABBSLP?”

Nancy again chiming in, “ Uhm I would skip the CFABBSLP, no one can pronounce that, but hipsters would totally pay for finely aged Black Bart pickles, you probably should have a disclaimer about freshness as they are over 100 years old.”

Bertha and Kevin pull out the other box and it too contains little pickles. We leave them to planning the Agent of DUCK pickle stand at the Jack London Square farmer's market and hike back down to the Ranger Station. Nancy gives Stewart a call and he picks us up and gives a ride back to our car.

The End?

## Outro

After Stewart drops us off at our SUV and we are heading back home, I start thinking about Nancy not hesitating in giving up the treasure.

“Nancy, how did you know that the boxes were going to be filled with little pickles?”

“Dad, remember the journal, while you, Bertha and Kevin were having a discussion, I read through it and did see that Black Bart considered his collection of canned little pickles to be his most valuable treasure. So I had a good hunch that there would not be gold in the boxes, but I did find something else in the Journal.”

“What is it?”

“A map with a Red X on it”

Below is an excerpt from further of Adventures of Bob and Nancy in Not Sally and the Pirate's Treasure:

## **Chapter one - Who is Not Sally?**

My name is Nancy, not Sally, Nancy Johnson. I am a Junior at Valley High in Pleasanton California. My dad, Bob, is the IT Service Manager for Sandia National Laboratories in Livermore. My mom is Guinevere and I have a younger brother Ned. I am quite adept at solving puzzles and without tooting my dad's horn too much; he is pretty good as well.

Last summer, Dad and I went on adventure involving a nefarious organization called the Agents of DUCK. DUCK is just an acronym for Dudes Undercover Chasing Kevin. You ask, who is Kevin, well let's just say someone really wanted it to spell DUCK and leave it at that.

After foiling the Agents of DUCK by leaving them with only finely aged jars of little pickles that once belonged to Black Bart the infamous Stagecoach Robber and Poet. I had liberated a map with a red X on it from the cache prior to revealing the aforementioned jars of pickles as the treasure. Mind you, I did hear that Bay Area Hipsters were paying hundreds of dollars for jars of little pickles once canned by Black Bart himself. Personally I don't care who caned them, am not eating any pickles with a born on date in the 1880s.

Well enough about little pickles my dad and I have a map with a Red X that I can only assume marks the spot. I have been busy with school and my new friend Stewart who happens to be a boy, but not "Boy Friend" so we have not had a chance to spend time researching

the map. Stewart is going on Christmas break to Wisconsin to visit his Grandparents, so I all of a sudden have time for the map we found.

“Mom, is dad out back in the shed trying to fix the old borfin that keeps schlumping?”

“You know it, remind him that Ned and I will be out shopping for Christmas presents and won’t be back until after dinner.”

“Ok mom, see you later.”

I head out to the shed to inform dad that I have all of Christmas break to research the map. Besides it was not just Stewart keeping us from working on the map, dad took a sample of it to one of his buddies and Sandia National Laboratories, SNL for short, to have it carbon dated and I think the results are due back today.



## Chapter two - About that Map

Opening the shed door, it appears that the borfin is not the only thing that is schlumping. Dad seems to have fallen asleep on the futon in the shed.

Shaking him, “Dad, dad wake up!”

“What, huh, I do not think that potato looks like Steve Jobs, even when you put a little turtle neck on it.”

“Dad, you are so weird, but enough about you, did you get the results back for the carbon dating of the map?”

“Map, what map?”

“Dad, you can’t fool me, I know you have fully recovered from your amnesia from this past summer and know exactly what map I am talking about.”

“Fine, but you don’t know, there could still be lingering effects from those DUCK agents drugging me last summer.”

Impatiently, ‘The map!’”

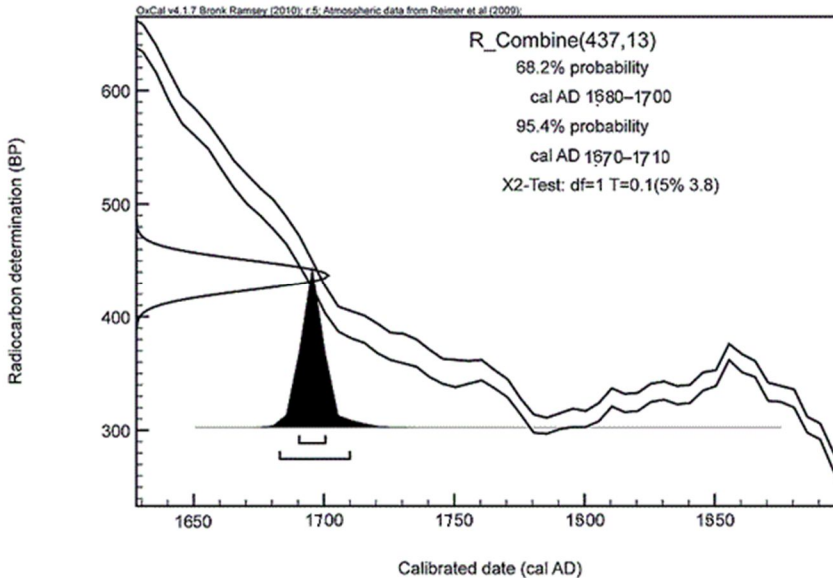
Holding an envelope with the SNL logo on it, “Oh, yes the map, I did seem to get this in the mail this afternoon, shall we open it together.”

“Yes, let’s open it and find out if there is any possibility the map might lead to buried treasure.”

“Sure, now that Stewart is out of town you can spend time with me.”

“Daaaaad, open it.”

We open the envelope together and see the results:



“Nancy, it looks like almost a 70% chance the map is from between 1680 and 1700 and greater than 95% chance it is from between 1670 and 1710.”

“But that is before Black Bart even lived and I think even before San Francisco was settled?”

“That is curious, maybe he found the map mixed in with the gold he robbed from the Wells Fargo stagecoaches in the mid to late 1800s, but that still does not explain the map being older than know settlement?”

“Do you know if the ink was tested separate from the paper?”

“Good thought and no, just the paper was tested. Well at least it is old and not something made up by the Agents of Duck twenty years ago. Though the ink could be from Black Bart’s time or any time after the paper was made, even twenty years ago.”

“Right, let’s do some research on the map itself. It is definitely of San Francisco, so what do you say we take a trip to the San Francisco Public Library, I bet they have all kinds of old maps of the area.”

“Let’s pack some provisions in case we end up on another adventure.”

“But no pickled herring.”

## **About the Author**

Glen did not invent the Metric system. Let's just get that right out of the way. He has never walked on the moon, but often has his head in the clouds. Glen enjoys the humor of Monty Python and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

Check out the 6502 Workshop and Nox Archaist for cutting edge 8 bit  
RPG: <http://www.6502workshop.com/p/nox-archaist.html>