





# THE UNIVERSAL SIGN

*"Rediscovering Earth's Lost History"*

A Factual Novel By

SIAMAK AKHAVAN

# THE UNIVERSAL SIGN

“Rediscovering Earth’s Lost History”

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**Dedicated to the world's  
young generation. May  
you make a better world,  
than the one you have  
inherited.**

*With special  
acknowledgement to that  
ageless luminary, the great  
mystic **Attar** (1142-1221  
AD), who still continues to  
be a guiding light.*

With warm regards to my  
family and true friends.

A very special thanks to all  
the guides and drivers, who  
attended so understandingly  
to my endeavors throughout  
the numerous tiresome  
research journeys. It could  
not have been done without  
you.



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## A Few Words From the Author

*To withhold the past is to withhold the present is to withhold the future.*

The world's remote past is buried, surviving as spared remnants of cataclysms that periodically inflict the earth. Much is lost, forgotten, or distorted.

The book you are about to read is the culmination of my life's research of ancient world history. My obsession is the exploration of lost historical mysteries. Ancient myths, I believe, often encode historical events that occurred before, during, and after global cataclysms that wiped out nearly all life on earth on at least two relatively recent known occasions. One ended the last ice age about 17,000 years ago, and the other unleashed the biblical flood about 12,500 years ago. And what about the innumerable global myths, unexplainable ancient structures like the Giza Pyramids, Nazca lines, and countless others, gods, God, religions, empires, wars, and the real identity of earth's historic rulers? To find out more, read what I offer you here.

A word of caution: exploring Earth's remote past can reveal political and religious controversies. So, proceed with an open mind.

This book contains factual historical data derived from extensive research. Data from remote historical periods often contain heretofore unknown details that must be pieced together to provide a meaningful context. My intention was not to write yet another vague theoretical text about mythology. Rather I present historical facts, mysteries, and anomalies in a fictional format—a *factual novel*. In the context of a story, I have attempted to explore and decipher the truths behind important and often forgotten or misunderstood world events. I like to call it lost history. How much of this book is fact, and how much fiction? Allow me to ask the

same question about our indoctrinated historical or religious belief systems. How can anyone ascertain the exact truth in such remote historical periods? I leave it to your judgment, common sense, and intuitive inner wisdom to sense your way among what once was, what might have been, and what is fiction. I hope, nevertheless, you will find the book at once entertaining and educational. I encourage you to further explore the mentioned names and places. Some of the historical characters in the book went by different names during their lives, but to avoid confusion I use the more recent, often Greek or Indo-European, popular names familiar to us.

I hope you enjoy this book as much as I enjoyed researching and writing it. Keep an open mind, focus, and please *read slowly*. Travel through time and place as you rediscover earth's lost history.

## The Starting Voyage

*The drop wept: "I am separated from the sea." The sea laughed, saying: "It is all us."*

A Sufi verse

*The only universal constant is change.*

Buddha

*This revolving cosmos we revere,  
consciousness a spark of its light,  
bearer of that light is the sun,  
around which we whirl in awe.*

Omar Khayam, 11th century AD

*In a not too distant future, on a high mountaintop,  
somewhere on earth . . .*

"Wow," they all sighed as another brilliant whiteness streaked across the heavens. Not recognizing a shooting star, our tiny friends pondered whether they could ever attain such grace, power, and freedom.

"When will we be freed to join the Source?" one asked.

On an early spring evening high on a snowcapped mountain peak overlooking hundreds of others, in a world of purity and graceful solitude, our frozen friends anxiously awaited their freedom. They all knew of their source, the ocean, with its majestic vastness, calm, and might, covering most of the planet. The elders in the icecap talked about it endlessly. They said the spring warmth would soon set some of the luckier ones free to flow to the ocean, the Source. The winter seemed eternal. Frozen in suspended animation, they wondered about their destiny. They didn't know when or how, but innately sensed that freedom and

union with the Source would soon become real.

Invisible forces bound our two tiny friends, Hydrogen and Oxygen, together as long as they could remember within a frozen water molecule. They shared an existence and an insatiable desire to understand, to strive for the freedom to reach the Source.

Everyone talked of union with the mighty ocean, but they were all stuck in frozen ice-crystals atop the mountain peak, millions and millions of frozen crystals, as far as our two friends could see. Translucent ice crystal lattices extended infinitely in all directions. Some rambled on about unrelated issues, some complained, some jostled for room or cracked to relieve the weight of the millions above them. The elders watched everything in a state of quiet contemplation. Our heroes were next to such a one.

“What will happen now?” Hydrogen asked the elders.

“If you are worthy, the spring warmth will soon free you to join the Source.”

“When?” Oxygen asked.

“When it happens, you will know.”

“How will it all be?” Hydrogen asked. “And how long will it take to reach the Source?”

“The journey is long and difficult. Many obstacles lead to oblivion and decay. The path is no longer clear or safe. There was a time long ago when the world was pure, when most of us reached the Source. All that is changed now. Now danger, misery, pollution, and decay block the way. Some do not wish to follow the path anymore. We are content here in this serene mountain peak ice cap, far from the rest of the world. Perplexing beings lurk there, and some need us for nourishment. In bygone eras there was purity and harmony. The world was better, but everything has changed.”

Hydrogen and Oxygen thought about what the elders said. The journey to the Source was perilous, but the alternative—numb comfort in an isolated, frozen landscape—could never satisfy their curiosity. The risks associated with finding their destination would not deter them.

The elders moved slightly to relieve the pressure from above, making a deep screeching sound and resumed. “If you wish to undertake the journey, you must take care not to depart from the path to the Source. It is no longer simple or safe. Many perish on the way, absorbed by the forces of darkness.”

Hydrogen and Oxygen looked at each other, not in fear or doubt but with determination. They were ready to take the path, to reach the Source just as soon as the spring warmth released them.

“Wow,” they sighed again, as yet another streak of heavenly light brightened their burning aspiration.

Many more cold days and nights passed while our heroes anxiously waited and questioned the eldest about freedom and the journey to the Source. Then one day, large flocks of birds appeared from the South. They seemed to be on a mass pilgrimage to their Source. The elder noted that it was a signal. They might soon be moving. Some were enthusiastic. Some were hesitant. Others wondered whether they, like the elders, should stay put in the relative safety and isolation of their familiar surroundings.

“Why bother,” one elder asked, “when we could face much hardship and misery or risk rotting in some dirty cesspool of worldly decay? It may be boring here, but at least we are safely isolated.”

Not our two friends. They looked bravely at each other. Without talking, they gazed anxiously up at the sky, where they sensed a warming sensation, the bright sunlight’s heat.

Some time later they noticed that they were near the top layers of their icebound world. Those above them had been leaving slowly. Would they also be worthy?

“It will be soon now.” the elders told our eager friends from below.

With the upper layers of ice now melting, our tiny heroes felt the sun’s intense, blanketing warmth increasing above them. Slowly, the heat loosened the ice crystal that held them. Among the commotion, they began to experience a freer state and movement. They bid goodbye to the elders, still advising them nervously to be careful along the way. First slowly, then more rapidly they flowed freely to join others sliding over other still-frozen ice crystals. They heard those left beneath shouting encouragement, concern, or caution. At last, their journey was under way.

Our excited friends were part of a tiny stream of ice-cold water flowing down the mountain. They gained speed and strength as they frequently merged with others. Soon they joined a foaming mountain stream, screaming excitedly as it tumbled down the rocky slopes to merge with a mighty, roaring river. They had never seen such a thing before. Others told our friends that the mighty flow was indeed headed toward the Source, the ocean.

An overwhelming power poured from everyone’s collective determination to attain the same goal. They moved rocks and cut through or bypassed mightier obstacles. With every obstruction removed, every challenge overcome, they felt stronger than the solid, idle, purposeless lumps of mass they pushed out of their way. A clear purpose drove them forward, whereas the obstructions sat idly, doing nothing. The growing torrent of water was unstoppable. Surely, reaching the Source was just a matter of time.

Soon they approached lowland plains covered by an endless mosaic of inhabited human villages and their feeble looking farms and livestock. Beyond the riverside settlements, the arid flat land spread in every direction as far as they could see. Out there, humans and animals huddled around the river for survival. The scene was increasingly dreadful, the earth scorched, the trees dead, the half-dead farm animals staggering aimlessly.

Here and there in the distance, monstrous factory chimneys spewed filthy clouds of black smoke. Rusted, broken pipes poured stinking toxic sludge and sewage into the pristine river. Nasty insects covered the surface of stagnant cesspools at the river's edge.

Farms nursed malnourished, chemically infested plants, struggling in the parched, exhausted soil. Sickness, famine, poverty, destruction, and decay filled a world of desperate life forms clinging to survival. Amid unrelieved blight, nothing seemed sacred, neither life, nature, harmony—nor death.

“Perhaps, the elders were right,” someone said. “Maybe we should have stayed in isolated comfort.”

“But why don't these creatures search for their source?” our two friends asked aloud. “Why do they stagnate in such decay and disillusionment?”

Everyone had questions, but no answers.

Another colleague in the river answered loudly, “Do not trouble yourselves with these hopeless entities. Why should you care at all? Once we reach the mighty ocean, such pathetic misery will not concern us.”

Our two tiny friends began to understand that the outside world held many unknowns. Why was there misery there and not at the Source? Why so much confusion, misery, and darkness here, yet tranquility there? Why the difference? They wondered and stared at their surroundings. If the ocean showed them neither the problem nor the answer, might there not be a higher

wisdom elsewhere? But what? And where? The questions reinforced their yearning for comprehension, but they lingered in confusion much longer, as the river roared past one bleak landscape after another.

Speeding past another obstacle, our friends spotted a devastated human settlement by the river. The human occupants appeared destitute and hungry, since their crops had failed from disease. The adults were gone on a desperate search for another day's sustenance rations. The elders were too weak and the children too malnourished and inexperienced to affect their hopeless destiny. Slime, insects, and the stench of decay and death covered a drying puddle of water in the village reservoir. In the midst of their hopelessness, the inhabitants crouched about, quietly enduring. Under the shadow of a dead olive tree, our two friends spotted a young girl and her infant brother, sheltered from the sun's punishing rays. The girl wept quietly, while her infant brother licked the teardrops from her face in consolation, or maybe just thirst.

"We should help. They are thirsty and dying," our friends cried.

The river roared that petty feelings and concerns were insignificant, a waste of time, no concern for superior beings like them. Not service to miserable barbarians, but the ocean's grandeur was their rightful destiny. Why bother with obviously inferior creatures?

Despite the objections, at the first bend, our two heroes—Hydrogen and Oxygen—and some other compassionate ones left the mighty river as a little stream and headed toward the destitute children. They were anxious, but they were intuitively convinced that the harmony and wisdom associated with the Source would not condone insensitivity and indifference.

Nervously, quietly, our friends approached the crying children. As the sparkling stream reached them,



the girl joyfully dragged her exhausted little body toward it, filled her dirty hands with the fresh water and carried it to her brother's mouth and then her own.

Before they knew it, the stream carried our friends past the village. Pulled by gravity, they fell into a dry ravine, flowing farther and farther from the river that grew a distant dream. As they beheld the nightmare before them, they trembled with fear. None had ever imagined, or been warned about such an arid place. Perhaps none of the elders had ever seen such a thing. Before them as far as they could see spread a desolate desert. They saw no icecaps, rivers, streams, trees, or even sickly life forms, nothing but scorched sand drifting along. The occasional dry tumbleweed rolled about like a condemned ghost seeking redemption in a hellish realm.

"There is certainly no ocean out there," one said hopelessly.

"See what a mess you got us into," yelled another who had followed our friends away from the river.

The fearful commotion followed them as they descended farther and farther until finally they settled into a cavity in the desert floor. Unable to move or turn back, they were completely stuck.

"Now we're really done for. We're all going to rot into oblivion, just as the elders warned," one cried.

"This certainly cannot be the reward for compassion," Oxygen whispered to Hydrogen. "I wonder if we will ever see the Source."

At that bleak moment they heard a firm, calm voice from below. "What source are you talking about?"

They looked down among the grains of sand at the bottom of the pond they formed, and saw a resilient, shiny being staring back at them.

"I am Silicone," the voice continued.

“How long have you been stuck out here?” Oxygen asked.

“The winds brought me here and deposited me a very long time ago, but I have not always been here. Originally, long ago, I was part of an important ancient place. I learned a lot there.”

“Have you ever seen the Source?” Hydrogen asked. “Is the ocean as beautiful as they say?”

Silicone smiled. “Yes, indeed, the ocean is very beautiful. But why do you call it *the Source*?”

“Because that is where everything came from,” someone said. “It is the source of all.”

Silicone laughed loudly. “Forgive me, my inexperienced friends. The way some mistake perception for reality always amuses me.”

“What do you mean?” another asked.

“Let me introduce myself. I was not always part of an insignificant piece of sand. About thirteen thousand years ago I was part of an important crystal. As a quartz crystal, we stored information. Magnificent lights and energy beams shone through us. We could learn and memorize the myriads of information the beams transmitted. I was embedded in one such crystal in the Great Library.”

Everyone waited in silence, as Silicone gazed at the distant horizon a while. “You see, the true Source is really the source of all creation, of everything that exists. The ocean is part of it, but there is much more to it than that. The Source is a complex concept. You wouldn’t understand. I certainly never have.”

“What is the Source then, and where can we find it?” Oxygen asked enthusiastically.

“Why do you want to find it? Do you have any idea what a proposition that is? In my lifetime of many millennia, I have witnessed events, people, and much misfortune. No one understands or cares anymore. Look

at the mess around you. Do you think you can make a difference? What do you seek? What gave you the idea you can find the Source? Even if you're lucky and worthy, will you recognize or understand the Source if you find it?"

The sun disappeared below the western horizon, like a wounded and dying god surrendering Earth to the forces of darkness. Yet countless stars and the crescent moon's light illuminated our friends' bleak surroundings, hinting that even in absolute darkness, light still glimmers.

A breeze spread the desert sand around gently. The stars' reflection on the surface of the little pond looked like fluttering white lace. The crescent moon could have been a wavering mirage of a faltering horned god.

"If," Hydrogen picked up the train of thought, "as you learned in that library, the Source is the origin of all creation, then it must have all the answers. Perhaps a way to improve the world."

"Here we go again. Haven't you done enough damage?" some others moaned. "It was your dreamy ideals got us into this puddle of death."

"Death is just awakening." Silicone announced to the puzzled crowd. "I learned that. You'll see. Be patient.

"As for you two eager ones, let me explain. I do not know what or where the source of all creation is, but I learned that it is the *highest truth*, the embodiment of the greatest wisdom—all-encompassing, complete, eternal—and not easily perceived by just anyone."

"But, we will not be just anyone. We will earn that privilege, no matter what it takes."

"Do you know where to find the Source?" Oxygen mused.

"No," Silicone replied, "that is beyond my

knowledge. When I was part of the Great Library, I heard a rumor of an ancient place where the answer can be found, a place called the *Chamber of Destiny* that supposedly guards *The Universal Sign*. Yes, I believe that's what they were called. I remember hearing about them from the elders in the library, who had been there much longer than I was. I believe the Universal Sign encoded some mysterious secret that reveals the Source of all creation."

"How can we get to the Chamber of Destiny?" Hydrogen and Oxygen spoke at the same time.

Everyone roared with laughter at the naïve question, all except Silicone. "My eager friends...that library is long gone. The great flood that wiped out everything on the planet over 12,500 years ago destroyed it. For millennia before that, the earth was quite different. Where we see deserts, lush forests grew, while thick layers of ice and glaciers covered other places. Then something changed everything. Gigantic quantities of ice began to thaw. The seas rose slowly at first, then suddenly and catastrophically during immense floods that destroyed much of what existed on the face of the earth. Nearly all life was wiped out. Entire civilizations disappeared from history. By the time it was all over, the oceans had risen substantially. I wonder if the remains of some of those lost civilizations are still there on the sunken coasts? The floods destroyed everything before them, including my library. All of us who were its crystal databanks have since become homeless vagabonds. Over the millennia, we were washed around, ground down, and spread all over the planet. When at last I was on land as a part of this grain of sand, the winds blew me about and deposited me here in this desert. All information about the Chamber of Destiny and the Universal Sign was lost, along with other ancient knowledge in the library, lost forever.

Since then, the world has been like an orphan, growing up alone, lost, and disillusioned.

“Yet there may be a way.” Silicone murmured after a long pensive pause. “If we could go back in time, long ago before the great floods and visit the Great Library’s crystal archives, we could find the exact location of the Chamber of Destiny and reveal the secret of the Universal Sign.”

“While you have gone back in time, could you please drop us back into the river?” Everyone burst into laughter at this cynical comment.

“What do you mean, going back in time?” Hydrogen asked. “How could that be possible?”

“The universe comprises many dimensions. We perceive only the physical dimensions, but there are many more, invisible to three-dimensional physical earthlings. There are other dimensions on earth, and different types of powerful energy fields that cannot be readily detected. I cannot give you an easy explanation. What I reveal to you is information that passed through me when I was part of the library’s crystal databanks. You see, the higher dimensional energy fields cross each other at specific places on earth, often amplifying each other and rarely creating time-space vortices. I once came across a map of such energy fields. When they intersect, they designate areas on earth where powerful events regularly take place—like earthquakes, electromagnetic anomalies, volcanoes, shifting magnetic fields, and so on. I recall the location of one such place, not so far from here. It is high in the caves and subterranean tunnels of the Andes Mountains. One special cave is where many earthly energy fields intersect. Within it lies a rare time-space vortex, a portal, and a sort of a gateway to multidimensional time-space coordinates. If my memory serves, the portal somehow transports objects across multidimensional pathways and

into other perceived time-space coordinates. You see, within the physical realm, beings like us can perceive only three-dimensional space. And time, of course. Time is a one-directional variable, moving in one direction at a constant speed. We can move through space, but we cannot control the direction and pace of time. But multidimensional pathways can arbitrarily change the relative positions of time and space. As physical entities, we cannot understand that, yet it might be the only way. If we could get to the Andes portal cave and transport back to the time before the flood, find the Great Library archives and the Chamber of Destiny, then maybe we can learn about the Universal Sign. Wow, that's a challenging adventure!"

"We're ready to go," Hydrogen and Oxygen announced.

Everyone laughed again. "We can't even get out of this rotting puddle you got us into. And now you want to go back in time to find some long-gone sign to unlock the secrets of existence and the universe?"

Some time later, through the pond's surface they saw the reddish desert dawn sky, the morning sunlight illuminating the desolate landscape once more. They saw nothing but sand, rock, the rolling tumbleweed, and no other body of water. The night of wild imagining and dreamy conversations gave way to renewed awareness of their hopeless situation. Would they wither away out there without ever seeing the ocean or even the old roaring river?

Yet Silicone managed a smile. "There is much about creation we don't understand. There may be hope for you yet, my friends. Just be patient and have faith in the wisdom of the universe."

No one responded until Oxygen and Hydrogen whispered to Silicone. "We want to find the Source and all its wisdom. That's all we have wanted since we were

stuck in the mountain. If we ever get out of here, we pledge to dedicate our existence to the cause.”

“I knew you would say that,” Silicone said, “but I warn you. The journey will be arduous.”

“If that is our destiny, so be it.”

“Very well then,” Silicone said. “I’m getting bored around here. Why not? I’ll come along. Plus, you’re going to need my knowledge of the past.”

“Now,” Oxygen concluded, “we need to figure out how to get to that Andean mountain cave.”

Their enthusiasm reassured Silicone. Just then, the sun’s heavenly rays pierced the gloom and cast their intense light and warm embrace onto the pond. Before they knew what was happening, the sun’s warming caress brought them to a state of exalted levitation. Freed and weightless, the vaporized water particles floated upward into the vast blue skies.

“Magic. Miracle.” They rejoiced, as they departed skyward.

Before Hydrogen and Oxygen rose to leave the pond, they embraced Silicone. Together they floated upward, as the sun’s rays and the force of the wind carried them up, forward, and away at great speed. They soon joined small patches of cloud and sailed forth with them. None uttered a word. All the while, Silicone monitored the geography of the land passing below them.

And then there it was, far below. They spotted the river in the distance, just as they left it. It roared along arrogantly, pushing rocks about and rounding obstacles, ceaselessly twisting its way toward the ocean. Joy, then silent awe overtook them, because still farther the outline of the ocean appeared on the distant horizon, a blue boundary to another worldly dimension. It was more beautiful, more serene, and grander than they imagined.

Finally everyone finally understood: they had never been lost or hopeless. They were only experiencing another dimension of their existence within the universe, a realization others in the river might never perceive. Unlike when they were in the river, they no longer felt themselves superior. They felt humbler and wiser, possessed of a deeper sense of connection with the rest of creation. Perhaps they were one step closer to the Source of all creation.

The others looked at our three friends as they smiled and waved goodbye. Then, gathering together as drops of rain, they fell towards the roaring waves of the great blue ocean.

For all others the journey had ended. The roaring winds propelled the three heroes of our continuing story along their *starting voyage*.



## Ice, Fire, & Flood

*To begin again like children, in complete ignorance of what had happened before . . .*

Plato quoting the ancient legends of the Egyptian priests of Heliopolis

*And Ahura Mazda spoke unto Yima: Yima the fair, Upon the material world a fatal winter is about to descend, that shall bring a vehement, destroying frost, and snow of great abundance. Ten months of winter are there now, two months of summer, and these are cold as the water, cold as the earth, cold as the trees. . . . There all around falls deep snow; that is the direst plague.*

From the Iranian Avestic scriptures

*Abandoned by the gods, men were driven from their hearths and the human race was swept from the surface of the earth. The earth itself was beginning to lose its shape. Already the stars were coming adrift from the sky and falling into the gaping void. Then all the rivers, all the seas rose and overflowed. They swelled and boiled over all things. The earth sank beneath the giant 'surt' that set the entire earth on fire. The world was no more than an immense furnace. Flames spurted from fissures in the rocks, and everywhere there was the hissing of steam. All living things and all plant life were destroyed.*

Teutonic myth

*The first world was destroyed as a punishment for human misdemeanors by an all-consuming fire that came from above and below. The second world ended when the terrestrial globe toppled from its axis and everything was covered with ice. The third world ended in a universal flood. The present world is the fourth. Its fate will depend on whether or not its inhabitants behave in accordance with Creation.*

Hopi myth

*We have invented nothing.*

Picasso on seeing the cave paintings at Lascaux, southern France

Our three friends floated in the atmosphere for days, heading for the Andes Mountains, catching different winds to move along the right direction. Silicone's resourcefulness and knowledge of Earth's geography, geology, and atmospheric meteorology were indispensable.

The landscape spread underneath them, a giant tapestry of desolation and human desperation. One overpopulated human settlement after another soiled the planet. Everywhere upon the scarred earth, waste and toxicity poisoned the land, the water, and the air. Here and there, however, our friends spotted Mother Earth's sanctuary in isolated hidden forests, marshlands, or mountain lakes, where she tended hidden nurseries of all but extinct flora and fauna.

Why the contrast? Were humans not of this world? Our friends wondered. What they saw and the numerous questions that arose hardened their resolve to pursue their mission. They discussed their observations and what they would do when they reached the time-space transfer portal. They began calling it the *Transportal* for short.

Then they became aware of a pair of airborne strangers hovering and watching them. Noticing that they were noticed, the strangers approached hesitantly, and one said, "Forgive our intrusion. But, we could not help observe that instead of leaving us as rain like the rest, you have stayed up here for quite a while. We followed you. We wanted to know what you are up to. We overheard some of your conversations. We are very curious about it all. Allow me to introduce us. I am Nitrogen, and this is my old friend Helium. We are what

you find mostly here in the atmosphere along with Oxygen and Hydrogen.”

The strangers’ courtesy reassured our friends. They talked a long time about their experiences, and their ambitious plans and their destination. In turn, Nitrogen and Helium told them about the increasing atmospheric pollution, rising temperatures, increased radiation due to a shrinking earth’s protective ozone shield, as well as strange meteorological patterns of storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes. Such unprecedented conditions were a big problem for all who dwelt in the atmosphere, and they pondered the causes.

“Would you let us come along?” Nitrogen asked. “We would very much like to join your journey. The way we see it, if we do not seek help from a higher power, our habitat is doomed.”

“And we have a lot of buddies up here. Perhaps we can be helpful,” Helium added.

Cautiously, Silicone embraced their offer. “You must consider the potential dangers that may lie in our path. Your knowledge of the winds and the atmosphere is certainly welcome.”

The new friends made the trip to the Andes a breeze as favorable winds sped them along. Finally, they arrived in a reassuringly pure and harmonious natural world. In the distance spread the majestic Andes, their twisting north-south alignment a timeless axis of serenity, like a giant serpent asleep.

Before they reached the mountains, Silicone took them to hover over the wide, flat desert floor of the Peruvian Nazca Plain. Below them, hundreds of lines, geometric shapes, and beautifully carved animal figures patterned the rocky desert. The scale was immense. The numerous intersecting lines were perfectly straight and traversed many miles, as if someone deliberately left a giant drawing or map, visible only from the air. Indeed,

they realized that none of the patterns could be seen from the ground. Who carved such enigmatic geometric shapes and lines invisible to those creeping upon the earth's surface? Why and for whom?

"Who did all this?" Hydrogen asked.

"No one knows for certain," Silicone sighed. "Records describe them as very ancient. The lines, strips, and geometric shapes configure a map that contains much information about the earth. The ancients believed that if used three dimensionally in conjunction with natural features nearby and on the scale of the adjacent topography, it becomes a giant address book. There are also other theories and secrets about the site I do not know about. The animal figures are much smaller and belong to a later time. They say the local inhabitants carved them a few thousand years ago. They probably denote the ancients' awareness of the plain's sacredness, and may be a sign of respect to those who mapped the original geometric layout. Some believe the people were trying to attract or communicate with their heavenly gods."

"Airborne gods evidently," Helium observed.

"What gods? The Source?" Oxygen asked.

"It's too complicated. We can talk about it later. But I *can* tell you why we're here. Certain information on the map identifies the exact location of the Transportal. That's why we came."

After studying the lines a while longer, Silicone said, "I think I have it. We're ready to leave."

As they approached, our friends gazed at the distant, towering Andes peaks. Hydrogen and Oxygen recalled the elders in the icecap, still frozen in the safety of their crystal lattices. Were they aware of the grave issues that confronted Earth? What would they think about the mission?

Silicone monitored the landscape's coordinates

and topography until at last it said, "According to my calculations, this must be it."

Nitrogen and Helium helped the winds deliver our friends to their destination. They stood before a small, barely visible cave near the top of a mountain peak, overgrown and hidden by tree roots. They entered without hesitation. Light dimmed as it passed through the maze of roots and shrubs over the cave's mouth. Floating dust and haze reflected the narrow beams to produce a hypnotic, translucent atmosphere. Here and there, a spider's web captured the light beams, appearing as illuminated fishing nets suspended in a dark ocean. Through the dim light they saw algae-like vegetation growing everywhere. Insects buzzed about, mocking fireflies as they passed through the light. The plants and insects seemed out of place in the high, dry, cold climate. Surely an alternative energy source was near.

Silicone pointed to a deep cavity or well in the center of the cave, from which came a strange halo of bright white light. There was no vegetation near the well, just bare rocks. As our bewildered friends stared at the shining well, a fly unwittingly approached its mouth. Our friends watched with disbelief as the insect disappeared in a bright flash of light, as if stricken by lightning. It was their first encounter with the magical Transportal.

"So what now?" Helium asked at last. "Should we go for the zap or is there another method to this madness?"

"According to my recollection," Silicone said, "this place is a crossing point for multitudes of Earth's energy fields. My friends, we are witnessing Mother Earth's magical power. We have seen a brief reflection of the Source. But I have not the slightest clue about the Transportal's power."

At that very instant, a voice came from a large

white rock near the mouth of the well. “Perhaps I can be of assistance. But first I would appreciate knowing who you are, where you come from, and where and what you seek?”

The stranger was Calcium. They spent some time telling their story and their destination. Calcium then gave them important information about the Transportal.

“I have no specific scientific knowledge about it. I do recall that many thousands of years ago certain humanoid entities came to this cave and transported through time and space. I know nothing of the details of their mission or its outcome. But, before they entered the well, their leader instructed them to hold hands and remember his previous instructions—which of course I did not hear. Upon his signal, they jumped into the well all together and disappeared from view. I overheard that the time-space lapse would last exactly twelve hours, something to do with Earth’s orbit around the sun. They could stay in their destination only when the sun was invisible. Sure enough, twelve hours later they reappeared and left without speaking a word. That was the only time I saw this well used, except for the occasional unfortunate insect. That is all I can tell you, but I really would like to go with you. I have stared and wondered about this well for too many millennia.”

“Welcome aboard,” Silicone said for the rest.

Our friends discussed other things they did not know about the Transportal, especially where and when it might transport them. Although they did not know how to determine their time-place destination—as that group of humanoids apparently did—they were glad that they would be back in twelve hours. Also, they knew at least that they should embrace, concentrate, and jump in at the same time. That sounded easy enough.

“For now,” Silicone cautioned, “I cannot tell you exactly where the library was. For that, we need to travel

to a point long before the floods. But since we don't know exactly how to use the Transportal, we'll have to depend on trial and error or sheer luck."

With Silicone's caveat in mind, they approached the well. They saw the abyss to which they were about to entrust their fate. It was a bottomless pit, lit by a whitish-blue halo and buzzing with multitudes of strange sparks. None of them had seen anything like it before. It had no familiar physical dimensions. Indeed, it appeared quite unearthly. They all looked at each other, nodded, embraced, and leaped into the unknown.

After what seemed like a brief lost moment, they found themselves in a large cave, dazed by a flash of brilliant white light. They were all there, and still together, relieved to be conscious and in one piece. They looked around curiously and found another strange perplexity. They were inside a very large cave with a fairly level floor and a very high ceiling. Here and there, black soot covered the ceiling, an indication of regular indoor fires.

They peeked outside through the narrow entrance. It was unusually dark. No visible stars, no moonlight, just a pitch-black night sky. Either all heavenly bodies had forsaken Earth, or clouds covered them. A powerful storm raged, like none they had ever seen. Only frequent thunder and lightning interrupted the howling wind. Intense rains and black bituminous hail balls smashed anything in their path. A foul-smelling smoke thickened the air. The wind roared through the cave's mouth, an emissary of the symphony of horrors outside.

"I'm glad that hole had enough sense to land us inside the cave." Helium murmured.

Within the cave, many human families huddled around numerous small fires. They wore torn, dirty animal skins or unfinished leather. They were dirty,

frightened, weak, and desperate. The men went around, handing out tiny pieces of smoked meat and dried berries to the women, who clutched their hungry, crying children. A few skinny canines sat by the fires, gnawing the bones of large animals and jumping at the thunder and lightning.

Beside the small bonfires was a larger central fire that illuminated a tall flat wall in the center of the cave. A roughly built scaffold of wooden platforms and ladders gave access to the higher parts of the wall. All along its surface were charcoal drawings and symbols that Silicone recognized at once. They were linguistic symbols of people who lived around 17,000 years ago on the northern plains of Asia. They were looking at an improvised writing board. An old man spoke to a few dozen young children as he wrote with charcoal on the cave wall. It appeared to be a makeshift classroom.

In another corner, a few of the older males and females gathered around a fire. They were tall, fair-skinned, and their shining blue eyes radiated intelligence. Despite their pathetic surroundings, they neither looked nor behaved like savages. They talked busily, drawing lines and symbols on the dirt floor, and marking on and reading from wooden tablets. They pored over a map made of elaborate lines and stone and wood markers in the dirt floor. Our friends approached the heated discussion. Understanding certain phrases of their language, Silicone translated.

“We have to move soon and to the south,” one man said.

“We need to wait for the weather to calm down. We have to find out what the catastrophe has done to our homeland,” a graying woman of obvious high stature replied.

Another man, holding an elaborate staff shaped like a coiled serpent and appearing to be the chief of the



group, spoke. “The catastrophe has changed everything we used to know. Nothing is the same. The animals either died or have disappeared. The forests have been ravaged. The few surviving trees have borne no fruit for four years. We do not know everything that has happened, but I agree. We need to move—and soon. We are running out of food. The storms and floods have ruined everything. We haven’t seen other survivors for months. It’s dangerous out there, but we can’t stay here starving and struggling like apes. The children are weak and restless. We have a duty to save them and our civilization. Much of our world is gone. Our cities, homes, schools, and temples, all destroyed. Look at us. When we die, what will our children and their children remember, living like scavenging animals? Will any of them know the glories of their ancestors, their heavenly gods, or their wonderful cities and temples? What will they recall of our sciences, arts, and culture? Will anyone remember the sacred wisdom? Look at our miserable children. They can’t even deal with our efforts to educate them. They are afraid, cold, and hungry. The volcano smoke, ash and lava are poisoning us. Most of the young ones will not live long enough to pass on what little we can teach them. Can’t you see that our history is doomed?”

The older woman stopped the old chief’s hopeless ramble calmly. “Then we will have to do better than the best we can do. That will be our destiny, for as long as we survive. We have to use all our past wisdom and knowledge to ensure our children’s survival. That’s what our gods want us to do to preserve our legacy. We will send out an expedition to track migrating animals. We can follow their instincts to a safer place. As soon as the storms subside, I’ll dispatch a few scouts.”

“But the storms have been going on for over six months.” another woman cried.

The old matriarch looked sorrowfully at the children in their makeshift class and sighed, “I wonder how much of our culture and civilization will survive the chaos and struggle? How much of the wisdom our gods gave us will be lost?”

“What great ‘catastrophe’ do they mean?” Oxygen asked.

The reply came from a few yards away. “It was an unprecedented and unimaginable event. No one comprehends the immense scale of destruction. All sorts of turbulent events have followed the catastrophe that happened almost four years ago.”

They saw a totally black earthling, lodged in a charcoal writing stick one of the elders was using to take notes on a flat stone slate.

“Who are you?” Oxygen asked.

“I am Carbon.”

“This planet’s keeper of the sun’s energy,” Silicone recalled. “Every life form on earth is made partly of carbon. Its stored energy gives all processed organic matter, like wood, coal, and oil, their quality as fuel.”

Carbon affirmed. “I see that you know a lot. Please accept my humble greetings.”

“Can you tell us more about the catastrophe?” Nitrogen asked.

“What I can tell you is that it happened and ended very suddenly. These people, whom I have accompanied for years, belonged to a much larger community. They lived in a fertile, forested land. I came from one such forest. Theirs was a lush, temperate world of rivers and lakes where countless herds of large, hairy mammals roamed. Finding food was the least of concerns. Life was an ongoing merry affair of harmony between nature, humans, and gods. For thousands of years, countless races and cultures evolved from such

abundance. Many developed large civilized communities. Rivers flowed, seasons passed, festivities came and went, and they paid tribute to the gods for good fortune. Their children were reared lovingly in the community traditions and knowledge. They cared for their elders and buried the deceased respectfully. Only rare regional quarrels and tribal arguments disturbed their lives, conflicts usually limited in scope and resolved by councils of elders. Their problems were rarely related to survival or exploitation. Their gods taught that humanity must live in harmony with itself and nature. Disagreements were resolved amicably. They had lived that way for as long as anyone could remember. . . . Excuse me for a second.”

The old human lifted the writing stick and scribbled something on a stone tablet.

When the writing stick was again laid down, Carbon continued. “Then one day all hell broke loose. It started with strange lights and colors in a cloudless blue sky. Then out of nowhere, storm clouds appeared on the horizon and rushed forward like a dark army, shooting lightning. The animals went mad, screamed and ran around. The sun’s light failed, as if night had come. The winds became more and more violent and powerful. The atmosphere blew up and thundered. Strange atmospheric halos of light and constant lightning filled the sky. Animals and humans were sucked up into the air and disappeared. Howling winds uprooted giant trees and tossed them around like sticks. One lovely tree was my old home. Then countless giant tornado funnels formed. Like an army of black-booted infantry, they crushed and vaporized anything in their path. It went on for a few hours. Everyone ran for safety, trying to save their dear ones. Many were already dead when *it* happened.”

“*What* happened?” Hydrogen asked breathlessly.

“The catastrophe. The world turned sideways.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m serious. The world seemed to turn on its side. Barely visible through the clouds, the sun seemed to slide across the sky. Moments later, horrendous winds blasted by with unimaginable force and speed. They audibly howled.

“Shock waves!” Silicone gasped.

“I cannot make you imagine,” Carbon went on, “what I shall never forget. The ground shook violently for hours. The earth’s layers heaved, cracked, and shifted up or down. Giant fissures opened everywhere. Fire, ash, and smoke spewed from the ruptures. Immense earthquakes and volcanic eruptions continued for months until the winds, the storms, and the lightning grew monstrous. Trees and animals vaporized or burst into flames, roasted, turned to ashes, or just disappeared as if transported into an invisible dimension. Sometime later, out of nowhere came the floods. Miles-high ocean waves rolled up the peaceful river valleys and lowland plains and washed away everything thousands of miles inland. They smashed, mangled, and uprooted all in their path. They carried water, mud, debris, and dead life forms. Only the highest altitudes were spared. Entire forests, animals, and people, indeed most of the world’s life forms were obliterated. Whole civilizations either disappeared or found themselves reduced to a state of desperate survival. The humans you see here are among the few survivors. They have struggled to migrate to a safer refuge. They call themselves Aryans, after their old home, Aryana Veja.”

“I know the event you have described,” Silicone interjected. “The Great Library archives described it in detail. It happened millennia before the Flood event that destroyed my old library and cast me adrift.”

“You mean there will be another flood? Another catastrophe?” Carbon seemed shocked.

“Yes, my new friend,” Silicone replied. “Traumatic cataclysms have visited this planet since the beginning. But, the records that survive are wiped clean of their previous historical heritage and detail. What little remains in the human survivors’ collective memory often appears much later as distorted tales or myths.”

“Please describe what you know about the event that reduced us to such a sad state,” Carbon requested.

“A sudden drastic *pole shift* event caused it.”

“Pole shift?” our friends repeated with amazement.

“Yes. Here is how it all happened,” Silicone said. “You see, Earth is a giant sphere, but its solid rocky outer crust is only about five hundred miles thick. It floats freely on a molten lava mantle, which in turn covers an inner metallic core. The core is made of an outer liquid metal core and an inner solid metal core. The outer liquid metallic core turns freely around the inner solid metal core at Earth’s very center. And just like the center point of a spinning spindle, it moves relatively slower than the solid metal center. The differing relative speed of the liquid metal outer core and the solid metal inner core creates Earth’s tremendous electromagnetic fields. The movement differential between the solid and molten metal cores is Earth’s own giant electromagnetic field generator. The phenomenon serves essential functions. For example, in the absence of an electromagnetic field, drag forces exerted by the sun’s solar wind would blow Earth’s gaseous atmosphere away. The earth’s magnetic shield deflects the electrically charged solar wind particles. Without it, the atmosphere would be blasted away into space, exposing all life forms to intense harmful solar radiation that would annihilate them instantly. Earth’s electromagnetic field affects events like earthquakes, volcanoes, and atmospheric storms directly.

“Like most things, Earth is not flawless. Its core layers are not perfect spheres. The liquid metallic core is much denser than the molten lava mantle. But like tree roots, the liquid metallic core and the liquid mantle penetrate each other’s zones. The earth’s crust is not uniformly thick everywhere. There are high mountains, deep oceans, and thick ice caps at the poles. Earth itself is not a perfect sphere. Due to centrifugal forces caused by its rotation around itself, it dips at the poles and bulges at the equatorial latitudes. Also, the moon’s gravity moves billions of tons of water from one place to another every day as oceanic tidal waves. Other neighboring cosmic bodies also exert gravitational forces on earth. And so on. Then there is the flotation of Earth’s crust over the outer liquid lava mantle. The crust’s slow slippage over its liquid interior is called *tectonic* plate movement from whose built up friction energy earthquakes result. Earth’s energy fields, in conjunction with its mineral mass configuration and movements, create and preserve the atmosphere and all other ecological settings that sustain life on earth. It is a finely balanced life-support system, an intricate nursery, provided and maintained by Mother Earth for all earthlings. Now, if some unusually powerful outside cosmic force affects the fragile balance, then the whole thing can be thrown off balance. All earthly phenomena seem fairly well choreographed, yet introducing a sudden external force can change the fragile arrangement. External influence might include unusual temporary gravitational force from a large cosmic body like a comet, asteroid, or another planet. Are you guys following me so far?”

“Sort of. Go on.”

“During the pole shift Carbon described to us, Earth’s entire solid surface crust suddenly slipped on the interior liquid mantle. I do not know what caused that

event 17,000 ago. Maybe we will find out later. It was one of the most destructive events in recorded history.

“At that time the north pole was somewhere over Greenland, and the polar icecap covered the North Sea, northwestern Europe, and northeastern America. The southern icecap did not cover all of Antarctica, and its long peninsula was temperate and habitable. If any maritime culture lived there, the pole shift froze their continent into an uninhabitable wasteland. Before the pole shift, the equator crossed the southern tip of Africa, leaving North Africa a temperate savannah. Many ancient civilizations lived there. The deserts of North Africa, the Middle East, and central Asia are quite young. Until about seventeen thousand years ago, their lush plains were home to many people. The Australian land mass was farther south, cooler, and not so arid. The biggest impact occurred, however, in Asia’s northern Siberian plains. Before the pole shift, icecaps covered most of northwestern Europe and northeastern America and were much larger and thicker than the icecaps of our era. They accumulated over hundreds of millennia, and with so much water stored in ice, the world’s ocean level was almost 450 feet lower. Who knows how many ancient ruins, how much of the world’s history, the rising seas have submerged? With the northern Asian plains warmer and the ocean level lower, the shallow Bering Strait was dry land and at lower and more temperate latitude. Likely, people and animals moved freely between Asia and America. Population exchange between America and Asia took place far longer than some believe today. Before the cataclysm, fertile plains and forests, rivers, animals, and humans were common in northwestern Asia. The flat northern Siberian landmass and the lower ocean levels made for large, broad fertile plains. The milder supported a variety of flora and fauna. As Carbon said, there was plenty of

food to support the hunter-gatherer human inhabitants. They were excellent horsemen and hunters, strong people whose horsemanship and knowledge of weapons were useful when their survivors fought their way south, southeast, and southwest. Immigrants, they overwhelmed or mixed with and adopted the cultures they found to the south. The mythical Aryans, who once lived west of the Ural Mountains, migrated south, west, and southwest. The ancestors of the northeast Asians, who lived east of the Urals, migrated southeast. The inhabitants of the Americas were cut off from their Asian brethren forever, as the northern passage suddenly moved north, became cold and hostile, and over the millennia sank beneath the rising oceans.

“Some believe the pole shift moved the north pole approximately twelve degrees, its present location in the Arctic Ocean. The south pole shifted closer to the center of the Antarctic land mass. The two most affected areas were northern Siberia and Antarctica. A thick blanket of ice covered Antarctica and the remains of any civilization that may have existed there. Everything near the new polar zones that survived the initial catastrophe froze within hours. In our own time, the remains of mammoths, woolly rhinos, saber-tooth tigers, ancient deer species, and trees and other vegetation turn up now and then under several meters of permafrost in northern Siberia and Alaska.

“The catastrophe caused winds, storms, lightning, earthquakes, and volcanoes, and after the tsunamis that rolled over the low lying regions, crushing most life forms into heaps of mangled flesh and bones, tree debris, mud, rocks, and volcanic ash—the content of most Siberian and Alaskan permafrost. Modern geological evidence in the excavated soil strata from the period confirms the occurrence of such an event. Most developed human civilization disappeared instantly.



Entire races, all their accomplishments and histories, vanished from the pages of history. The few remaining survivors were thrown into a state of primitive survival and forced to struggle against unimaginable hardships. The world's climate changed rapidly and unfamiliarly in most regions. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, rising oceans, and periodic flooding wrought continuous havoc. The world's human and animal populations fell drastically. After many years of such conditions, animal and human survivors faced transformed global conditions. Many species that could not migrate or adapt became extinct. The hungry human survivors hunted many of the remaining species—mammoths, woolly rhinos, saber-tooth tigers—to extinction. Their distant cousins survived because they were in less affected areas of the earth, like south Asia and Africa. The surviving humans of the freezing northern Asian plains migrated en masse, passing on what recollected knowledge they remembered to new generations.

“So began the mass migrations of the Aryans and the ancestors of modern East Asians from the northern Asian land mass. Although new ice began slowly forming over the new polar regions, the much quicker thawing of the old ice caps, burned memories of rising oceans, floods, and lost cities and civilizations into the world's mythical and religious consciousness. The catastrophe still affects modern history.”

Silicone took a deep breath and considered the hour. “I believe our time is nearing its end. According to my estimate, we've been here over ten hours.”

Our friends looked around the dim cave. The humans huddled around their fires, clinging to hope. Outside the storms and winds howled, and balls of black hail searched for victims, all lit by frequent lightning. The skinny canines dozed off restlessly, shaking or growling at every disturbance outside.

Hydrogen pointed to a statue on a stone pedestal, a chubby female in a meticulously creased white dress with dried flowers and colored beads at her feet. The dress was an attractively complex outfit, unlike the cave dwellers' rags, evidence of the people's cultural consciousness. The woman smiled sweetly and held her chubby arms out in an embrace.

"Who is she?" Hydrogen asked.

"That is the Mother Earth goddess," Carbon answered.

"A representation of fertility and sustenance, important to hunter-gatherer cultures that depend on nature for their survival," Silicone amplified.

"I cannot tell you how grateful I am to meet you all tonight." Carbon said.

"Why don't you come with us?" Hydrogen proposed, looking at the rest for confirmation.

Silicone took the initiative: "We must leave in only a few minutes. Prepare yourselves. Embrace each other and Carbon, so he can return to our time with us."

While holding and waiting, they gazed at the world of ice, fire, and floods they were about to leave forever...the Mother Earth shrine, the improvised blackboard, the sleeping survivors, the flickering flames, and the nervous skinny canines. Then they noticed the old chief in front of a drawing on a prominent corner of the cave wall.

They could barely hear his murmur: "Praised be our heavenly lord Azhi Dahaka, for we need you not banish us so."

The chief fell to his knees, and kissed the ground. The large drawing was of a strange humanoid, a tall hairless man, with large shining eyes, wearing a metallic cape and a symbol—⊕—on his chest. He wore a large helmet from which protruded seven serpents spitting lightning from their mouths. He looked serene,

smiled calmly, and held an object in each hand. In one, was what appeared to be a winged flaming heart. In the other, was a staff shaped like a dragon/serpent, from whose eyes lightning radiated.

“Is that thing the old man is bowing to a god?”

Thunderous lightning shook the place, made the skinny dogs tremble, and drowned Oxygen’s last words. Another flash of white light revealed our friends back in the Transportal cave. An insect buzzing innocently about veered into the cave’s mouth—and disappeared at once.



## Empires Of Gold And Steel

*The ancients said that this man and his companions traveled north, working marvels as he went and they never saw him again . . . He gave men instructions, how they should live, speaking of great love and kindness . . . admonishing them to be good and cause no harm or injury to others, but to love and show charity to all . . . He lifted huge stones by his word alone, he controlled fire, healed the sick by touch, spoke every tongue and knew of many miracles . . . They left as they came in the sea on a 'plume of foam' . . . In most places he was called Viracocha."*

### **Inca myth**

*No longer can be seen the book of Popol Vuh which the kings had in olden times . . . The original book, written long ago, existed, but now its sight is hidden but to the searcher and to the thinker.*

### **Anonymous 16th Century Inca chronicler**

*The 'First Men' . . . measured the round face of the earth . . . examined the four points of the arch of the sky . . . succeeded in seeing, succeeded in knowing all that there is in the world . . . But the 'dark' heart of heaven blew mist into their eyes . . . In this way all the wisdom and all the knowledge of the 'First Men,' their memory of their origin, and their beginning were destroyed.*

### **The Mayan Popol Vuh**

A shooting star zoomed across the star-filled Andean night sky. Hydrogen and Oxygen looked at each other reminiscently. The group sat just outside the cave. They had much to discuss.

"I wonder when we will find the Chamber of Destiny and the Universal Sign," Hydrogen mumbled impatiently.

"First, we need to locate my old library,"

Silicone said, “and when it was destroyed. We cannot choose the Transportal’s time-space delivery point, so for now we can only go where it sends us.”

“How can we learn to make it send us where we want?” Carbon asked.

“I am not sure if that’s a question of learning or of wisdom,” Silicone replied.

“What do you mean?”

“Knowledge and wisdom are quite different,” Silicone said. “Knowledge comes from information, but wisdom comes from becoming worthy to attain it, and one becomes worthy by comprehending meaningful experiences.”

“What does all that have to do with the Transportal?”

“Because the nature of its power means people with undesirable objectives cannot use it. Think about it. People could influence historic events and change the future in many ways. That’s a risky proposition in the hands of the unwise. As its location is hidden, so are its exact navigational powers. We will have to learn about it on our way. Until then, we must rely on the Transportal’s guidance.”

Dim light filtering through the catacombs of roots and branches about the cave’s barely visible mouth announced the dawn. Our friends, ready for their next journey, gathered around the mouth of the Transportal.

Seconds later, they were in an enclosed room without windows and lit only by oil lamps mounted on the perfectly fitted, polished masonry walls. The stone blocks, cut at random angles, fit together like a jigsaw puzzle without mortar. Their stonemasons clearly knew advanced geometry and quarrying and polishing techniques. Calcium went to investigate. Regularly carved niches in the masonry walls housed statues and sculptures of finely crafted shining metal or glazed

ceramic. Exquisite cushions lay atop beautifully patterned colorful rugs on one side of the room, the colors of the textiles full of life even in the dim light. The people who created the space knew craftsmanship and geometry, how to dye fabric, and most significantly had a sense of beauty.

A man dressed in beautiful garments sat cross-legged on a cushion, seeming to stare at nothing, a sorrowful gaze. He was small but fit, his complexion golden brown and his jet-black hair tied behind his head. On a small table before him were corn cakes and water.

“Where are we?” Nitrogen asked.

“I don’t know yet,” Silicone said.

A metal lock clicked, and a heavy wooden door swung open. A tall, fair-skinned, bearded man walked in. He wore tight black pants, leather boots, slack white shirt, and a leather vest. A steel sword swung on one side, a flint-type pistol on the other. He stood silently before the sitting man. Another man, who resembled the sitting man, but more simply dressed, accompanied him. The tall man bowed, bent his left knee, and said, “Greetings. I regret having to meet you for the first time in such circumstances.”

The second man spoke translating into a different language for the sitting man, who neither moved nor spoke, just gazing into the distance as if to ignore them.

“Who are they?” Carbon asked. “What language does the second man speak?”

“This is Atahualpa, the Great Inca, leader of the Empire of the Sun. They are speaking the imperial language, Quechua,” a voice replied.

Our friends turned toward the voice and saw a brilliantly shining earthling in a beautifully engraved ring on the sitting man’s finger.

“I am Gold,” It said. “Who are you, and how did

you get here?”

Silicone briefed Gold about their journey. “Would you translate for us?”

“Yes, of course,” Gold said. “I am just as curious about what is happening as you are. Who is this tall bearded man?”

“He is Francisco Pizarro, the commanding general and the official envoy of the Spanish Crown.” The answer came from the sword at the man’s waist. “I am Iron. Forgive my unsavory housing. I regret that it was not of my choosing. Please allow me to offer my assistance.”

“Yes,” Silicone said, “the strong one. I know of you.”

“I overheard your conversation, and your journey fascinates me. I also seek my true destiny away from this sword.”

Just then, Atahualpa addressed Pizarro, without turning his gaze. “Who are you...really? And what brings you to our sacred land?”

“I am Comandante Francisco Pizarro of the Court of Their Majesties, the Holy Roman Emperor and Empress, Monarchs of the Roman Catholic faithful, Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain and all her territories. I represent their Majesties. We are here to offer the heathen savages of this land the righteous truth and virtuous ways of Christianity, the Catholic Church, and His Holiness the Pope, Christ’s vicar on earth.”

“You speak many big words,” Atahualpa countered, “but you say nothing. You say you have come from another world across the great ocean, from the direction of the rising Sun Lord, the blessed spirit of the universe, and you mean to teach us your ways?”

“Yes. We bring your people the gospel of salvation.”

“Salvation? Today you massacred thousands of



unarmed people who came to greet you in peace in Cajamarca. Even as they fled in fear and confusion, or tried to surrender.”

“I regret that my men went too far. We meant to capture you alive, not to slaughter your unarmed entourage.”

“Capture me? Why?”

“Because you are a numerous, powerful, civilized people. Even if we bring reinforcements, we are outnumbered. Our strategy was to take you hostage and force your people to surrender and cooperate.”

“You call us *savages*, yet you say we are civilized? Who was that angry fat man who gave me that object today? What did he want?”

“That was Hernando de Luque, a Christian friar. He tried to give you our Holy Bible. He meant to have you submit to it. When you insulted him by throwing the sacred gospels on the ground, he called on my men to defend the Faith—and to rescue his fat flesh from you unpredictable infidels. That is why there was so much havoc. I regret I could not capture you with less bloodshed.”

“No one greeted us or spoke to us in our language,” Atahualpa replied. “We came unarmed to talk peacefully. We brought the Sacred Disc to show our intentions.”

“We meant to capture you, not talk. The Friar interfered too early and spoiled my plans. The needless bloodshed could have been avoided. Now, what was that golden disc?”

“The Sacred Disc you melted down and destroyed came from Coricancha, the holy Temple of the Sun, handed down from generation to generation by our ancestors. It represents Sun’s passage through the seasons and the Houses of Heaven. It is a calendar of time, yearly seasons, ages of the world, and more. Long

ago, our Heavenly Lord Viracocha taught it to our ancestors. And we brought it to you as a test.”

“Who is Viracocha? And what did you mean to test?”

“Viracocha is mankind’s patron and protector, the teacher of all knowledge, science, agriculture, the building arts, and civilization. He taught the secrets of the Sacred Disc to our ancestors. Legends say he came from the sea in a ship shaped like a winged dragon/serpent, riding on a sea of foam and fire. Twelve disciples accompanied him. The legends say they were all tall men with shining skin. They wore flowing white capes and hoods of a strange shining metal. They came many thousands of years ago when our ancestors were few, the sole survivors of a great calamity. They lived in caves like animals, having forgotten their forefathers’ civilization. Viracocha and his disciples traveled all along the coast and into the mountains, coaxing the survivors out of their caves. He recalled to them civilization, science, language, and the art of building. He gave them plant seeds and showed them how to raise crops on terraced highland slopes and to irrigate them from water reservoirs and canals. Most important, he taught them the word, laws, and how man and nature can live in peace. The Sacred Disc came from another of Viracocha’s gifts, the study of the heavens. The temple priests teach their disciples such heavenly sciences.”

“And why did you present it to us as a test?” Pizarro asked again.

“After you landed on the coast, the priests, the nobles, and the commoners argued about who you really are. Many think you are the fulfillment of the prophecies, Viracocha’s disciples returning to us. You are all tall, fair-skinned men, and you wear white capes and metallic helmets. And you carry Viracocha’s sacred sign.”

“What sign?”

“The two crossed lines, the cross is one of the signs of Viracocha.”

“You mean the crucifix, the Christian cross. Yes, it is one of our holy symbols as well. But what prophecies?”

“Viracocha’s good work ended in a fight with Pachacamac, the god of war on Earth. He came after and fought Viracocha. Pachacamac forced Viracocha’s followers to withdraw across the skies and the oceans, but ancient prophecies speak of Viracocha’s return to restore peace and harmony on Earth. Many believe the arrival of your ships from across the seas are the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. Others do not.”

“The Aztec king, Moctezuma,” Silicone recalled, “mistook the Spanish conquistador Cortez for the Aztec god-hero Quetzalcoatl. His sign is a plumed serpent. At first they welcomed the Spanish and presented a jeweled feather cape and a golden serpentine mask, but the hospitality ended quickly when the Aztecs realized their mistake. Then they slaughtered most of the Spaniards, and few survivors escaped. Soon the Spanish returned and subjugated them. They brought with them European diseases that wiped out much of the native population.”

“We were en-route to Cuzco, our capital,” Atahualpa resumed. “We stopped to rest at the thermal springs just east of Cajamarca, when we heard of your landing. When you came quickly to Cajamarca, I knew you were seeking me. Ignoring the advice of cautious elders, I decided to greet you and test you with the Sacred Disc. Your response to it would reveal your identity and purpose. We had heard of the atrocities committed in the nations to the north. I decided to greet you personally, since you could be the gods returning. I came in peace, and peaceful greeting must be respected. But today you violated that basic honored rule. You

confirmed the pessimists' worst fears. You are unenlightened men and certainly not disciples of Viracocha. We demand an apology. Release me at once and return to your own land."

"You are in no position to negotiate," Pizarro sneered. "I cannot grant your request."

Atahualpa sighed angrily. "I feared so."

"You say your gods looked like us. You mean they were like men?"

Atahualpa pointed to two golden statues displayed in opposing niches. One was a man wearing a robe adorned with a  $\oplus$  symbol, and a large headdress from which serpents protruded. He held a staff in each outstretched hand. "That is Viracocha," Atahualpa said, "and there is Pachacamac."

The second statue was humanoid but with the head of a beast—fierce eyes, protruding fangs, a fearsome expression. A big 'X' sign, from which a vulture's head protruded, adorned its chest. It held a long knife in one hand, and in the other a human skull by the hair.

"The Aztecs have a similar patron god, named Quetzalcoatl, and the war-god, Tezcatlipoca. Cortez says the Aztecs are especially devoted to Tezcatlipoca. Human skulls and 'X' symbols, like those on this Pachacamac statue, adorn their war banners and sacrificial altars. Were they men or gods?"

"Yes, though they are far away, we have heard rumors of the Aztecs' savagery and human sacrifices to Pachacamac. Unlike us Incas, they have caused much misery among the people they subjugate. Viracocha and Pachacamac are neither men nor gods. They were deities, god-men."

"Sacrilege. There is but one God, the Christian God, creator of all that exists."

"Yes, the source of all creation. We believe in

the Creator too. The Creator blesses us and sustains life through its worldly manifestation, the Sun. That must be what you call your Christian God.”

“The sun is not God. God created it and everything else.”

“Yes, the Creator. We worship the same thing.”

“Then why do you worship the sun and so-called god-men?”

“I told you we worship the sun as the Creator’s manifestation. Viracocha is a legendary god who shaped our history and culture. He left relics and buildings as his legacy.”

“What buildings?”

“Great stone structures that are our holy sites. Viracocha’s men built them of stone, shaped and moved through the air by the power of their Word. They taught our ancestors to build stone terraces to control the earth and water for farming. The towers of sacred Sacsayhuaman were designed to study the heavens. They drew the lines in the coastal desert of Nazca. Many sacred temples and ancient sites in Inca lands are dedicated to Viracocha. Just as there are ancient sites dedicated to Pachacamac, the war-god, where you can see him portrayed with carvings of warriors and dead or dismembered enemies. Our subject nations are no longer certain of the mysterious origins of their ancient sites and legends. The heritage of the people of Nazca, Paracas, the Chimus, and the Chancas describe those ancient times. They say their dry coastal deserts were once lush and fertile, with many rivers and lakes fed by the ice atop the mountains. But then the waters stopped flowing a few thousand years ago. They say their food supplies and population numbers dwindled, weakening the coastal nations and leaving them subjects of the Inca Empire. We brought Viracocha’s peaceful ways, the ways we inherited from our ancestors who lived in

Tihuanaco near Lake Titicaca where you can still see the ancient Temple of Viracocha. The Inca nation united all those warlike people and turned them away from war, misery, and death—the ways of Pachacamac. We restored peace, and the ancient systems of farming, stonework, and water management.”

“You call those pre-Inca nations ancient,” Pizarro said. “How ancient?”

“Older than anyone knows. Ancient records engraved on sacred stone tablets and guarded in our temples say there have been four *ages* of civilization before ours. Calamities destroyed them all. The present age began after the floods and the departure of Viracocha. They say our age is about twelve thousand years old and will end after many hardships and great changes on Earth. Then Viracocha will return to save us, his children.”

“What changes?”

“I do not understand much of the prophecy. Our temple guardians protect the sacred tablets that reveal Viracocha’s final instructions before he left. That information is not available to everyone. It is held and guarded in secret locations, awaiting the time when it will be revealed to the chosen ones.”

“What time?”

“When our age ends, the next will begin, the sixth age. Viracocha will return to help his children. The sacred texts contain the secret guidelines for that era.”

“So your people think we are the fulfillment of that prophecy? They think one of us is your so-called god Viracocha?” Pizarro asked.

“Some believed so. But rebel nations want to use you for political reasons, to betray us. I am trying to lead my people responsibly.”

“Is that why you tried to welcome me instead of fighting?”

Atahualpa gazed sadly into infinity. “I told you that despite my doubts I respect my people’s beliefs and traditions. I shall bear the pain of knowing that my people and nation will suffer from my mistake for many generations.”

“I have some questions,” Pizarro said flatly. “I will be frank. Your civilization dazzles me. The architecture, the stone masonry, and the water systems are many times more advanced and complex than anything in Europe. Even the famous Andalusian Moors would marvel at the skills of your craftspeople. Only the Orient products rival your metal castings, your ceramics, and your textiles. You know agriculture, food storage, and medicine.”

“But what is your question?”

“Three questions, really. First, why do you do not have a writing system?”

“Our expanded Inca Empire is only just over a hundred years old. We have a system for record keeping, and experts who know how to use it. They serve the empire’s administrative needs. Otherwise we transfer information orally. Our official messengers and record keepers have excellent memories. What is your next question?”

“Why don’t you use gold or silver to value the goods and services you trade?”

“I do not understand the question,” the Grand Inca replied. “The land belongs to the Creator. As the gods taught us of the Creator’s wishes, Inca society rests on equal benefits, justice, and welfare for all. The Inca Administrators are caretakers of the land and the people, maintaining the empire and its security. We build and maintain roads, water reservoirs and canals, public buildings, temples, and other sacred sites. Regional communities—we call them *ayllus*—care for the land parcels entrusted to them. They manage and farm the

land. They provide food for their people and obtain other needs at designated exchange centers. If the ayllus neglect or harm the land, the Creator's gift, their leaders lose their privileges as punishment. The more they produce, the more they can obtain by exchange. We let no Inca subject starve, and our healers provide care without cost. How can gold and silver measure the Creator's love of the world and its people? That makes no sense to me. Why do you worship gold and silver? They are good for ornaments. They are easy to smelt, malleable enough to cast and work, and never corrode. Indeed they are beautiful, but the Creator blesses nature with them freely. Why should we equate something found freely in nature with the fruits of our labor and craft? You cannot eat gold if you are hungry or wear it if you are cold. The value of a golden object is represented by the amount of effort that transforms it useful. Your lust for gold and silver puzzles us. How can you take the precious Sacred Disk and melt it to a valueless block of gold? You are either crazy or stupid. If people's efforts and work products are exchanged for what the Creator provides freely, then gold can enslave craftspeople and farmers who have no access to gold. Then only those with gold control the rules of exchange, like the value of a bag of maize or an alpaca in gold. And that makes no sense. In any society, some must find and process gold or other natural minerals. Some must craft them into useful or beautiful objects, while others must farm to feed everyone else. Here the Incas exchange according to how much work and effort goes into producing each craft or crop, and NOT according to the dictates of those who have a lot of gold. Gold, like everything else in the world, is the Creator's gift, freely provided for all, not just the unscrupulous few."

Our friends looked at Gold, who looked perplexed.



Pizarro asked his third question. “Why don’t the Inca have steel swords. You have very advanced metallurgical skills. You use gold, silver, copper, even bronze alloys. But not steel. Why?”

“The devilish hard metal you slice our flesh with is unknown to us. Our soldiers and craftspeople use polished obsidian, other hard stones, or brass to make weapons, arrowheads, chisels, and knives. We had never seen this metal. What is it? Where is it found?”

“Steel comes from cooking iron with coal,” Pizarro explained. “Spain and other countries of my world know many places to find iron. It is much stronger than bronze. As you saw today, no sword or shield of yours resists the blow of a steel sword, and your obsidian or brass tipped spears and arrows are useless against our steel plated armor.

“What are those large, fast animals you ride?”

“Horses. Our ancestors have domesticated them since ancient times.”

“With your strong steel swords, shields, and armor, atop your fast powerful beasts—we haven’t a chance against you fighting on foot. What are those thunderous fire weapons that flash and kill from a distance?”

“You mean our guns and cannons. We learned about them from the Orientals. The Moors and the Turks taught us to use them. They learned about gunpowder from the Chinese and harnessed its explosive power within a metal chamber. The explosion causes a spewing metal ball far deadlier than an arrowhead or a stone from a slingshot.”

“What evil magic spell do your people know that makes us sick and weak and has killed so many of us?”

“Disease. We don’t know how, but they move from the sick to the healthy and make them sick.”

“How did you build such big boats? And how

did you find your way here?" Atahualpa asked.

"We learned to build corsairs and galleons from our contact with other seafaring people. They had learned from seafaring people before them, who gradually developed and perfected marine vessels for trade. As for how we found our way here . . . We use a compass to find a direction. A compass uses a magnet, a special type of iron needle that always points to the same north-south direction. A compass shows where one is going. If you know the wind's strength, you can determine the distance a ship travels in a day. We chart that on a map to see where we are."

"But if you had never been here before, why did you think of coming here?"

"An Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus, discovered this continent about twenty-five years ago. His expedition set out to find a westerly route through the uncharted ocean to reach the riches of the Orient. But it was no accident that he found this New World."

Everyone's ears perked up.

"I," Pizarro went on, "belong to a secret organization. Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci, the explorer who identified the new lands as a continent, belong too. The society guards the secret body of knowledge held by an even older group called the Order of the Knights Templar, once very powerful and influential. But the Catholic Church persecuted them, and most of them went into hiding and carried on their secret activities with new identities and organizations. Among many other relics and secrets, the Templars' archives contained ancient charts and maps that came from the Orient. No one was certain whether they were real or false. They showed unknown lands to the west and south of Europe. They also presented the world as round, contrary to the common belief that the earth is flat. The maps showed the New World, and now

we have found it. For a long time the maps and charts puzzled us. When the Christians finally defeated the Moors of Andalusia, we found similar old charts and maps with the same information. The Moorish scholars believed their maps to originate from ancient Egypt, India, Mesopotamia, and China, lands you may not know about. My Order was well aware of many such ancient mysteries, though we kept them hidden from the public—and the Church. One of the Templars' responsibilities when they were formed during the Crusades was to find, preserve, and insure the survival of ancient knowledge. Soon, when the time is right, we will reveal them and generate a renaissance of civilization. Our purpose was to rediscover the New World and prove the old maps authentic. Of course, the crown, the church, and my men and I are also here for this land's riches."

"So," Atahualpa added, "your mission to bring us 'salvation' is really about a secret agenda, as well as the chance to exploit my land and people."

Pizarro did not answer. He could reveal no more.

"You say your people, government, and church, are really after my land's riches. What do we have here that you cannot find in your own land?"

"Gold. Europe has no significant sources of gold and silver. Spain and most other nations use gold for all commerce and economic exchange. Your gold will make us all very rich."

"You are fooled by Pachacamac's evil influences!" Atahualpa cried. "He rules your minds and souls. You say our gold will make you rich. But, you fail to recognize that you will only enrich the people who produce the goods and services your gold will buy. You steal our gold. When you steal and exploit others, you abandon the ways of peace. You will grow lazy and forget how to produce life's necessities. You will

depend on exploiting others. To provide for your people, you will give your stolen gold to other nations, those who actually produce your food, clothes and everything else. They will learn new skills and knowledge to get rich off your evil deeds and greed, while you grow decadent and ignorant...true poverty. When our gold runs out, you will find yourselves poor, with no skills for producing food and other things you need. You will resort to further evil deeds, to enslave others to feed yourselves. Your world will become ruthless and warlike. Whether you are rich or poor, Pachacamac will enslave you and steal the freedom of your true self, the spirit the Creator gave you. True wealth comes only from living harmoniously with nature and the universe. Can't you grasp Viracocha's simple teaching?"

Pizarro's eyes glazed. "Most of my men come from Andalusia. We are peasants. Your land and gold will make us noble. They persecuted us after the wars of the Inquisition. Your riches will buy us respect, status, and power."

"Indeed, all lands are rich, but they remain rich only if their people live harmoniously with it. My people work with the land for everyone's benefit, not for your exploits."

"From now on, they work for us."

"And if we refuse?"

Pizarro did not answer.

"So your salvation is in fact slavery."

"That is what the Christian armies did to the Muslims and Jews of Andalusia when they liberated it. We are the Christian servants of our Christian conquerors. Now you become our servants."

"Who are Muslims and Jews? Did they not believe in the Creator so that you had to make them Christians?"

"Oh, they had religions of their own, but in our

land we permit only the religion of the Catholic Church. After we beat them, we forced the Muslims and Jews to convert or leave Spain. The Inquisition tortured or killed many.”

“So what you call your faith in the Creator,” Atahualpa responded angrily, “does not tolerate other faiths that believe in the Creator. People must follow your religion or die. You are followers and servants of Pachacamac. He has stolen your souls and blinded you with ignorance, hate, violence, and greed. Our worst fears have come true. I have subjected my people to slavery. You carry the insignia of Viracocha, but in truth you follow Pachacamac. You damned evil fools!”

Atahualpa rose to his feet abruptly and paced back and forth. Pizarro sat in silence until Atahualpa turned to him and said, “The ransom you demand, enough gold and silver to fill this room, will not secure the release of my people and your promised departure, will it?”

“No,” Pizarro said flatly, “it won’t. We will bring reinforcements, built strongholds, make alliances with rebellious tribes, and tighten our grip on your land and people.”

“I suspected that. My people believe their gold and silver ornaments and statues will get you to leave, as you falsely pledged. They think you are holding me hostage but that you will release me and leave with the loot. They trust you. They are complying because that is the safest way. How happy our enemies must be.”

“They believe our promises of freedom and independence from Inca rule. They resented the civil war between you and your half-brother Huascar, whom you killed. Many have betrayed you and allied themselves with us. They think we will give them independence if they help us defeat the Inca hordes. Fools.”

“Then you do not mean to honor any of your promises, much less fulfill their hopes?”

Pizarro smiled slyly. “Such are the ways of the world.”

“No. Such are the ways of the world as you make it. Viracocha taught us to strive for something far better. We must be different.”

Pizarro sighed. “Not in our lifetime. For so long as the flesh leads the soul, we shall languish in the domain of darkness.”

“You cannot let me live,” Atahualpa said. “You must destroy the pride and memory of our race and our ways. I appeal to the honor of this night of frankness. Can you at least tell our future generations of my honor and dedication to them?”

“*Disculpe, Señor*, that is out of my hands. The church will decide that. You will soon die, and the symbol of the Inca Empire will disappear. History will say you gave away your nation’s gold and its freedom to save your own head. My people will portray you as a selfish cowardly savage. We will deprive your future generations of their proud history. It will make conquering your land easier.”

“You are wrong!” Atahualpa rejoined. “The guardians of the temples and the sacred sites will never let our legacy die. They will preserve our ways and the wise teachings of Viracocha. They will save the secrets of our sacred sites from your evil grasp. You may take our gold and our land and enslave our people, but our legacy is ancient and runs far too deep. Some, maybe much of it, will surely survive for our children and their children. We have a duty to preserve the sacred instructions to be ready for Viracocha’s return and the coming of the sixth age. Your kind, evil disciples of Pachacamac, will never find them. A day will come when the world rediscovers the truth behind our magical

civilization. The world will flock to our sacred sites and temples. They will stand in awe of our ancient monuments and relics, and the wisdom of our beliefs. They will yearn to follow the ways of peace and universal harmony. They will see the lost and stolen legacy of humanity as Viracocha wished it. In such future age, a few enlightened souls will reveal the sacred texts and instructions. Then they will prepare for the sixth age and the return of Viracocha. Time and history will bear witness.”

Pizarro did not answer.

Atahualpa looked at Pizarro sadly. “The reality of this world and the created universe is far beyond our imagination and under no one’s control.”

A sense of doom hung in the air.

Silicone spoke hesitantly. “We have only a few minutes before we return to our time.”

“I am ashamed of my involvement with these sad events,” Iron murmured.

“I wonder if these people can preserve any of their legacy, as Atahualpa hopes,” Gold mused.

“I investigated the masonry walls,” Calcium said. “I learned of caves and sites in the Andes with strange writings and symbols engraved in stone. Apparently, they come from an ancient era when the gods were here. Supposedly, some temples have hidden chambers that hold maps and coded information about such sites. Only a small group of trusted priests and guardians know of them.”

“If Pizarro is right,” Carbon said, “the dark forces at work here will soon destroy those relics of ancient wisdom.”

“That is if they can find them,” Calcium interjected. “According to what I was told, very few dedicated temple guardians have that information. Each one knows about only a small number of sites. Together

they know about them all. They all belong to a secret brotherhood administered from Coricancha, the Temple of the Sun, in Cuzco.”

“The ancient gods’ instructions must be preserved for the benefit of humanity,” Hydrogen declared with its usual heroic enthusiasm. “You all heard it. Their teachings deal with the Source.”

“My friends,” Gold said, “I want to tell you something.”

Everyone focused on the newcomer. “These people associate my kind with their god Viracocha and his wise teachings. That is why they fashion statues and icons of their gods from gold. The Coricancha Temple of the Sun, which was built on the remains of even more ancient temples, is dedicated to preserving and promoting their gods’ teachings. Its roof and the walls are covered in gold. The Temple gardens display replicas of flowers, plants, trees and animals, made entirely of gold. The entire complex is designed to be in harmony with the sun. Our nature is to shine. When the sunlight falls on us, we reflect the sun. That is why the Coricancha Temple is so adorned with gold. The entire Temple shines like the sun’s terrestrial emissary. Its intense brilliance is visible from the mountains around Cuzco.”

“Interesting,” Silicone said. “What are you implying?”

“If as we have learned, the Spanish conquistadors are after the gold here they will soon strip the Temple’s gold veneer and ornamentation. That will disrupt the sun’s shining reflection from the golden Coricancha, which the people watch every day from far away. They may see an omen, a message from the gods; or they may see the invaders’ true intentions. They will know that the Spanish invaders who defile the holy places of Viracocha cannot possibly be associated with



him.”

“True,” Silicone agreed. “That means they will hurry to safeguard their sacred tablets and secret sites before the Spanish find them. The Temple guardians may be able to save some of the relics entrusted to them. We still do not know the identity of Viracocha, but we can assume that his heritage needs to be protected.”

At that moment, Pizarro forcefully took the royal seal ring on Atahualpa’s index finger. Perhaps, Pizarro worried that instructions might be sent from the prison. Certainly, the gold in the ring was insignificant compared to what was soon to arrive as ransom. Pizarro left the room, followed by his Quechua interpreter. The sound of the locking heavy deadbolt reminded everyone who was now in charge of the Empire of the Sun.

“May Gold and I join you?” Iron asked. “If I may speak for both of us, tonight’s events have changed and inspired us forever.” Gold, who along with Iron had decided to remain with our friends within Atahualpa’s windowless stone prison, nodded in agreement.

Through the small ceiling vent perforation, the brightening dawn sky was now becoming visible. But, the room seemed much darker now. Was it the shadow of the dark forces that would now control this blessed land of the sun, or just the dimming lamps that were running out of oil?

Atahualpa, the Great Inca, sat helplessly. As tears flowed down his bronze-colored cheeks, he gazed sadly at the golden statue of Viracocha. The revered god appeared to be dying in the fading light of the oil lamps. Just then, an oil lamp, next to the golden god, briefly flickered with a very intense brightness before completely burning out. The increased temporary luminosity restored Viracocha’s full brilliant shine. The serene looking god, with his serpent-protruding helmet, still held out his reassuringly caring arms. Perhaps, a

reminder of the magnanimous god's promised return to save his people, it inspired Atahualpa to faintly smile and close his tearful eyes.

A powerful flash of light followed the flicker of the dying oil lamp, delivering our friends back to their world.

## Crossroads Of Myths And Mysteries

*O living Aten, the beginning of all life,  
though distant, your rays are upon the earth;  
you are seen everywhere, yet your ways are unknown,  
How everything you created manifests, though you are  
hidden,  
you who created and sustain everything, and all people on all  
lands.  
You are alone, rising in your distant heaven,  
your breath sustains all that you have created.  
Oh sole God, like whom there is no other,  
you yourself are life, and all live through you.*

### **Excerpts from Akhenaten's Hymn to Aten**

*I am Yhvy (Yahweh), thy Elohim. Thou shalt have no other  
gods before me, for I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God.*

### **Exodus, 20: 2-4**

“I don't understand.”

Hydrogen and the rest were sitting outside the cave. Only distant stars pinpricked the evening darkness. When no one answered, Hydrogen continued. “What drives humans to such irrational insensitivity toward one another? Their bodies consist of all of our kinds. What is it that blinds but does not bind them?”

“They are complex networks of organic molecules, millions of us, and their size gives them complex unitary abilities. Whereas we seek each other's cooperation, humans can do a lot on their own. Maybe their complexity makes the journey to the Source easier, but their awareness of their powers—they call it *ego*—blinds them. Like confused children abusing their powers, they often harm themselves or others. That's what I meant by worthiness. Power in the hands of the unwise becomes a destructive dark force.”

A purple dawn rose above the mountainous horizon, signaling their next journey. The group eagerly awaited the rising sun and the Transportal's accompanying flash of light.

Moments later, they were scanning their new surroundings. The grand hall's magnificent flower-shaped stone columns flanked the high walls and carried a plastered ceiling covered with carved motif designs, all painted in brilliant colors. The floor consisted of polished alabaster slabs of different hues laid in a dazzling geometrical arrangement, and the walls painted with Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Large statues resembling godly super-humans dominated the hall, their perfect facial features, hairless heads and faces, large almond shaped eyes and blue-hued skin otherworldly and surreal. They wore magnificent clothes, jewelry, and unusually large crowns. Some were in long flowing robes and held oddly shaped scepters, and others had wing-shaped capes. Gold pointed at one with a golden crown, adorned with the familiar symbols of a sun-disc and a protruding cobra, a ⊕ sign prominently displayed on its chest.

"He looks like Viracocha's Egyptian twin," Helium commented.

"Or Azhi Dahaka. These must be their gods," Carbon concluded.

Dim light entered through small openings in the wall. At the end of the hall, long white linen drapes fell from a balcony, fluttering in the gentle late afternoon breeze. The friends moved toward the balcony from where they heard voices faintly. The terrace, colonnaded and floored in alabaster, looked onto a semi-arid plain, extending toward reddish mountains on the horizon. Four tall, muscular, tanned men stood guard, equidistant and perfectly still. They wore ceremonial military uniforms—embroidered white shirts and tunics, brass-

studded leather vests and sandals—and held long brass spears. A brass head ring secured their red and white striped fan-shaped cloth headdress.

Forward on the balcony were two throne-like chairs of exotic wood, brass fittings, and elegant upholstery. Two graceful men of evident importance sat quietly, gazing at the distant landscape. The older one was tall and slender. He wore a white, blue, and gold headdress, and robes that hung to the ankles of his sandaled feet. The loose garb did not hide his ample hips. He had an abnormally elongated head and face, chiseled nose and chin, and full lips. Appearing to be in his forties, he did not look quite normal.

The younger was in his early twenties, handsome, with big dark eyes and average build. His jet-black straight hair hung down to his shoulders. He wore a white and red blouse and tunic, and an intricately worked silver-studded leather vest. Upon a carved mahogany table were silver bowls of fruit and lacquered ceramic jars of liquid refreshment. Both men stared serenely at the blood-red sun, gradually falling below the western horizon like a wounded and dying god. The music of songbirds accompanied the soft rustling of the wind-blown linen drapes.

“This place is a lot more pleasant than the last two,” Helium stated.

“Where are we? Who are these people?” Oxygen asked.

“I believe we’re in Egypt.” Silicone replied.

“I don’t get it,” Helium said. “How do you know about so many things if you sat in the desert for thousands of years?”

“Since the Great Library was destroyed, I met and learned from others of my kind, who knew many things. That is how I have learned that I do not know enough!”

“Indeed, you are in Egypt.” The voice came from within a polished bronze staff lying next to the old man, shaped like a winding cobra topped by a golden sun disc. “This man is Akhenaten, the visionary pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty. He is the exiled leader of the Habiru in Lower Egypt. I am Copper.”

Another voice continued from inside the cane. “And I am Tin. Together we make bronze. Who are you?”

The group introduced themselves.

“Who are these Habiru?” Carbon asked.

“They migrated to work in Egypt from the territories to the northeast,” Copper explained.

“Who is that young man?” Silicone asked.

“He is the young Pharaoh Tutankhamon, the son of Akhenaten from his concubine Kiya. Akhenaten had six daughters from Nefertiti, the queen, but no male heir. His son from Kiya, and successor, Tutankhamon later changed his name from Tutankhaten and married his half-sister to become the next legitimate eighteenth dynasty pharaoh.”

“Why did he change his name?”

A shining white entity replied from within an earring on the young Pharaoh’s ear. “I am Silver. Let me explain. Following Akhenaten’s abdication, Queen Nefertiti ruled as Semenkhare until the child Tutankhaten came of age. Once enthroned, he exchanged the ‘aten’ in his name with ‘amon’ as a gesture of reconciliation with the old dominant religion of Upper Egypt. He restored the worship of the old gods and reopened their temples.”

“That’s right,” Silicone said. The heretic Pharaoh Amonhotep IV (the name means ‘Amon is content’) later changed his name to Akhenaten (means ‘glory of Aten’). He tried to replace Egypt’s ancient gods with a monotheistic spiritual philosophy. He ruled from 3357

to 3349 BCE during the eighteenth dynastic period, one of Egypt's most remarkable eras. His unorthodox transformations shook the foundations of Egyptian society, religion, culture, as well as the balance of power between the throne and the Amon priesthood. Five years later, the Amon priesthood and certain ambitious military leaders exiled him. Akhenaten's story was subsequently erased from Egyptian history, his legacy largely lost, forgotten, or misunderstood. Yet in many ways his saga continues to influence history."

At that moment Akhenaten spoke in a soothing yet royal voice. "I am glad to have you here my son. It has been many years since we spent time together. You have become a fine Pharaoh. Tell me how are Queen Mother Nefertiti, your wife, and my other daughters? How is your mother?"

"They are well. They send their blessings. They are sad you cannot be with them."

"Have things changed in Upper Egypt?"

"Your capital city, Akhet-Aten (Amarna), is deserted and ransacked. Its gardens, palaces, and squares lie in ruin, its magnificent buildings stripped, their stone masonry carried off for use elsewhere. The Amon priests regained their stature, power, and wealth. They persecute your followers and reassert the ancient gods. The Amon priesthood means to eradicate the remnants of Aten. Mutiny brews in the army. In an unholy partnership with the religious establishment, Generals Ramses and Seti plot against us. They say the eighteenth dynasty were corrupt, treacherous Habiru half-breeds. They plan to rid Egypt of Asiatic infidels and restore Egypt's racial and religious purity. I'm afraid our days may be numbered."

"How do people respond to all that?"

"They still suffer from the last dozen years' droughts and plagues. If you recall, seven of the most

severe years occurred during your reign. The priests still fill their pockets, but their temple rebuilding projects drain the treasury. People suffer, and I am virtually powerless. They blame my government and make scapegoats of the surviving Habiru. They say we angered Amon and brought on the droughts and plagues. They accuse us of spending the nation's riches to protect you and your followers up here. Your self-exile only emboldens them. The people believe that as long as the infidel foreigners have influence in Egypt, the people's lives will not improve, and the glories of Egypt will not return.

"The ancient mystery traditions are also under scrutiny. The Amon priests do not want to risk a repeat of past experience. They oppose the old traditions, especially the cults of Osiris, Ptah, Thoth, and Isis. The guardians of the Temple of Osiris had to hide their libraries. They worry about losing their sacred papyrus scrolls. The sacred sciences have been brought under administrative control. You know, Father, since you have been away, I have learned much about the ancient ways of wisdom."

Akhenaten gazed at the orange-colored sky reflected by the belly of a small cumulus cloud. His beloved sun, the manifestation of Aten, was gone, but the cloud's reflection confirmed its existence. Aten, like its emissary the sun, would always be there, could never be denied, even if out of sight.

"My son," Akhenaten said at length, "did I ever tell you about my childhood in Lower Egypt?"

Tutankhamon turned his big black eyes to his father. So did our friends.

"First, let me remind you that the empire once extended along the Mediterranean coast into Canaan and Mittani. Egyptian power was unchallenged, and Mesopotamia was weak and divided. Before the



seventeenth dynasty of Ahmose I and his son Amonhotep I, the Hyksos conquered all our Asian territories. They even overran the north of Egypt. While they controlled Lower Egypt, our forefathers could not sail along the Nile to the sea. Ancient, glorious Egypt seemed headed for the same destiny as Sumer. But Ahmose and Amonhotep drove the Hyksos out and regained Lower Egypt, though not our Asian territories. Then our great grandfather Tuthmose III, who founded the eighteenth dynasty, finally took the throne from Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh. The old guard opposed him at first, for he was the son of the last seventeenth dynasty pharaoh, Tuthmose II, by a minor wife of Asiatic origin named Sara. She was from the family of Abraham, chief of a prominent Habiru clan. As far as the establishment was concerned, Tuthmose III was not of pure Egyptian blood, but half Habiru. Eventually, that half-breed prince, our ancestor, became the first pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty. He drove deep into Asia, defeated the Canaanite-Mittani alliance decisively at the battle of the Valley of Armageddon, and regained Egypt's lost Asian territories up to the western bank of the Euphrates. He captured Kadesh, Megiddo, the stronghold of Zion, and the land of Urusalim. In honor of his victories, he replaced the destroyed Egyptian temples and built a temple for the Habiru, who went back to their own lands. That is why he is called King of the Habiru, the builder of the famous Temple of Urusalim."

"Is that why people call the eighteenth dynasty pharaohs half-breed Habiru?"

"Exactly my son. The succeeding eighteenth dynasty Pharaohs—Tuthmose IV, your grandfather Amonhotep III, and I—have always had close affinities with our Asian brethren, the Habiru.

"Think about it. Escaping famine and Hyksos

rule, many Canaanites had fled and settled in northern Egypt. For most of these people, called the Habiru, Egypt has been home for generations. Both the Hyksos and the Egyptians oppressed them. Tuthmose III's marriage to Sara bound their people into the fabric of Egyptian society. That is why the Habiru recognize him as their first true king. The marriage also secured their allegiance to Egypt and their role in governing and defending Egypt's Asian provinces. For many of the Habiru, Tuthmose III was a hero-king, who restored their national pride and identity. These people are industrious, resourceful, and have their own spiritual traditions. The eighteenth Egyptian dynasty is one of Egypt's most glorious eras, due to the intermixing of peoples and their cultures. The Amon Priesthood and their political allies either forget or ignore that fact. Yes, my son, humanity is generally disconnected from reality, and the usual consequences are conflict and suffering."

"And Lower Egypt's gods?"

"The first three eighteenth dynasty Pharaohs ruled over a newly reunited Egypt and the mystery traditions of Thoth, Isis, Osiris, Horus, and Ra, as well as the Habiru gods," Akhenaten said. "For centuries before the reunification, the priests of Amon reigned supreme in southern Egypt. The religious quagmire of the newly reunited Egypt challenged the early eighteenth dynasty administrations. What was the solution? As a ceremonious compromise, Amon (the historical god of Upper Egypt) was merged with Ra to create the supreme Amon-Re, the king of the gods. While the other ancient Egyptian and Habiru gods were nominally tolerated. This transformation took place during Tuthmose III's rule. The inadequate resolution, however, caused the various temples to compete for recognition and donations. The confusion persisted until father's royal

decrees established hierarchical equivalence between the Amon temples and the others. Father's decrees effectively reduced the Karnack Amon priests' religious influence, power, and wealth, but strengthened the royal house. They never forgave us for that. That was the blow that started their enmity, which eventually led to today's events."

"What of your childhood experiences?"

"Oh yes. Awakenings, my beloved son, awakenings. My eyes were opened for the first time."

Akhenaten silently gazed at the now darkened night sky. The crescent moon's beams whirled serpent-like through the waves of rising desert warm air.

Tutankhamon interrupted his father: "You spent most of your childhood in Zarw, in Lower Egypt. Tell me about the origins and meanings of the ancient Egyptian traditions."

"Good, my son, very good. Open your mind to the unspoken words. Secret teachings reveal much wisdom. The truth lies beneath the surface reflections. Contemplation penetrates the surface to reveal the truth that lies beyond."

Akhenaten paused, breathed deeply, and then went on. "You have seen the great five great pyramids, the three at Giza, the Red and the Bent Pyramids, and the Sphinx and its temple complex."

"Of course. Why?"

"Have you *really* seen them? Have you stood before their grandeur and majesty and really admired them? The mystery traditions teach that the ancient gods embedded many secrets in them."

At that point a uniformed man came upon the balcony, approached the two nobles, and talked quietly.

"The pyramids," Silicone explained in the meantime, "are among the most enigmatic structures that have survived from antiquity. Science continues to

unearth their previously undiscovered features. Ordinarily, people believe slaves built each one, using bronze chisels, ropes, and rollers. Having quarried millions of tons of stones hundreds of miles away, they assembled them all during one megalomaniac pharaoh's life to give him a private tomb. That theory hardly explains some of their complexities. Throughout and under them run corridors and chambers with puzzling engineering and mathematical features. Oddly, none bears any Egyptian building record or any sign or text proclaiming their builders, whereas typically other ancient monuments provide that information. In later better-recorded times, dozens of smaller pyramids were built from stone rubbles and lie in ruins, and each is covered in designs and texts attributed to its builder. All have been looted of their mummies and treasures, but not the great five pyramids. Apparently, no one entered them between their building and the era of a studious Memluk Sultan, who once inside, found no mummies, no treasure, no information...nothing. Those magnificent structures remain a mystery."

"Maybe their builders forgot to sign their names before sealing the secret doors," Helium humored.

The uniformed man finished his conversation, bowed, and walked away. Akhenaten resumed. "We revere the sacred pyramids and imitate them so we may reach the ancient gods' heavenly abodes. The priests pretend to understand their messages, but they are deceitful fools. I believe the ancients left a message for humanity. Maybe those structures guard secrets, but we still cannot understand them."

"Perhaps," Tutankhamon said, "their message is meant only for those worthy of its power. As you always told me, a blade can cut the harvest or someone's flesh. It depends on who wields it."

Akhenaten nodded. "Are there other sites buried

deep in the desert sand? Often I feel the desert did not always cover Egypt, for she houses numerous remnants of ancient civilizations. Have you visited the ziggurat in Saqqara built by the Pharaoh Zoser? On its inner walls, his priests inscribed The Pyramid Texts, the first written version of what we revere as the holy *Book of The Dead*.”

“Father, every educated person makes that pilgrimage.”

“Again I ask, have you really seen it?”

“Please explain.”

“The Saqqara step-pyramid is built within a far more ancient site. The surrounding walls, decorated at the top with sacred cobra heads, are built with the same workmanship and precision as the great five pyramids. Since unknown ancient times, the complex has been attributed to the god Osiris. A group of initiated priests preserved the wisdom of the ancient gods—alchemy, magic, astronomy, and other sacred arts. Long ago the priests began to misinterpret or disagree about the ancient message. They decided to break the sacred oral tradition and inscribed the texts on the walls of a small step pyramid built for that purpose inside the temple complex in an archaic form of our language we no longer understand. Later they translated it into contemporary hieroglyphics. The ancient pyramid texts described the scriptures we revere today as the holy *Book of The Dead*. I wonder if their ancient wisdom will survive?

“I fear their true message is already lost. Most people are illiterate. They use the holy texts to decorate houses and tombs. Egypt relies on false, corrupt priests who claim to be the messengers, interpreters, and guardians of the holy texts. They sedate the illiterate masses into submission with false hopes, sermons, and fear. They satisfy the lazy masses’ spiritual thirst, as

well as the ruling establishment's needs. We make little statues of mythical gods as ornaments—portable, convenient, pretty. Jewelry, decoration, *toys*. No one even acknowledges or understands the wisdom of the sacred texts. Nowadays you can lead an evil life, then buy a 'holy' blessing, write a few passages from the scriptures on your coffin, and hope to go to the heavens to dwell with the gods. People do not see even the reflection on the surface, let alone what lies beyond."

Tutankhamon nodded sadly. "Father, tell me about the resurrection after death mentioned in *The Book of the Dead*."

"Look, son. The night is dark. The sun, the Aten's sacred manifestation, seems to have disappeared, but you can still see its reflection from the moon. My beloved son, realization requires imagination, thought, conscious effort, and discipline. Unguided, humanity tends to laziness, leisure, and selfishness. Effort and discipline are not our virtues. For thousands of years, we have recited the sacred texts without understanding their true message. What the scriptures call Ka or spirit, every living being's essence, is the sun in all of us. The priesthood promotes the belief that only faithfulness assures us of a heavenly abode after death. But blind faithfulness, or the money paid for mummification, trinkets, or blessings, doesn't lead to a lofty afterlife. The priesthood establishment has a monopoly and a high price for mummification and blessings. So apparently, only the rich have any chance of attaining immortality. That is not the ancients' message."

"I believe the sacred message reveals that the breath of Aten-Ka, the sun in all of us-gives us life in this world and in the next. Everyone has a Ka that survives death. Like Aten, the Ka is beyond physical worldly existence. That is the essence of the Ka. The Ka is immortal by nature, because it is part of Aten. That is

what I believe and what I preach.”

Akhenaten pointed at the statue of the god wearing the cobra and sun disc crown, and the ⊕ sign on its chest. “I believe that is the ancient gods’ true message for humanity. The Amon priesthood always opposed my interpretations, unlike the poor, the oppressed, intellectuals, and artisans. During the Hyksos occupation, the ancient traditions of Osiris, Ptah, Aten, Thoth, and Isis went underground. After Lower Egypt was freed, the Amon priesthood tried to keep the competition suppressed. I wanted to break the Amon priesthood’s yoke. I had no quarrel with the ancient gods and the wisdom they bestowed upon humanity. Rather I could not promote superstitious obedience to vague idols, whether dozens or just one. We should not worship the ancient gods. We should be enlightened by their sacred message that has to be deciphered and transmitted to everyone. Someone has to lift humanity out of the quicksand of spiritual ignorance. Only decent, compassionate, spiritual ways lead us to realize our already-present immortality. Do you understand? We must really understand the scriptures, not just donate to a temple or hang a little statue or some misunderstood words on an amulet. Spiritual salvation is not a choice or a luxury but a right and an undeniable duty for all.”

“Seems like he is talking about finding the Source,” Hydrogen whispered.

“Sure makes a lot of sense,” Helium concurred.

“You know the rest of the story,” Akhenaten said. “The opportunists in the military are allied with the Amon priesthood. Despite the loyalty of Horemheb and Aye, I was threatened with revolt and bloodshed unless I abdicated. I left Akhet-Aten with my followers, though not everyone who needed protection. How are they treating the rest?”

“Not well, Father. They are excluded from the

religious, social, and economic domains. For now, Aye, mother, Horemheb, and I protect them. Otherwise, there would be mass chaos and bloodshed. Our legacy is under threat. There are many rumors, Father, but I am not afraid.”

“After I went into exile, they reopened the Amon temples, but the Amon priesthood will not rest until they regain their monopoly. You must be careful.”

Tutankhamon nodded but changed the subject. “Father, following your advice. I studied the mystery traditions. I have learned much, but much puzzles me. Some concepts are mysterious even to the scholars. They say that much knowledge has been lost since the gods left Earth, and other knowledge must remain hidden. I have come across perplexing relics. The mystery traditions guard ancient secret manuscripts, written in undecipherable mathematical symbols, passages that sound like meaningless poetry but somehow raise you to another spiritual state. And then there’s alchemy and all that about the philosopher’s stone, some existential state invisible to others.”

“I have heard the rumors, my son. But since the alchemists hide their knowledge, we should not even converse such things with ignorant people. They were meant to enlighten us, not to be abused for commerce or spiritual sedation.”

“The mystery schools have begun to hide their wisdom,” Tutankhamon observed, “in anticipation of an onslaught from the Amon priesthood. Many have sought safety in mountain sanctuaries where they intend to ride out the purge of all heretical faiths.”

“We can only lose what we do not deserve to keep.”

“Father, tell me about the faith of the Habiru. They used to live in Canaan and the Sinai provinces, didn’t they?”



“The Canaanite traditions influenced their belief. Their gods—El, Baal, Mot, Anat, and others—resemble the Akkadian and Sumerian gods, just as the Sumerian gods—Enki, Enlil, and Ishtar—resemble our Osiris, Ra, and Isis. The gods of Sumer and Egypt are almost identical. Upon arriving here in exile from Egypt proper, we have had to work hard to promote our faith in the true creator, Aten. Our first year mostly dealt with the social and economic integration with the local population. That was quite difficult. The Egyptian immigrants were more skilled in farming. However, the land here is dryer, and there are no major rivers like the Nile. Water is only available from underground sources. The terrain consists of basically a parched rocky land, suitable mostly for herding. The natives’ initial reluctance to share their herding territory caused hardship, conflict, and violence. Derived from Egyptian legal codes, a simple set of laws was enshrined as a sort of ‘code of ethics’. I, the ‘heretic Pharaoh’, have been reduced to a tribal leader of an unruly populace! These conditions have only benefited the usual opportunists. The traditional alliance between the local Amorite nobility and the northern kingdoms of Canaan has fostered the current rebellion.”

Akhenaten paused and looked at his son: "That is why I called on you. I am no longer considered Egypt's favorite citizen. But, it is in our collective interests to defend the integrity of Egypt, and all its minorities including the Habiru, against the onslaught of the Canaanite and their Hittite allies. If we lose these lands, the local Egyptians and Habiru will be exiled again, or reduced to foreign servitude. And, with the Canaanites’ and Hittite navy at the doorsteps of the Nile’s trading routes, it will not be long before the accomplishments of the 17th and 18th Dynasties will be undone.”

Tutankhamon fell silent and gazed across the

moonlit plain. He enjoyed talking to his wise father. It felt like the most beautiful evening he had ever experienced. Serenity spread before them. But, he was suddenly shaken by a vision of screaming bloody bodies, which would soon stain this majestic manifestation of Aten. Where was Aten? Where were the gods? He remembered his mentors at the temple of Osiris in Memphis. He recalled the Osiris Temple monks' vows of tolerance and non-violence in the face of oppression and hardship. It is hard to be a holy man when one is cast outside a temple, when one is a leader of the people. Could the immense wisdom of the sacred ancient scriptures be summarized in just a few commandments?

"Father," he said at last, "there are rumors of an attempt on my life. Should something happen to me, promise you will not put yourself or the family in danger by opposing the rebels. That could trigger a massacre."

"That will happen regardless of what I do. I do not hope to regain Egypt's heart and soul. I have already failed. But in case of an exodus, our people will need help. If they depose you, Aye and Horemheb cannot get the refugees out safely. It is my moral and spiritual duty to help them escape."

Tutankhamon pointed to the desert dawn sky's myriad stars: "Father, which star is closer to heaven, to the abode of Aten?"

"Any of them."

"Why do people refer to you as Mose?"

"Just as Tuthmose (Thoth-mose) means *reflection of Thoth*, Ramses (Ra-mose) means *reflection of Ra*. According to them, I am the reflection of the invisible god."

"Why do they call me a *yesua*?"

"Because they consider you a savior. That's what it means in their language. You are here to help them

gain their promised land. The land they believe Aten and I promised them, a place of peace and prosperity. Surely, following the ways of Aten can lead to such a world.”

They smiled and gazed at the sky, red with the sun’s rise, red in anticipation of a bloody battle.

Tutankhamon got up, knelt, embraced his father’s hand and kissed it “Father, I must prepare for battle.”

Tutankhamen walked away, passing through the still fluttering white linen drapes and disappeared from view. Akhenaten lovingly followed every last move of his departing son.

He then quietly whispered: "Here we are, ironically living the dark ways of war, chaos, and conflict.”

Akhenaten then rose, turned to a statue and cried, “Damn you, Seth! Again you steal our faith and fate. How long must humanity put up with your evil designs? When will you free us from war, misery, subjugation, and slavery?”

The statue represented a tall man with the head of a black jackal and tall square ears, fierce red eyes, and a cold smile. Its headdress featured a fearsome vulture. Red straps crossed like a big ‘X’ lay over its white tunic.

Hydrogen and Oxygen saw a tear roll down Akhenaten’s elongated chin. His prominent hips leaning on his bronze serpent cane, he limped beyond the white curtains at the balcony entrance.

Copper, Tin and Silver rushed forward, and Silver said, “What will happen to Tutankhamon?”

“I’ll tell you what I know,” Silicone said. “Tutankhamon survived the next few days. The Egyptian army reestablished Egypt’s sovereignty over the promised land, a semi-autonomous Egyptian

province and a haven for the exiled Habiru. The arrangement did not last beyond the reign of the eighteenth dynasty's last pharaohs—Tutankhamon, Horemheb, and Aye. Soon Ramses fulfilled his ambition of becoming Pharaoh, supported by the Amon priesthood. His reign marked another era of Egyptian military glory. Her Asian borders again extended well into Asia, all the way to the western bank of the Euphrates. The period also marked the reestablishment of the Amon priesthood's intolerant religious monopoly and the persecution of religious and racial minorities. One of Ramses' first acts was to strip the foreign Egyptian Habiru of their wealth and power and expel them *en masse*. He undertook a campaign to purify Egypt of aliens, just as Akhenaten predicted. The Hebrew exodus legend refers to that episode. Akhenaten's disciples arranged the evacuation, which the new rulers called rebellion and dispatched General Seti, who ruled after Ramses as Seti I, to deal with the fleeing heretic rebels. During a chase, his army bogged down in sudden unusual flooding of the Nile Delta. With his pursuing army's heavy chariots immobilized in the flooded marshes, Seti abandoned the hordes of refugees escaping to the promised land. Even there they suffered under oppressive nineteenth dynasty governments. Later the Assyrians, armed with iron swords, overcame them. Eight centuries later, they were defeated again and their most valuable people taken to Babylon as hostages. They were free briefly 150 years later when Cyrus, the first Persian Achaemenid King, defeated Babylon. Soon, however, Greek and Roman conquerors ended Hebrews' elusive freedom. The dream of a promised land remained a dream among a people united by faith, history, and tradition. Centuries of hardship, exile, and oppression imprinted their culture and religion. Hebrew historians recorded their recollections of mythical kings,

history, and faith. Their heritage influenced three religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Many know Egyptian heroes only by their Hebrew names—David, Solomon, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua. In nineteenth dynasty Egypt, the saga was censured from official Egyptian history to leave only a scornful mention of the mad heretic pharaoh. But nineteenth century archeological finds at Akhet-Aten (Amarna) revealed a different Akhenaten. Egypt suffered from her spiritual wound. She never recovered her glory. The legacies of the ancient *crossroads of myths and mysteries* and Akhenaten's spiritual reformation survived with the gnostics, the Essenes, and others. Egyptian wisdom has influenced mystics, prophets, philosophers, and scholars, just as they did Akhenaten and Tutankhamon and their Habiru followers."

"But what happened to Tutankhamon?" Silver asked again.

"Tutankhamon was assassinated a day after the war with Canaan ended. A popular, just, competent young pharaoh, his death marked the end of Egypt's eighteenth dynasty. Because his tomb was unmarked and unmentioned—a sign of disrespect—looters never found Tutankhamon's burial treasures."

Silver, Copper, and Tin were saddened, but their new path would soon obviate their sentiment for their old world.



## Worlds Collide

*Every civilization starts as a theocracy and ends as a democracy.*

**Victor Hugo**

*The members of this dreadful new military order consider that they have every right to attack anyone not confessing Christ's name, whereas if they themselves are killed while thus unjustly attacking the pagans, they are called martyrs for the faith. We do not maintain that all they do is wrong, but we do insist that what they are doing can be an occasion of many future evils.*

**Isaac of Etoile, English mystic and Cistercian abbot, a contemporary of Bernard de Clairvaux**

The night sky was moonless and dark. The stars flickered faithfully, their distant yet tireless light reminiscent of thousands of ✚ piercing the night sky.

The group sat around the opening of the Transportal like a troop of scouts around a bonfire. They spent hours reviewing other journeys with their new friends.

“I feel lucky to have come across you and to join your mission,” Tin said.

“I hope that together we will find the Universal Sign,” Copper agreed.

“Each of us brings individual natural strengths to the group,” Silicone responded hopefully.

Hydrogen gazed at the Transportal's halo-like lights and asked, “Do you think that's Earth's Ka?”

“Interesting thought,” Silicone began. “Whatever this field of energy is and wherever it comes from, it always seems to be there like some immortal dimension of the planet.”

“Just as Akhenaten described the human Ka,” said Copper.

“But maybe only intelligent complex living organisms have a Ka,” Oxygen cautioned.

“Aren’t humans just a bundle of us?” Helium interjected.

“Okay, let’s assume we’re all right. If the earth’s Ka is always here and flows unceasingly, then the human Ka must be the same. Right?”

“If so, why are humans so confused about their existence? Why their idols, priests, prayers, offerings, and mummifications? Do only the richest see their Ka transcend to heaven after they die?”

“Do you remember what I said about the humans’ powers, abilities, and self-conscious admiration?” Silicone asked. “Their ego may be one of the reasons they are confused about their origins, their destiny, and their connection to everything around them—and the Source.”

“Isn’t it strange that even though humans are ‘a bundle of us,’ it seems they cannot acknowledge our presence?” Calcium said. “It’s as if they can’t detect us.”

“They use us as ornaments, tools, and symbols of wealth, but they don’t know what we truly are.”

“What is wealth?” Nitrogen asked.

“Things they own. Objects they fancy,” Carbon replied. “They obviously need water, air, and food. They also need to stay warm, comfortable, and safe. Once they have all that, however, they turn to wanting things they consider beautiful or valuable. It is like an unconscious attraction or addiction to the material world.”

“Regrettably so,” Gold added, “since they use our kind to put a ‘value’ on most of those things.”

“And they use me to guard or steal such ‘valuables’ from each other,” Iron added sarcastically.

“The desire to own things boosts their sense of self-admiration or purpose, and they will do anything for



it.”

After a period of pensive silence, Silicone said: “I find it curious that the ancient gods’ features fit a pattern. There are gods of enlightenment, teaching, and knowledge, as well as gods of war, submission, and order. Also I see common global symbolisms of winged entities, dragon and serpents, eagles or vultures, human skulls, as well as the recurring  $\oplus$  and  $\otimes$  insignias. I wonder what all that means.”

“The Egyptian Osiris and the Inca Viracocha are a lot alike,” Gold said.

“And Azhi Dahaka.”

“What about the Incan Pachacamac, the Mayan Tezcatlipoca, and the Egyptian Seth?”

“The Egyptian *Ankh* signifies life-force,” Copper said, “and the Egyptian hieroglyphic symbol *Hr* ( $\otimes$ ) means *to fight* or *bind*.”

“Human histories or legends alternate between benevolence and oppression, granted. But what I find odd,” Silicone said, “are the recurring patterns, symbols, and myths among different cultures so widely separated in time and place. Separated by vast distances, ancient humans had little chance to communicate with each other. So how do we explain the remarkable similarity in their imagery and symbolism?”

The rising sun reminded them that their journey must continue before they found any answers.

The friends looked around to see where the Transportal delivered them, and saw a hilltop stone fortress overlooking a beautiful port city. Stone houses and small gardens lined the curved alleys descending the hill below the fortress. At the bottom of the hill, an impressive stone pier jutted into the sea, defining a curved harbor. Around the city, farms of dates, palms, olives, and other fruit lay in neat, checkered squares, watered by irrigation channels fed by clay pipes

emerging from invisible wells or aqueducts bringing water from the eastern mountain ranges. Beyond the farms, the terrain turned arid, scarred by dry streambeds.

In the distance they spotted a curious sight—rows and rows of tents, men, and horses. The men sat idly under the blazing sun or in the shade of their tents. Nitrogen and Helium rose into the air for a better view and informed their companions.

“They look like a ragtag army,” Nitrogen said. “Tired and dazed, they’re sitting aimlessly, clasping their weapons—swords, bows, spears, and shields. I see flags and banners with different patterns and markings, but a white banner with a red cross in the center recurs.”

“Another + symbol,” Helium added.

“What else?” Silicone asked.

“I see another camp of soldiers in the distance,” Nitrogen reported. “They are just as miserable, but their camp looks different. The tents are cones of colorful patterned cloth. The men wear baggy clothes and onion-shaped, pointed helmets. A ravine divides the two camps, and they’re keeping a nervous eye on each other across it.”

“There must be a war,” Silicone concluded.

They had heard of wars but could not understand why humans slaughtered one another. They knew there were often economic motives behind wars, the drive to get each other’s wealth or productive energy.

Oxygen noted many ships in the port and others anchored off the coast, the portside ships intricately detailed and beautifully painted with colorfully clothed men on board. Young boys hustled goods to the sailors from the docks. The offshore ships were plain brown wooden vessels flying various flags, always including a white one with a red +. The water was calm, and the sun had begun its orange descent into the western sea.

The friends began to explore the hilltop fortress, an impressive fortification dominating the city's highest point. Formidable masonry walls surrounded it, pierced by gates accessible only from movable aerial walkways spanning water-filled ditches. The town below the walls followed the hill down to the port.

The city's population overflowed, women and children sleeping in makeshift tents around the squares and streets, even in yards and gardens, on balconies and the flat rooftops. They looked fearful, hungry, and tired. The children played and cried while their mothers and sisters gazed sadly toward the distant plains, hoping perhaps to spot brothers, husbands, or sons in the distant camps.

North and east of the fortress, cliffs of breathtaking inaccessibility presented an awesome challenge to uninvited guests. Corner watchtowers, turrets, and other perimeter defense systems topped the walls upon which stood men wearing loose red and green shirts and baggy trousers, metal chain mail to their ankles, up-tipped leather boots, and onion shaped helmets topped with white feathers. They kept careful watch on the distant armies and the flotillas in and out of the harbor.

The friends turned into a large central courtyard with a cylindrical tower at the center, the highest point of the fortress complex, overlooking a 360-degree vista of the port city, the distant plains, and the sea. Soldiers filled the courtyard, surrounded by a two-story structure, the guards' barracks and armory. Soldiers in light garments and carrying iron crossbows and longbows guarded a doorway to a subterranean chamber. On the guards' backs hung a weapon, a long black iron tube funneled outward at its end and attached to a V-shaped wooden handle.

"I wonder what is in the underground room they

are guarding,” Calcium said.

“And what new killing tool do I see—fashioned out of me?” Iron wondered.

“Who are you folks?” a voice inquired from inside a soldier’s iron tube. “Forgive my intrusion. I am Sulphur.”

Another voice spoke. “And I am Potassium. Together we make the mighty Black Powder.”

“Black Powder—or *gunpowder*, as you will come to be known—I have heard much about you,” Silicone said. “The discovery of what you two can do together changed the human world for the better at times, but more often for the worse.”

“Regrettably, you are right,” Sulphur admitted. “We know what humans value most about us. Here we wait idly until we fuse in an explosion...”

“That will take the life force out of a miserable human who has no understanding of what is about to happen to him.” Another voice concluded from within a metallic ball in the center of the weapon.

“And you are ...?”

“Lead, the heavyweight and condemned because of it.”

“Can you tell us where we are?”

“You are in one of the port cities recently recaptured by the Seljuk forces in the province of Palestine, or the Kingdom of Jerusalem, depending on whose claim you consider,” Sulphur replied. “Many battles have been fought to control these coastal lands. For centuries people have lived together here and practiced different faiths, like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They became subjects of the Seljuk Empire during the last century. The Seljuk are Muslims by faith but trace their ancestry to the Turkic tribes of the Central Asian steppes. Everyone lived in harmony together until the crusading warriors arrived from the northwest. They

invaded by sea and land, brandishing a red cross and claiming the right to their Holy Land. Imagine that. They claim it, despite their, or their ancestors, never having set foot here! Inconceivable atrocities came with the ensuing senseless wars.”

“The crusades.” Silicone launched into another portentous recital. “For almost two hundred years, Christian Europeans and their Byzantine allies fought the increasingly powerful Muslim Turks, expanding into Asia Minor. Centuries earlier, nomadic Turkic tribes organized and united under various rulers and thundered south from their homelands in the northern Asian steppes. The Turkic Seljuk Empire ruled western Asia between India, China, and Egypt and began to encroach on Byzantine territory in Asia Minor. So grave was the threat that the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I requested help from his western European rivals in Rome. Pope Urban II was quick to agree. Many have speculated about the Pope’s motives in calling for the “Holy War of the Cross”. Perhaps he hoped to recreate a reunified “Holy Roman Empire” across Europe. Likely, he hoped to neutralize the violently competing powers of feudal Europe. Regional European kings increasingly defied Rome’s authority, levied their own taxes, and waged costly land-grabbing wars that directly and tangibly affected the Vatican’s power, influence, and revenues. Independent feudal monarchies vied for power within a Roman Catholic dominated Western Europe. A “Truce of God” was declared in Europe. The forces of Christendom were reconciled and mobilized against the Muslim “barbarians.” They accused Muslims of harassing local Christian populations and European pilgrims in the Holy Land. Asian Christians, despite their peaceful coexistence in Palestine and elsewhere, were thrown into the middle of the ensuing conflict. This ancient land, a conflict-ridden crossroads of people,

faiths, and armies, had enjoyed an unusual period of harmony and calm for four centuries before the crusades. The period of quiet followed the integration of the region under a new religion. After 661 C.E., the Islamic whirlwind stormed out of the nomadic heart of the Arabian Desert and swept across western Asia and northern Africa. Initially a fanatical, intolerant, and warlike movement, the wisdom of the Persian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and other ancient civilizations of the wider region influenced its development. The Muslim caliphates, established in Baghdad or Damascus, administered an empire that spanned Phoenicia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, North Africa, and Andalusia. Though not always willingly, people learned to live together. Jews and Christians—though not the Persian Zoroastrians, who did not trace their ancient faith to the Old Testament as Christianity and Islam do—were generally tolerated. With its unique geography and history, that intercontinental pivot, the Asian Mediterranean, was notably cosmopolitan. With a mixed population of Jews, Muslims, and Christians, it housed holy pilgrimage sites of all three faiths and was an important historical, cultural, and religious hub, a progressive place of coexistence for various people and their traditions. Between 1147 and 1149 C.E., the armies of the second crusade conquered and ransacked the heart of the empire. In the ensuing violent madness, every living creature in the city of Jerusalem was massacred. For days blood streamed from the city's drainage channels. The crusading wars continued for almost two centuries and shaped the future political history of Europe and Asia, isolating the Middle East and its people. They also helped guide a backward and superstitious medieval Europe through to an age of enlightenment, the Renaissance and the Reformation. Pizarro mentioned

that in our second voyage.”

Silicone paused for a moment. There was commotion in the central square. A small squad of mounted men rode through the gates. With fair skin, hair, and beards, they were tall and stocky. They wore light ceremonial armor and carried large wooden shields adorned with various insignia. They held banners, including the red-crossed white banner. In their midst a red-bearded giant with a golden crown on his head held an ornate golden shield with a red lion in the center. The Seljuk soldiers made way and looked on the passing mounted platoon with amazement, respect, fear, and despise. The horses pranced between lines of standing soldiers and across the cobblestone square. The entire event seemed well choreographed. The men reached the tower and dismounted. The two Seljuk soldiers guarding the door gave way ceremoniously. Two knights accompanied the tall crowned man through the massive iron-gated door and disappeared from view. Their companions sat in a shaded area and helped themselves eagerly to the food and drink laid out for them.

The friends and their three new colleagues followed the men into the tower and climbed the steep, spiraling stone stairway into a large circular chamber at the top of the tower, a room designed for military command and defense. All the doors were of heavy iron. Strategically configured windows could be closed quickly, leaving narrow slits for shooting projectiles. The windows looked in every direction. Operable hatch doors over a number of openings on the carved plaster dome let in ventilation and natural light. Beautiful woolen carpets covered the floor, and equally elegant silks draped the walls. A large, intricately carved inlaid table held oil lamps, many books, scrolls, maps, feather pens, and inkwells, as well as fruit and refreshments, all arrayed on a red, gold, and green silk tablecloth.

The two knights sat near the entrance, while the crowned man went inside to a stately chair upon which he sat. The room was absolutely quiet, the only sound a canary silently hopping in a brass birdcage hanging in the corner. Even the canary was too nervous to sing.

Our friends noticed a man standing by a window, staring at the harbor and the sea beyond. He was a tall, strong man in his early forties. He had a beard and wore a white, blue, and gold embroidered silk robe and loose pants. His rolled white and blue silk headdress wrapped neatly around a semi-spherical golden cap and flowed around and behind his neck. A curved jewel-studded golden dagger adorned his leather belt. He turned toward his seated guest, bowed slightly, and spoke in fluent Latin.

“I welcome you to this castle, but not to this land. I am Al Nasir Salah-al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayub, the Governor of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, the faithful emissary of the Seljuk Court. You may address me as your people do, Saladin.”

The red-bearded giant responded, “And I am Richard of England, known as Lionheart, and I represent his Holiness the Pope, as well as the Levantine Latin kingdoms and their Christian subjects.”

An eerie silence fell, as the rivals assessed each other.

“Why are you invading our land,” Saladin asked at last. “Why are you here again?”

“Why did you invade the Iberian peninsula, Sicily, or Malta? Why are you there?”

“Despite wartime formalities,” Saladin diplomatically changed the subject, “I must admit that Lionheart suits you. You are the most competent military commander among the crusading invaders.”

“May I also compliment your military strategy, especially your tactics of distant warfare?”



“One might say we are uncommon leaders in exceptional times. We must devote our minds and hearts, and often the lives of many dear ones, to questionable causes. Men like us often lead incomprehensible lives.”

Saladin stood silently, looked up, and muttered some kind of short silent prayer. He then glanced at Richard. It was neither a hateful look, nor a challenging stare. Rather, it seemed like a wise gaze that questions the absurdity of human suffering. Richard looked attentively at him. It was a strange brief moment for opposing leaders of such fearsome armadas.

“We must discuss ceasefire terms,” Richard prompted. “Have you received the Seljuk Emperor’s directives?”

Saladin smiled. “His Lordship trusts my recommendations.”

“Very well. Let’s get on with it.”

Richard raised his right arm. Instantly, one of his two companions rose and handed him a scroll.

What Tin saw next amazed it. “Look at the arm of the man, carrying the scroll. There, the embroidery on his shirt sleeve.”

Our friends recognized what they saw. The embroidery was a shield divided into four squares. Two were marked with the symbol ‘+’, but the other two were marked with ‘X’. Below the shield was a human skull superimposed over a pair of crossed human thighbones.

“He is wearing the symbols of both Viracocha and Pachacamac,” Gold gasped.

The two men spent the next hour poring over maps. Richard’s crusading army was to give up the claim to Jerusalem and the surrounding territories, which Saladin recaptured in 1187 A.D. The Latins would retain control of their small coastal Asian

kingdoms. Christians could live and make pilgrimages to Jerusalem and other holy sites. The Seljuk navy would escort the Latin navy out to sea for “insurance and protection”. Hostilities were to cease for five years. The Christian colonists would cease raiding the Seljuk lands, towns, and merchant caravans. Although, both Saladin and Richard suspected the conflict would persist, providing plenty of pretexts for retaliation.

Silicone took advantage of the negotiations to explain. “Richard and Saladin know that Saladin’s struggles are far from over. This is no truce but only a cessation of hostilities between their armies. Richard’s army is withdrawing from the ongoing regional conflict, in effect abandoning the war he came to fight. And Saladin knows it.”

“But, why would he do that,” Potassium asked, “when he has recaptured several coastal towns?”

“Maybe he’s homesick,” Helium humored.

“You’re both right. Richard won some victories, but Saladin’s tiresome strategy of avoiding head-on engagements has worn him down. Saladin bids his time, exhausts his foe’s resources, and waits for a strategically opportune time to invest his army. Saladin knew that the northern Europeans would have trouble with the hot, dry climate, and the Seljuk naval blockade of supply routes. Time was on his side. His men were defending their homes and families and were better supplied. Saladin conducted a war of attrition, denying Richard the quick decisive war he wanted. Time was *not* on his side. Richard had started the Third Crusade in conjunction with the armies of the French King Phillip Augustus and the remaining troops of the German King Frederick Barbarossa—who drowned in a Seleucian river. But Richard took a long time to reach Asia since he stopped to help take the western Iberian Peninsula back from Muslim Moorish forces to form the Kingdom of

Portugal. Later he took Cypress away from its Byzantine ruler because he insulted his fiancée. He reached the eastern Mediterranean to confront intense local summer heat, few remaining German forces, and an unreliable French King, who departed soon after the bloody conquest of Acre. After that Richard had to manage the regional squabbles over kingship, power, and politics with a smaller army. More important, he learned his brother John had rebelled in England, was busily consolidating alliances and fighting Richard's outnumbered followers, including the English folk hero Robin Hood. Richard recognized the urgency of going home to deal with his own problems."

At this point, Saladin and Richard rose and walked to the window overlooking the harbor. They knew they were responsible for many lives. Could they reach their goals without further bloodshed?

"Your reputation has spread throughout Europe," Richard said. "You have become a legend of sorts."

"That is encouraging."

"The church denounces the Muslims, but the veteran crusaders tell a different story. Some people understand that the infidel oriental is neither evil nor decadent, not too unlike Europeans."

"Just ordinary humans with the same needs, confusions, fears, and hopes."

"I know that you protect civilians and prisoners, even offering to pay for their return home. You know we are short on provisions, so we execute the wounded prisoners and other useless mouths."

"You slaughtered three thousand Muslim women and children at Acre. Were they useless? Could you not let them go, so we could feed them?"

Richard did not answer.

"I seek understanding between our peoples. War serves no good purpose."

“You speak wisely,” Richard replied. “Some question Rome’s holy wars. Others tell of mysterious discoveries in the Holy Land.”

“What do you mean?”

“I will tell you,” the Englishman said, “but first I want to ask you some questions. What we say, you must never reveal.”

Saladin nodded in agreement.

“Very well then. Explain the attack-withdrawal tactics you beat my cavalry with.”

“The Parthians used them against the Romans. The Parthian light cavalry were skilled mounted archers and engaged their enemies from a distance. They attacked with a fraction of their cavalry, and then withdrew as if in retreat. As soon as some distance separated them from their enemy, reinforcements rushed in for an ambush. The Parthians could shoot backwards with deadly accuracy at a full gallop. Our cavalry does well on long distance expeditions in arid and mountainous terrains, but fail to stop the galloping heavy armor-clad European knights in the first crusade. We learned. Your heavy armor and weapons cripple an army in a prolonged engagement in a hot climate.”

“You’re right about the climate and your tactics,” Richard conceded. “The knights who rode out too far never came back. Why are your thin swords so strong? If our blacksmiths made such thin blades, we could use them only for roasting chickens.”

Saladin smiled. “That, my honored guest. I cannot tell you. One must first learn our alchemists’ secrets.”

Saladin paused to ask for some fresh mint tea for them.

Silicone took the opportunity to explain. “The two worlds learned much from each other. The Europeans, younger and more isolated, learned from

their neighbors' culture, science, and philosophy. The Seljuk blacksmiths knew how to mix ratios of pure cooked coal powder—our friend Carbon here—to make lighter, stronger steel weapons, armor, and gun barrels.”

Iron and Carbon looked at each other. They knew they were stronger together.

“Tell me about your guns and your explosive weapons.”

“Grenades and guns.” Saladin crowed. “We learned about them from the Chinese, and improved them. They use an incendiary powder, whose exact composition is a secret.”

“I also have heard of your ancient maps that show lands we know nothing about, far away seas beyond the end of the inhabited world, where only dragons and demons roam.”

Saladin laughed “What rubbish. There are such maps. I have seen them. They show a continent far to the west and a great island continent in the far south. Despite their accuracies, some of the maps have recurring geographical inconsistencies. The world they represent was different from the one we know. They show dry land where we know seas, and solid land where there are now only islands. It's as if the seas were lower then. The Great Library of Alexandria had many such maps and charts and obscure manuscripts, but the Roman Church unleashed their mobs to destroy it. Valuable treasures vanished forever. The Catholic establishment continues to destroy ancient precious knowledge. The eastern Christians of Byzantium are not so perverse. The western Catholics are sunk in ignorance, superstition, and prejudice. But for the Muslim scholars, even Greek literature and philosophy would have disappeared.”

“Ironically, Rome has opened Pandora's box,” Richard said bitterly. “It has already had to yield.”

“Yield? To whom?” Saladin asked.

“The Knights Templar.”

“Oh, yes,” Saladin said. “‘The Poor Knights’! They’re far from poor. They swarm the holy sites in and around Jerusalem. When we recaptured Jerusalem, they sent a secret emissary. They claimed to be a secret brotherhood, only nominally loyal to Rome. They sought an arrangement whereby their scholars could continue studying the ancient sites, monasteries, and religious centers.”

“From the start of the first Crusade, some of the French nobility, notably the Court of Champagne, had an agenda before they got to Jerusalem. When Jerusalem fell in the second crusade, Bernard of Clairvaux capitalized on public sympathy for a ragtag militia under Hughes de Payens that protected Christian pilgrims. They were known as the Poor Knights because they could afford neither armor nor servants like the aristocratic knights. “Saint Bernard” led them to make an agreement with the new Kingdom of Jerusalem. Hence headquartered on the site of Solomon’s Temple of Solomon, they called themselves The Knights of the Temple or the Knights Templar. They secretly excavated the ruins of Solomon’s Temple. What they found, nobody knows.”

“Does no one know?” Saladin asked.

“Some say they took what they found and hid them among heretics like the French Cathar. Nobody knows what was discovered, but we do know what it did for the Poor Knights. Nine Templar leaders met secretly with a Papal Council in Troyes, and walked out with unheard of concessions and privileges: grants of land all over Europe and the Levant, the right to finance and protect Christians pilgrims—and no taxes whatsoever. They got the right to maintain a militia, accountable only to themselves. They walked out as an autonomous

power with lands to rule, armies to keep, profitable operations to run, paying no taxes to anyone. Clearly, whatever they found in Jerusalem was so controversial that Rome had to make a deal. The Templars agreed to silence in exchange for their remarkable privileges.”

“Is that why you came here?” Saladin asked. “Are you their ally?”

“I can tell you only that they are not happy that you recaptured Jerusalem and the other holy sites. You’re costing them money.”

At that moment, Saladin walked away with one of his men, who had come to whisper something to him.

“What happened to the Knights Templar?” Hydrogen asked.

“That answer requires a long discussion,” Silicone said. “But I’ll tell you what is relevant to us. After the second Crusade, many remained in the newly established Christian kingdoms whose Muslim and Jewish citizens were slaughtered. They profited from trade between Asia and Europe, and often looted Silk Road caravans. They built strategically located fortifications for local defense and deployment of armored knight brigades. Saint Bernard recognized the need for more professional military resources, and promoted the idea of the *crusading monks*, religious warriors who did God’s fighting work with a cross in one hand, and a sword in the other. The armies of Islam had a similar religion-infused fighting philosophy, the *jihad*. Christian edicts glorified and legitimized the ‘warriors of Christ,’ turning crusader mercenaries into folk heroes. Donations and concessions poured in from the Vatican, kings, merchants, and common folks for these protectors of the Holy Land. The militant orders’ fortified monasteries spread across the Levant and Europe. Inevitably, their power and wealth attracted investment from European elite, creating Europe’s first international commercial

and financial enterprises. The orders soon had financial, commercial, military, and political reach throughout the Levant and Europe. By the time of Saladin, the Templars and the Hospitaller owned almost half the Latin Levant. Others soon copied them. The Germanic Order of Teutonic Knights played a major role in the Baltic crusades that led to the creation of the Catholic nations of Prussia, Poland, and the Baltic nations. It was the Teutonic Knights' brutal surprise raiding parties into these previously pagan lands, which inspired such old folkloric tales as the 'Headless Horseman' –a metaphorical imagery of faceless, armored, and helmeted knights conducting surprise raids out of foggy forests. These soldiers of God invented a new type of entity, whose lifeline no longer depended on national and religious affiliations. Such military-religious 'orders' developed private international soldiery, trade, finance, and land and capital ownership. Indeed, it proved to be a very powerful and lucrative existence. The Levantine orders were eventually dislodged from their Asian territories by Saladin, and later his Ayubbid descendents and the Egyptian Memluk. In the early 14th century, the Ottomans captured the last eastern stronghold of the Hospitallers in Rhodes and Cyprus.

“The 14th century marked the beginning of the political decline of Vatican's Holy Roman Empire. Perhaps, to consolidate their European influence, in 1307 AD, Pope Clement V outlawed the Templars, declaring them as heretics and devil worshippers. Many were burned at the stake. But, some of the Templars fled, or henceforth operated under different incarnations. Throughout most of Catholic Europe, their lands were confiscated. The Templars spirited away money, treasures, relics, and secret traditions to safer havens like Scotland. Some of the Templar relics are believed to be still hidden in Scottish sanctuaries. Others reincarnated



in Portugal as the 'Order of Christ'. Throughout the 15th century, under the rule of their enigmatic Grand Master, Emperor Henry "the Navigator", the Portuguese famously circumnavigated Africa, finding a marine route to Asia, and created a colonial trading and slaving empire. Also, the Order of Christ facilitated the discovery of the New World. Their possession of ancient navigational charts was instrumental to the finding and exploration of the American continent. Following their African, Asian, and American colonization ventures, the Order of Christ was famed to have become the richest enterprise in Europe. While the Templars were persecuted, Rome allied itself to some other military-religious orders, such as the Order of Christ and the Hospitallers. After the loss of the Holy Land, the Hospitallers fled to Cyprus, Rhodes, and a few smaller Aegean islands. After the fall of Rhodes and Cyprus to the Ottomans, they moved to Malta under the new name of the "Knights of the Order of St. John", better known as the 'Knights of Malta'. They have been the Vatican's loyal agents ever since. These surviving religious military Orders profited from within the Catholic nations of Spain, Portugal, Malta, and the merchant Italian City states, and effectively controlled European trade for over a century. By then, these Orders had adopted ruthless greed, exploitation, and autocracy. No profitable activity was overlooked, even smuggling, piracy, and slave trading. Increasing competition between the seafaring Protestant Northern Europeans and the Catholic lands brought rivalry and war. It was the descendants of the exiled English Templars that raised the infamous *Skull and Bones* flags atop their pirate ships."

At that moment, Saladin returned and invited Richard to a table lavishly set with various dishes.

"Your pope," Saladin said as Richard ate, "should

know that the Templars will have no special privileges, just the same safe access as all other Christians.”

Richard laughed so loudly that some food spewed out of his mouth.

Richard: ‘Sorry. I laugh because it's rather grander than that. Ironically, Rome’s attempt to control Europe has diminished its power and influence for good. The Templars and their allies are sworn to undo the Vatican's influence and what they see as the church’s deliberate distortion of the historical truth behind Christianity and Jesus Christ.

“But tell me, we seem to be behind the Asians in many ways. Spices, herbs, fruits and vegetables, paper, color dyes, alchemy, metalworking, gunpowder, navigational charts, fine textiles, mathematics, sciences, medicine, and astronomy. Apparently, we surpass you mostly in fighting and religion. When I got here, I saw the difference with the Christians here. They bathe often, use incense, wear fine clothes, eat well, and live in fine villas. They even recite poetry for us at night.”

Richard and his companion laughed scornfully, but not Saladin. “A taste for such luxuries started these wars. Greed. The Muslim and Byzantine merchants’ stand in the way of the Holy Roman Empire’s aim to dominate the Asian and African trade in spices, silk, ivory, and color dyes, all so precious in Europe. Once they lose their foothold here, they will find other ways to get at what they want. One wonders why Europe is so greedy, since its land is blessed with much water.”

“Indeed, our crops often exceed our needs. We eat well, but we spend a lot of time doing the bidding of the Roman Church.”

“Why is that?”

“Europe,” Richard replied, “is isolated. Unlike Asia, we have no long history of races and nations mingling and learning from each other. Dense forests

cover much of Europe. So in order to farm, we have to cut lots of trees. We got strong, durable iron tools, sharp enough to cut trees only when Rome colonized northern Europe. Before that most Europeans were hunter-gatherer warriors and knew little about the rest of the world.”

“Yes,” Saladin said, “our agriculture suffers from lack of water. Ancient records tell us that it used to rain much more here. There were more rivers, lakes, and forests in Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, and central Asia. Now much of that is arid plains and desert. Our world has dried up. Our people invent new ways to manage water and develop dry land crops. Famines cause invasion and migration all over Asia.”

Richard mumbled: “Yes, that is a problem for the local Christian kingdoms as well.”

Saladin had another question for his guest. “Islam learns from both the Old and New Testaments, yet Jews and Christians do not accept Islam. But why do Christians persecute Jews? Why did the Christians massacre Jews along with Muslims when they captured Jerusalem?”

“The church blames the Jews for persecuting Jesus. And Jews do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.”

“Well,” Saladin rejoined, “Christians reject the newer Islam. But, why blame the Jews for hanging onto their beliefs? If we all mean the same one God, then the creator’s word should be the same in any language and faith. Why are your gospels true, and everything else false? Why force your beliefs down people’s throats?”

Richard offered no answer, only grabbing the red cross on his shirt. He changed the subject. “In Palestine, we visited the Coptic monasteries. The crosses that adorn their churches are different from ours.”

“How so?”

“Their early Christian crosses were often

composed of a circle above the cross, flanked by stretched wings, and crowned by a crescent moon.”

“I know little about mythology or spiritual history,” Saladin said, “but I can tell you that the winged disc and the crescent moon are ancient symbols many share in Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, and other places. They say it has something to do with the ancient pagans’ abode of the gods. The cross with a circle on top is an Egyptian hieroglyph called Ankh, which means life or life force. The Sumerians also used the cross as a holy symbol. Your cross probably derived from such sacred symbols of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Their origin, true message, and age defy all our knowledge. You Christians do not seem to fully grasp what it is that you so devotedly worship. Well, neither do we! But does anyone?”

“We revere the cross because Jesus died on one.”

Saladin shook his head and smiled.

“Earlier, you mentioned about the Greeks’ literary works, that have been translated into Arabic. What kind of books are these?”

Saladin: “Almost as grand as the maps and charts that you fancy. Many have already been brought into Europe by the likes of your Templar scholars. The genie is already out of the bottle, Sahib. Our *worlds have collided*.”

The two foes approached the circular tower’s windows, overlooking a quiet hillside port city, and the opposing tented camps in the distance. As their two worlds’ stalemate was brought back to life by the brightening dawn sky, they knew their encounter had already brought great change.

As for our friends, the rising sun signaled their departure.

## The Re-Visitor Of The Sacred Message

*Your soul is bound for the sky, your corpse is beneath the ground . . . You shall go up to the sky . . . You shall ascend to those who are above the earth . . . For your wings are those of a falcon, your gleam is that of a star.*

**Ancient Egyptian Book Of The Dead**

*A Chakra is a node, a vortex of energy at the conjunction point of the spirit and the body; a transition of the spiritual life-force from the higher dimensions into the four dimensional world.*

**Ancient Tibetan manuscript of unknown date and origin**

“We are back again, and I feel no closer to our destination.” Nitrogen said to the others, once again gathered outside the cave and engaged in several simultaneous discussions.

“Maybe, that’s the nature of the quest for enlightenment,” Hydrogen suggested.

“We are destined for complex discoveries, until we reach our destination,” Silicone added. “The journey to the Sign will not be straightforward. We must understand every bit of knowledge we find.”

Lead took the opportunity to question Silicone. “Before we came back, you said that some of the military religious Orders, such as the Portuguese Order of Christ, became the earliest multi-national corporations, but before the crusades, Europe were technologically inferior to Asia. How did they do it?”

“During the two centuries they fought, the warring nations learned much from each other. Once Europeans understood and adopted gunpowder, combining its powers with their superior naval skills,

they stopped the Ottomans' western advance. The Asian conquerors were not naval powers. Guns, big ships, scientific and navigational advances, maps and compasses, and the desire to conquer the world bore Europe's colonial era, just as Saladin and Richard foresaw and Pizarro described."

"What happened to the military orders' vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience?"

"At least they stuck to obedience," Silicone said, "a secret oath of obedience to their goal—to control the world's riches."

"Why," Gold asked, "did some orders adopt the 'X' or skull symbols?"

"I can't say," Silicone answered, "but whatever they represent, the ancient world understood. They used them often in religious and spiritual art, but the meaning has been forgotten or lost."

"But why did the church go after the Templars and not the others, like the Hospitallers?" Hydrogen asked.

"Perhaps they threatened the Church? Or unearthed some secret ancient knowledge." Silicone suggested.

"Maybe," Calcium said, "what they discovered threatened Rome's religious and political monopoly."

Oxygen had another topic in mind. "Why was ancient Europe so isolated?"

"Before the polar shift, most of northwestern Europe was under miles of ice, and the rest of Europe was cold, dry, and inhospitable. Northern Europe became habitable only after the pole shift melted the ice. When the north Asian migrants met other Asians in the south, they merged culturally and racially. But, those that reached northern Europe found an uninhabited land of ice, melt water swamps, or dense forests. They preserved some of their languages, myths, and

traditions, but their descendants were isolated for millennia until new immigrants from Asia and the Romans brought them back in contact with the rest of the world about two thousand years ago. The only European ice-age civilizations were far to the south, in the Mediterranean peninsulas and islands like Malta, Iberia, and Sicily. The islands were larger and connected to each other and the continent, since the seas were lower. They left megalithic temple ruins and cave paintings.

“If northern Asia was as temperate as modern Europe before the pole shift, then southern Europe must have been like the fringes of modern Siberia. Europe could not have supported a large population, but northern Asia could have. No wonder so many ancient civilizations and monuments are in Asia.”

“During all those catastrophes, did the ‘gods’ help people? If so, which one? The one symbolized by the serpent or the bird of prey? The ‘+’ or ‘X’ gods?”

Hydrogen’s question brought on a silence just as a shower of comets streaked the clear night sky. They all thought of the same thing. For even Hydrogen and Oxygen, the event had new meaning. The shooting stars reminded them of what people saw that fateful day seventeen thousand years ago. When following glowing lights and violent storms, the *sky tumbled and heaven streaked across the sky*. They realized how that event affected history.

“I wonder what happened to my beloved library?” Silicone whispered.

Later they gathered near the Transportal, awaiting the rising sun and departure for another unknown realm. Once again they cast themselves into the sparks, hues, and halos of strange light.

Moments later, they found themselves in a forested meadow of lush vegetation and centuries old

trees. Jagged snow-capped mountains stretched towards the purple horizon. A stream of pure water gurgled past them. Countless birds sang enthusiastically, as bees and butterflies waltzed to their enchanting tunes.

“If I were the Creator,” Helium said, “I would certainly hang around here.”

The perfect harmony of light, color, and movement, mesmerized them. “Everything is so perfectly in order, nothing out of place,” Silicone said.

Nitrogen spotted something. “Except that man over there.”

A couple of hundred meters away, an old willow tree bowed gracefully, spreading its arms to shelter a lone man’s slim body. He sat motionless, cross-legged, eyes closed. A contented smile contradicted his ragged condition. He wore old stitched clothes and no shoes. Meticulously clean, his long hair and beard and thin figure attested to arduous asceticism.

“What is he up to?” Lead whispered.

“I think he’s *meditating*,” Silicone said.

“What’s that?” Iron wondered.

“A state of quiet contemplation aimed at hidden truths unseen by the senses. Call it a sort of extrasensory perceptive awakening.” The voice answered from a white crystal rock, lying on a sun-bleached, wrinkled khaki cloth, along with a piece of dried flat bread and a water-filled clay bowl. “I am Sodium, and this is my friend Chlorine.”

“Two of the most abundant earthlings,” Silicone intoned, “individually poisonous, but together as salt, essential to all life. We’re glad to meet you.”

“Likewise.”

“Who is this man?”

“His visitors call him Siddhartha. We have wandered around these mountains since his friend brought us here. He spends his time thinking and



meditating. He rarely eats and then only the fruits and vegetables visitors give him.”

“Now I remember,” Silicone said. “He will be known as Buddha, the one who attained Buddha-hood. He will inspire the faith of billions, his wisdom and influence transcending culture and time. A person of privilege, he rejected comfort to seek enlightenment in solitude and austerity.”

“How so?” Hydrogen asked excitedly.

“His father Suddhodana, ruled the Shakya tribe in the southern Himalayas,” Sodium replied. “According to legend, at his birth a seer predicted he would be either a king or a teacher. His father tried to raise him to be king. He had everything. At sixteen he married Yasodhara and lived with her and his other concubines for thirteen years. But then, he encountered life’s harsh realities.”

Our friends wanted to know more. Sodium explained. “What I will tell you I learned from Siddhartha. One day he met a decrepit old man. Then he saw a sick person. Finally he saw a corpse in a funeral procession. He’d never seen such things. When he met an ascetic, the man’s inner strength, tranquility, and detachment from comforts awakened Siddhartha. He renounced life’s comfort and followed the ascetic’s path for six years. He studied with scholars in many places. Then came the period some call the Dawn of Truth. In time, Siddhartha gained an understanding of his past lives and the perception of human souls disappearing and reappearing in the worldly realm, people trapped in an endless cycle of death and rebirth, depending on their deeds. He called it the cycle of karma and reincarnation.”

“What are they?” our friends asked.

“Karma is related to the way people live in harmony with others, the world, and nature. A soul’s

karma influences its rebirth or reincarnation.”

“So,” Silver noted, “human spirits are reborn into earthly life, and do not ascend to the heavenly abodes of the gods?”

“The true nature, origin, and destiny of the human soul/spirit/Ka are mysteries. Let me tell you something else Siddhartha observed that is closely related to our quest. He had visions of the dissolution and evolution of many world cycles, something many ancient myths deal with.”

Siddhartha sat motionless, though he seemed to smile more visibly.

“Buddha used his new understandings to find ways to stop the corruption of the soul. Legend has it that after thirty-five years he reached enlightenment or awakening—Buddhahood. Then people called him Buddha. Anyone who aspires to Buddhahood undergoes, as Siddhartha did, the Bodhisattva, a time of intense exercise to develop generosity, discipline, renunciation, wisdom, benevolence, and perfect equanimity. Buddha taught the purest love and profoundest wisdom. He emphasized the search for the *Highest Truth*.”

“You mentioned that when we first met,” Hydrogen said. “What is the Highest Truth?”

“I cannot say with any certainty,” Silicone admitted, “but they say Buddha understood the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Here is how he described it:

Ignorance results in moral and immoral consciousness conditioning activities.

Consciousness results in mind and matter.

Mind and matter result in the senses.

Senses result in contact.

Contact results in feeling.

Feeling results in desire and craving.

Desire and craving result in grasping.

Grasping results in becoming.

Becoming results in birth.

Birth results in decay, death, sorrow, pain, despair, and ignorance.

In other words, ignorance fuels humanity's endless cycle of birth and rebirth."

"That explains all the human suffering, pollution, chaos, and over-population we know all too well."

"Buddha was onto something all right!" Helium burred.

"Buddha" Silicone droned on, "understood the Four Noble Truths, which explain that first, the human condition is steeped in suffering, and its life estranged from reality. Second, humanity's delusion, anxiety, and suffering arise from their indulgence of insatiable and illusory desires that separate them from each other, life, and reality—and the Source. Third, suffering will end only when humans suppress, overcome, and master false desires and reach a state of detachment, indifference to the world's luxuries. Fourth, salvation comes from following the Eightfold Path of Right Knowledge, Right Aspirations, Right Speech (truthfulness), Right Behavior, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and finally Right Contemplation. Those truths are revealed to those who follow the path, thereby reaching toward Nirvana. Scholars have noted that the earliest, purest Buddhism was not a religion but a system of psychological and ethical discipline and guidance for life."

"Buddha certainly tells his disciples that they should believe nothing before it's been thoroughly pondered, digested, and tested, not even his own teachings. He always stresses the importance of intellect and reason." Chlorine spoke from experience.

"Buddha's insistence on individual thinking and

initiative influenced Buddhism. Monasteries were widespread, decentralized, and relatively independent. Scholars formed many independent schools. Except for regional Buddhist societies, there is no supranational, centralized, authoritative establishment, unlike the case with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Those religions discourage deviation from established doctrine, but Buddhism encourages a diverse, dynamic, and evolutionary approach to spirituality.”

Observing its colleagues’ ‘utopian’ expressions, Silicone was quick to add: “Wealthy and powerful Buddhist institutions did historically evolve. They wielded much influence, and meddled in the political systems of many nations and communities. One cannot deny that elitism and corruption did not exist amongst such institutions.”

Just then Hydrogen noticed an expression of irritation on Buddha’s face. He no longer smiled.

“Through many a birth in existence wandered I, seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house,” an unfamiliar voice announced.

Our friends looked around to see who was saying words that described their mission, their reason for being there. But they saw no one except Buddha, his eyes open and looking at them. Our friends looked behind them to see what attracted Siddhartha. Seeing nothing, they turned back to Buddha, still staring with the same probing intensity. “Yes, my tiny guests, it is you!”

Hydrogen spoke first. “Forgive us for disturbing your peace, Your Highness. We did not realize you could hear us. Frankly, this has never happened. No human ever noticed us before.”

Buddha smiled. “First, do not call me Highness. Like you, I am a humble seeker of the Highest Truth. I have heard all you said since you came.”

“But how can you communicate with us?”  
Carbon stammered.

“There are many ways of understanding and communicating with the universe. Perhaps language is compromising and inefficient. We all hold the universal essence of truth within us. We must tap into the stream of consciousness, much like we feel the wind, river currents, or the energy in nature. Often physically handicapped people are forced to enhance their extrasensory ability. In the last few years I have learned nature’s hidden rhythms and language. Once I was able to feel and help a wounded animal. I was amazed when the other species behaved as if they knew it. That is how I communicate with you.”

Sensing our friends’ intimidation, Siddhartha continued. “I heard about your journeys. Your experiences intrigue me. You are strange, special earthlings, whom I am privileged to meet.”

Hydrogen went first. “Sir, what is the Highest Truth?”

Buddha laughed. “The honest answer is that I’m not quite sure. What your friend referred to earlier is a state of understanding I have yet to attain. Here and now, I believe the Highest Truth is the true nature of existence of all things, present and absent, visible or invisible, sensed or not. The true nature of all and the way all things relate to everything else. The beginning of what existed before and the end destiny of all things, and what lies beyond. The very purpose of the pulsating universal consciousness. The heartbeat of life as we see it. The origin and destiny of all.”

Our friends listened hypnotically. Only Hydrogen whispered, “The Source.”

“You can call it that. Frankly, I like that. I think we all seek the same answers. Most entities in the universe do not thirst for them. They simply exist,

floating along aimlessly. The few who seek enlightenment often fail. Only a few are sufficiently dedicated to perceive the Highest Truth. I certainly hope we are among them. Therefore The Highest Truth can also be understood as understanding one's connection with all creation—or the Source, as you call it.”

“So seeking the Highest Truth leads to the Creator Source.” Oxygen concluded.

Gold addressed the great sage. “Sir, we have all seen great human suffering in different times and places in the world.”

“The disharmony between humanity and the rest of the earth is devastating the world,” Nitrogen added.

Gold took up the theme. “Your Four Noble Truths address the causes of human misery. Can you explain why humans are the only species/entity on the planet that suffers from disharmony?”

“My friends” Buddha said, “the simplest way to talk about such things is to describe basic principles. Everything, whether we perceive it or not, is composed of the true essence of reality, the Source. How and in what context I cannot yet explain, since I lack scientific understanding of the complex universal fabric. All creation is in some way derived from the Source. Most things relate to the connection intuitively. A stone tumbles, turns, and erodes in a water torrent. As summer becomes winter, the trees part with their leaves. Birds migrate all year to find hospitable climates. Flowers ceaselessly follow the sun. All animals and plants are inherently harmonious and connected with their universe.”

“Like electrical appliances connected to a universal electricity grid,” Silicone added.

“Humans alone seem to be disconnected. No other species has evolved to such an unnatural state of existence. Humans are born, live, get sick, grow weak,

and decay, nothing but a collection of incoherent experiences. They have the universal qualities of compassion, love, and kindness, and yet they commit the most dreadful deeds against themselves and everything around them.”

Buddha paused, gathered his fluttering hair, and gazed at the invisible wind, as if welcoming a favored visitor. “I do not understand the causes of human disharmony, but I think the causes are historic. Anyhow, universal harmony is revealed only to those who let go of self-centered delusions like greed, hate, self-admiration, egoism, and so on. Selfless living lets us rediscover our universal connection, an eternal true love. Recognizing our ignorance, cleansing our minds, and reconnecting the soul with the universe is something only a few attempt and fewer achieve. Nirvana is not easily reached. Leaving my family and the luxuries of my youth was hard. But I know no other way. Otherwise, I would not be truly alive, but a physically functioning yet spiritually dysfunctional organic mechanism.”

“I have learned, Siddhartha,” Silicone said, “that you believe everything is transitory and impermanent. Most ancient traditions believed the immortal human soul is resurrected to reach some heavenly place. What about that?”

“Many ancient traditions deal with the duality of human nature: a physical body, and a spirit/Ka/Chi. Others describe an ordeal between the opposing universal forces of good and evil, positive and negative, or matter and energy. Those universal contrasts exist, but I believe that good and evil are different manifestations of the same creation. The essence of the universe is the source of both, yet beyond the nature of both. Good and evil are both parts of the created and perceived universe on opposite ends of the same

spectrum of consciousness. Similarly, both matter and energy are transitional illusory forms of a much higher state of consciousness, the Godhead or the Source of all creation. Nobody really knows. Perhaps, science will explain the exact nature of the universe one day.”

“Do you discount humanity’s hope of a life after death?”

“Not at all. In fact, that is what we should all strive for. I believe there is no better place after life, no heavenly abode of the gods or God, no paradise. It is here. Both heaven and hell are here and now. Humans themselves are responsible for where their consciousness resides. Heaven or hell manifests from our present interactions with the world. Do you understand? They define our choice, not in some future but right here and now. We should strive to reach a higher level of consciousness. Spiritual life is a continuous journey that transcends mortal life. It does not start with birth or end with death. In one shape or another, we exist in eternity. My disagreement is not with the humans' belief in immortal spiritual existence, or the soul if you wish, but humans’ distorted understanding of it. I believe that we manifest in this miserable material existence to study and learn. Learn to comprehend the realities of the universe, to raise our consciousness level. Raise our consciousness level, so that we can manifest in a higher dimensional realm of existence. As long as we do not achieve that higher state of consciousness, we can only return into a material existence. Stuck right down here in our own entrapped tombs. That is the true nature of the four dimensional human existence.”

Buddha seemed disturbed. “It remains a mystery to me how a shadowy web of corruption, manipulation, and exploitation controls this world and its occupants, who misunderstand or misrepresent the sacred message



of the Highest Truth. Maybe one day you time travelers will understand.”

“Are you a re-visitor of the sacred message?” Hydrogen bluntly inquired.

Buddha’s eyes lit up. “I hope so my friend. I sincerely hope I am worthy. I teach my friends to remain detached from unnecessary comforts and possessions, from rigidity and dogma. I hope my message does not become another distorted religion.”

“Sir,” Calcium interrupted, “you said something about human perception of a four dimensional reality. What did you mean by that?”

“Everything appears in four universal dimensions—three-dimensional space and time. We move about in space, and experience linear forward-moving time. We are confined within that realm. We have developed mathematical ways to analyze our four-dimensional conscious prison. I believe dreams and imagination let us perceive the universe in other ways. To move unhindered in the space-time continuum we often call hallucination. I have tried to escape those limitations. I freed my consciousness from my body in a controlled dream state. I transcended the boundaries of space. Then I began to leap in time. I saw my own childhood and other past events. Then I began to see past worlds. History unfolded before me. Mystics call this soul-traveling.”

Buddha paused, closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and sat still without exhaling. Then he exhaled, and continued. “I want to tell you something that I do not quite understand, because I am not sure if I am hallucinating or having a real experience. Often people have nearly fatal accidents. They often recount similar experiences—floating in space, watching their motionless bodies, reviewing their lives in a flash, passing through tunnels of light, rising above Earth, and

seeing and entering light spheres and astral planes, being greeted by their deceased relatives, instructing guardians, and so on.”

Buddha paused for a moment. “I believe I have experienced the higher dimensions of this planet. Several times, while in a deep meditative state. I lost consciousness of who I was and where and when. At that point, I could see the world from above. Our world was like a beautiful giant ball of blue, white, brown, beige, and green. On a few occasions something unexplainable happened. For a few moments, I saw fields of light, glowing halos, circular fields of astral light encircling the planet.”

Buddha’s description of the Earth’s astral lights reminded our friends of the Transportal.

“Another time, on a moonless night I saw little lights scattered in Earth’s astral regions, like the lights of a city seen at night from a distance. I thought I felt pulses of consciousness saying something to me.”

“What? Hydrogen asked.

“God is light.”

Siddhartha opened his eyes, looked at our friends, and smiled. He raised his head and looked at the clear night sky, whose stars appeared just like lights suspended in heaven. What did *God is light* mean exactly?

“I really believe, that life exists in numerous dimensions. I think it is all related to heavenly bodies and realms—not abodes. Maybe the ancients meant the same thing. When we look at the sun, moon, or the stars with our four-dimensional senses, we see everything in only four dimensions. I think there is much more to the universe and the empty spaces of the night sky. Maybe we don’t have the right set of eyes or the consciousness level to perceive it.”

Silicone whispered, “Like a receiver tuned to the

wrong frequency.”

“Sir,” Sulphur said, “do you think heaven is somewhere in our planet’s astral fields or somewhere in the stars?”

“We cannot be certain either way,” Buddha replied, “but one thing is sure, heaven could be here, there, or maybe everywhere. We think it beyond our living grasp, but it may not be. The same is true of hell. I think heaven and hell can be here and now, depending on our consciousness. We can choose to exist in heaven or hell, or as how we will reincarnate in our next life. We are responsible for determining our fate with conscious dedication and effort. That is why I defined the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Path as a simple ethical model during the physical journey. That, I hope, is the way to heaven, whatever or wherever it is.”

At that moment, a pair of shining red eyes appeared from the darkness of the woods. It was as if a fearsome god was coming to punish them for the crime of learning. A few moments later, a young limping deer walked out of the darkness of their unfamiliarity, to approach the smiling Siddhartha. His hand held out a piece of dried flat bread. The deer appreciatively licked his fingers, took the bread, and limped back into the darkness.

Buddha turned smilingly towards our friends. “Love and compassion are universally understood truths, don’t you agree?”

“Please tell us about the ancient Hindu scriptures,” Gold said.

Buddha laughed. “They are too much to read in a lifetime, but I think you time travelers are after clues about the distant past and the fate of your library, right? I want to learn about the cataclysms and cycles of destruction, too.”

The group reviewed their past experiences and

knowledge of earthly cataclysms, the migrating survivors, the climatic transformations, unexplainable monuments and manuscripts, maps showing unseen lands, and other lost and forgotten legacies. After all that, Buddha said, “I remember a phrase from an ancient text, the Mahabharata that describes a great calamity.

Dense arrows of flame, like a great shower, issued forth upon creation. A thick gloom swiftly settled upon them. All points of the compass were lost in darkness. Fierce winds began to blow. Clouds roared upward, showering dust and gravel. Birds croaked madly . . . the very elements seemed disturbed. The sun seemed to waver in the heavens. The earth shook, scorched by the terrible violent heat. Elephants burst into flames and ran to and fro in frenzy. Over a vast area other animals crumpled to the ground and died. From all points of the compass the arrows of flame rained continuously and fiercely.

“I had never understood that until I heard your story tonight.”

“It sounds like a description of meteors with dust tails throwing arrows of flame. The wavering sun would have been the planet shifting on its axis. Sir, this might describe the events over fourteen thousand years before your time. This may be what forced the northern Aryans to move south, some reaching here. The Tamil and the *Indus-Sarasvati* legends describe similar cataclysmic events and floods.”

“Tell me, what caused the floods?”

“The north and south poles were in other places

once. Much of the world's water was stored in gigantic icecaps. Our icecaps are not a fraction of the old ice age version. After the cataclysm, the old icecaps thawed faster than the new ones could reabsorb them, so the sea levels rose over 150 meters, inundating much of the ancient coastal areas where people lived during the ice age. There are at least six hundred known flood myths from all around the world."

"When did the floods occur?" Buddha asked.

"About twenty-five centuries after you lived, scientists found geological evidence of super-floods between sixteen and fourteen thousand years ago, thirteen and eleven thousand years ago, and seven to eight thousand years ago."

Buddha lowered his head, and raised his clasped hands to his heart, and sighed, "Poor souls. What catastrophe! The suffering . . ." Then he said, "The *Vedas* describe the legend of Manu, a great sage whom a great fish told to build a ship. The ship carried Manu and seven Rishis or sages and landed high in the Himalayas after the flood. They saved all the seeds, crops, and animals, as well as all the sacred knowledge and sciences and passed them on to the survivors here. Thousands of years later what remained as oral tradition was written down as the *Vedas* and several other texts."

"Manu is like another six hundred legendary characters, including the Sumerian Zisudra, the Babylonian Atrahasis, the Assyrian/Akkadian Utnapishtim, the Zoroastrian Yima, the Chinese Mahei/Maniu, the Greek Deucalion, the Scandinavian Bergelmir, the Masai Tumbainot, the Hebrew Noah, and others." Silicone added.

"So my premonitions were right. I have sensed cycles of global destruction in the very distant past. So much of our wisdom descended from the Himalayan highland monasteries."

“Or other mountain ranges around the world.”

“Ancient wisdom is often associated with mountaintop sanctuaries,” Calcium observed.

“Simple,” Helium said. “Mountain tops stay above water.”

“I have seen ancient texts in Himalayan monasteries,” Buddha said, “often written on palm leaves or stone tablets in forgotten languages. Monks sworn to secrecy guard them. Texts like the Tibetan *Tie Tu* or the Chinese *Vin King* survived that way.”

“Do people find sunken ruins in the future?” Buddha asked.

“Sunken ruins have been found off the Egyptian, Indian, Caribbean and Cuban coasts.”

“Were they glorious?”

“Some measure over twenty kilometers across, indicating developed and populated urban centers,” Silicone said. “Some contain multistory structures of complex geometric shape. And that’s only what the water hasn’t eroded.”

“So much lost and forgotten,” Buddha murmured.

“Sir,” Silver said, “can you please tell us about the Hindu gods?”

“There are many, with different traits, responsibilities, arsenals, and consorts. They are always shown larger than humans and with blue skin.”

“Just like the Egyptian gods,” Tin noted.

“There are lots of tales, too many to tell, but a couple of puzzling things may interest you. The *Vedas* describe a cosmic hierarchy, a graded series of ascending heavenly systems, planets as you called them earlier, inaccessible to those in the lower systems. The greatest authority in the material universe is Brahma, who lives in Brahmaloaka, the highest planetary system. Beneath Brahmaloaka are other planetary systems

inhabited by ascetic Rishis/sages who cultivate wisdom. Beneath those systems is the realm of the Daeva, whose battles with lower dark forces sometimes affect life on earth. The Daeva live a long time in a relatively stable social and political state. They are in charge of maintaining the order of the physical cosmos, not well defined in the *Vedas*. The worst dark forces are the Asura, closely related to the Daeva. The *Purana* are fantastic tales of wars between the Daeva and the Asura. Another book, *The Mahabharata*, says the Asura invaded the earth after a cataclysm. The Vedic literature also describes non-human races in a hierarchy lower than the Daeva. Some were demonic, and others were neutral.”

“That sounds like a battle for a cosmic colonial order,” Iron said.

“According to the *Vedas*,” Buddha said, “the lower entities exist in three categories of consciousness: Sattva, pure goodness and being; Rajas, passionate desires; or Tamas, darkness and delusion. Humans are mostly in the mode of passion, with some goodness and ignorance. The world’s battle sagas describe ancient battles for Earth.”

Carbon asked. “Were they the ‘gods’ of ancient humanity?”

“That might explain the myths and stone structures scattered all over the planet,” Calcium suggested.

Buddha recited some puzzling passages from the *Puranas* and *Mahabharata*.

His Saubha clung to the sky at a league’s length. . . . He threw rockets, missiles, spears, spikes, three bladed javelins, flame-throwers, without pausing. . . . The sky . . . seemed to hold a hundred suns, a hundred moons . . . and

a hundred myriad stars. Neither day nor night could be made out, nor the points of compass.

I quickly laid out an arrow, which killed by seeking out sound, to kill them. . . . All the Danavas who had been screeching lay dead, killed by the blazing sun-like arrows that were triggered by sound.

But the Sauba itself escaped attack, and at last Krishna hurls against it his 'favorite fire weapon,' a discus having the shape of the 'haloed sun.' Severed in half by the impact, the entire 'aerial city' fell down.

Gurkha, flying in his swift and powerful Vimana, hurled against the three cities of the Vrishnis and Andhakas a single projectile charged with all the power of the universe. An incandescent column of smoke and flame as bright as the thousand suns rose in its entire splendor. An iron thunderbolt, a gigantic messenger of death, which reduced to ashes the entire race of the Vrishnis and the Andhakas. . . . The corpses were so burned as to be unrecognizable. The hair and nails fell out; pottery broke without apparent cause, and the birds turned white. . . . After a few hours all foodstuffs were infected. . . . To escape from this fire, the soldiers threw themselves in streams to wash themselves and their equipment.



Silicone added: "I have seen reports from nineteenth century AD archeologists who excavated the Indus-Sarasvati city of Mohenjodaro and found skeletons lying in the streets, some holding hands, as if grieving. But they didn't die in a flood. The skeletons had peculiar forms of cellular disintegration and were as radioactive as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims. Lumps of black glass littered the streets of Mohenjodaro, which laboratory analysis showed to be clay containers that melted suddenly in intense heat."

"Sir," Silicone asked, "how do you understand *vimana*?"

"I think of flying chariots or aerial crafts of shining metal, hovering or moving at will, with great speed, capability, and maneuverability, radiating sun-like light. Some were as large as flying cities floating high in the sky, while others traveled over land or beneath the seas. Most ancient records call them flying man-birds or winged chariots."

"Sir," Copper asked, "were any Hindu gods associated with serpent symbolism?"

"Some of the oldest known Sanskrit texts," Buddha said, "speak of a serpent race descending from the skies, teaching humanity agriculture, pottery, astronomy, sciences, and 'the ways of virtuous living'. These semi-divine Naga or Sarpa –are often described as tall creatures with shining eyes, elongated faces, and bluish skin. One passage says the Naga 'descended on cloud-borne chariots from a cloudless sky.'"

"The Aryans migrants to Northern Europe and their descendant Normans revered dragons that lived in underground lairs," Silicone added.

"In Chinese mythology," Buddha said, "dragons were the guardians of human civilization and were present at the time of creation, perhaps the first moments of the post-cataclysm world. They taught humans fire

making, weaving, and music. The *Vin King* describes the remote time when humans and wise dragons co-existed peacefully, and the dragons lived in the sky. The Chinese creator goddess Neu-Kwa is half woman, half serpent.”

“Central African myths tell of a serpent god called Olokun,” Silicone said.

“A Japanese mythical god called Omononushi-no-Okami, whose symbol is a serpent, is revered on Mount Miwa where he came from the sky to help the people who survived the cataclysm.”

“Are any of the gods associated with death, war, and human skulls?” Iron asked.

“Yes,” Buddha replied, “a few. Shiva, the destroyer god of victory, battle and order is one. Often portrayed in battle gear and arms, engaging in aerial Vimana battles, crushing enemies or guiding his human followers. His consort is Kali, usually portrayed with a fierce expression, sunken eyes, and sagging skeletal body. Both Shiva and Kali are associated with obedience, fear, wrath, death, blood, eroticism, and sexual rituals. The Hindu myths call the current era the age of Kali or Kali Yoga.”

Once again, the brightening hews of dawn had begun to illuminate the world.

“Before we leave,” Silicone said, “is there any way we can be of service to you?”

Buddha smiled. “You have done more than you realize, my dear colleagues.” He smiled contentedly and resumed his meditating position. Just before the flash of light took them away, the travelers heard, “Farewell, my dear friends. Never lose heart. Once you have learned to focus on the wisdom of creation, then you shall find the way to your destination.”

## Watchers, Seekers, Builders, and Others

Soma sema: *The body is a tomb.*

Plato quoting Hermes

*Be as wise as serpents, gentle as doves.*

Jesus Christ

*It was also regarded as the land of the giants; giants formerly dwelt there, a people as great, numerous, and tall as the Anakim. But the Lord destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place.*

Deuteronomy 2:20-21

*And I will put enmity between thee and woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

Yahweh to the serpent in the Garden of Eden; Genesis (3:15)

Was the stars' energy source radioactive, electromagnetic, or something else unknown to our friends? Did the heavenly bodies' Ka somehow generate it? How did the Source give them that Ka? Was it some sort of interconnected universal energy or spirit? Did the star systems house humanoid entities? Were they more or less evolved? Could they travel beyond their physical worlds and visit other planets? What would their intentions and actions be in other worlds? How did all that, and they, relate to the Source? Where was the Source?

Once again the friends awaited the rising sun and a journey into yet another unpredictable realm. Our time travelers felt a sense of eventuality, the gravity of an unknown source of wisdom, approaching and unfolding, screen by screen, like an intricate stage play nearing an inevitable last curtain. When Hydrogen and Silicone

summoned them to the edge of the Transportal, the sun was rising behind the soaring ice-capped Andes peaks.

Soon, they appeared in a fascinating setting, a vast mountainous region. Pine trees indicated a high, dry climate. Mountain peaks ran in all directions, the highest ice-blanketed and engulfed in cloud. Down in the gorge before them, a small river twisted and tumbled into a pristine blue lake. The dusk sunlight set the whole atmosphere ablaze with an orange-golden hue.

“Another lovely setting,” Oxygen was relieved.

In the near distance, a small mansion of white marble walls and reddish-brown tiled roof topped a hill overlooking the lake. The group waded toward it. As they approached, they saw people roaming about. An old gardener, hair and long beard as white as his woolen cap, hesitantly snipped rosebuds in the beautifully groomed garden spreading from the heights of the hill. Household animals sat about, ruminating. A few magnificent horses stood near the colonnade of a small stable, contentedly shaking their tails.

Marble stairs fanned like an exquisite scallop shell from the center of the mansion’s entrance into the garden. On them a few men in loose cotton and leather riding garb sat, flipping small swords or bows in their hands. They were flirting with young maids, who did not seem to mind the guards’ harmless humor as they dusted and arranged flowers and fruit in the hall.

Colorful stained glass transoms crowned the hall’s large wood-framed glass windows. Our friends drifted in, attracted by the ornate décor. The floor was a lattice of stone mosaic, exotic wood, and colored ceramic, separated by brass spacers. The tall, white marble columns supported a plastered ceiling intricately carved and painted shades of blue, red, white, then inlaid with exotic wood and gold or silver leaf. Everywhere large windows delivered light and revealed the serenity

of the landscape: the mountains, the garden, and the lake.

Tastefully ornate wooden furniture, colorful woven cushions, hammered brass and silver tables, and flowing silk and linen drapes filled the space. An elegant wooden harp, inlaid with ivory and brass, sat in a corner. A library of old leather-bound books occupied one wall. A large map covered another wall. On the other walls were paintings, one depicting a royal hunting scene, men on horses with bows and arrows. Another showed horsemen on a field, playing polo. One painting attracted everyone's attention—a man with a shining face, dressed in white robes, loose pants and a cap, arms outstretched to the sun, as if in prayer. The center of his chest seemed to glow with flame. The man's prayerful posture reminded them of Azhi Dahaka and Akhenaten.

"Zarathustra." Silicone was bound to know.

The maids lit incense, candles, and oil lamps as the daylight slowly faded. On a balcony at the rear of the hall stood five old men dressed in white robes, loose, wrinkled, baggy pants, colorful embroidered vests, and assorted types of hats. They stood in quiet awe of the energy radiating in every direction from the mountains, forest, lake, and setting sun.

"It all looks pleasant and peaceful enough, doesn't it?" Sulphur ventured.

"Where are we?" Iron asked.

"Judging from the geography, the landscape, the décor, the clothing, that map, and the paintings, I would venture a guess that we're on the western Persian plateau, around fifteen hundred years before our time."

"Bravo!" An excited voice cried from within a piece of unusual mechanical furniture. "Excuse me. I am Mercury."

"What is that strange thing you're housed in?" Helium asked.

“A wonderful machine. I am a liquid metal at ambient temperature, indeed the only one on the earth’s surface. My expansion and contraction in this glass tube, in response to atmospheric changes, moves gauges in the machine to indicate the temperature and barometric pressure.”

“An old weather indicator,” Silicone concluded.

“Please,” Mercury said, “tell me who you are.”

After the introduction, another voice revealed its presence. “Please accept my sincere welcome and offer of assistance. I am Phosphorus.”

Phosphorus resided in a frosty residue covering the inside of a glass sphere on a high console. As the sunlight faded, our friends saw the dazzling light it emitted.

“A lamp with no energy source,” Gold gasped.

“Except our natural luminescence,” Phosphorus clarified.

“Where are we?” Silicone asked.

“As you said,” Mercury replied, “in Persia. To be precise, you are in the mountain retreat of the Grand-Vizier Bozorgmehr, ‘the compassionate’, in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains, about a day’s ride east of Ctesiphon, the Sassanid capital. Bozorgmehr is the first minister of the Sassanid King Khosrow-Parviz, also known as Anush-ravan, widely reputed as Dadgar meaning just, one of the greatest Sassanid kings. In fact, he will soon be here for a secret gathering.”

“Persia,” Silicone sighed, “the land of mystery, wisdom, culture, and art. It gave the world Zoroastrianism, as well as history’s first multinational administrative apparatus, the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus. The land bridge that connected the Orient to the Occident, a strip of high mountainous plateau four hundred miles wide was for long the only accessible passage from eastern Asia to the west. Hence,

the corridor for many conquerors throughout history, Persia was often hostage to its important geopolitical position. Yet it has absorbed the shocks and influenced every conquering race.”

“A land of great geographical contrasts,” Mercury resumed. “Deserts, forests, fertile plains, snowy mountain peaks, luxuriant river valleys. Unless you sail the Indian Ocean or cross north of the world’s largest inland lake, the Caspian Sea, you must cross the Persian plateau. Thus the Silk Road passes through it.”

“Its natural resources, strategic position, its mountains, deserts, and seas, gave it an important role in history when civilization spread from Asia around the world. Humans have inhabited it continuously since Paleolithic times. The high altitude and lower latitude made it a haven for northern Asian tribes fleeing the devastation in Siberia. Much Persian and Median mythology recalls the fleeing migrants.”

“Long before the Aryans arrived, other small nations occupied the Middle East’s fertile, temperate high plains. Their adobe ziggurats, six to twelve millennia old, dot the now arid Iranian plains and elsewhere in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Middle East.”

“More pyramid-like structures,” Calcium observed.

“Khosrow’s ancestor, Ardeshir, the first of the Persian Sassanid dynasty, patched together a vast empire by overthrowing his predecessors, the Parthians. With the shadow of Rome looming nearby, the Sassanid kings tried to centralize control of their satrapies, including religious homogeneity in Zoroastrianism.”

Because times were hard, the rulers relied on religion to control and mobilize the masses. For the first time we know of, most of the imperial subjects adhered to a single faith. Although pre-Christianity Roman

Empire was religiously diverse, the Sassanid promoted an official state religion. The orthodox Zoroastrian establishment and chief priest Kartir stood behind the throne of the first Sassanid, Shapur I (270-272 AD) and the next three Sassanid emperors. Under the fanatical watch of Kartir, an official orthodox version of Zoroastrianism flourished. Shapur restored a portion of the old Achaemenid Empire and brought many western Asian peoples and faiths under its rule. Historical factors made it prudent to abandon tolerance and impose religious uniformity. The Persians chose orthodox Zoroastrianism, the Romans a version of Christianity.”

Phosphorus regained the lead. “Not so long ago, the Central Asian Huns and Ephtalite took King Pirooz by surprise, defeated, captured, and killed him in battle. His son, Kavaad I had to pay hefty tribute that caused economic hardship. Combined with a drought, the times deepened peasant dissatisfaction with the rigid social caste system. The popular revolutionary Mazdaki movement, a socialistic socioeconomic form of Zoroastrianism, shook the empire to its core.

“But the empire’s foundations were already shaky, and in the next century Islam toppled the Sassanid and Byzantine control of western Asia. Salman ‘the Parsi’ (Persian), the son of an exiled Mazdaki official, and Mohammad’s close associate, invited the young Sassanid King Khosrow to accept Islam, but his invitation was torn up. Salman is famed for devising the universal Arabic alphabet, and standardizing the language. Salman and a Hebrew scholar set out to mobilize a social reform movement to crumble the Byzantine and Sassanid empires once and for all. The Koran appears to contain much of the Mazdaki socioeconomic doctrines and the Old Testament’s mythical and spiritual heritage. Whatever Islam’s true origins were, the Sassanid peasant armies, inspired by



Islam's promises of social equity, refused to fight the invading Muslim holy warriors. Islamic armies swept away opposition, and the new Islamic Caliphate's raiders chipped away a significant chunk of the Byzantine Empire's Asian and North African colonies in a century, and then added the Iberian Peninsula in the next. The dream of Salman and his Judean colleague was partially realized by religious fervor."

"Nevertheless," Silicone pointed out, "the Persians never accepted Islamic rule, especially since it did little to improve people's social conditions."

A sudden commotion overcame the mansion. The maids hastened to finish their chores. The five old men on the balcony reentered the hall and walked to the main entrance. The sound of riders approaching from a distance grew steadily louder. Our friends soon saw fifty or so fancily dressed, fully armored, riders escort an ornate armored carriage flying an embroidered silk banner. Once the party reached the outer grounds, the carriage and a half-dozen riders approached the building, while the rest assumed positions around the compound. Then two riders split from the group and galloped around the hilltop palace's ring road, evaluating the security conditions. After conferring with the palace guards, they rejoined the carriage. Soon they were all at the entrance stairway.

Our friends watched through the large glass windows as assistants opened the carriage door and set out a small stool for the passenger. Out came Khosrow Anush-ravan, 'King of Kings' and emperor of the lands under Persian Sassanid subjugation. A tall man with long, graying black hair and moustache, he wore a dark royal blue velvet cape emblazoned with royal insignia and white and gold tunic and trousers. He wore a purple and gold velvet headdress, topped with a golden pin showing *farr-vehar*, the winged disc image of the

Zoroastrian Ahura Mazda, superimposed on a horned golden sun disc. At his side hung a jeweled dagger. He held an engraved, jewel-studded golden ceremonial scepter. He stepped onto the stool, and out of the carriage with slow grace.

Everyone stood and bowed. Something unusual struck our watchful friends. As Khosrow walked up the stairs and approached the bowing old men, his arrogance became overshadowed by respect. One by one, the older men kissed the seal ring on the king's right index finger as he touched their right shoulders gently with his left. Each in turn saluted him with the same phrase, "Blessings upon Your Royal Highness."

Khosrow embraced the last man like a father and walked inside, the elders following.

"Who is the last old man the king embraced?" Silver asked.

"The Grand Vizier Bozorgmehr," Phosphorus answered. "He has been Khosrow's mentor and teacher since childhood and his first minister and adviser since he assumed the crown."

"When Khosrow stabilized the Mazdaki era's chaos, Bozorgmehr's wise policies restored order and prosperity. He undertook economic reforms, promoted scholarship, and helped make the Gondi-Shapur academy and library a world famous center of learning. Despite the early turmoil, Bozorgmehr's reforms made Khosrow's reign a time of enlightened stability."

The King and the five older men walked to a distinguished armchair, slightly raised above five smaller but equally ornate chairs, around a mahogany table on which lay fruits, sweets, candles, books, and notebooks. Looming above them on a high pedestal was the phosphorus-laced lamp, glowing magically in the dusk.

Khosrow-Parviz pointed at the lamp.

“Bozorgmehr, when are you going to give me this magic lantern?”

“Your Highness,” the minister replied, “this trifle is not worthy of your household, though it illuminates my nightly chores.”

Khosrow laughed: “Bozorgmehr, my genius diplomat.”

Khosrow sat in the big armchair, the others took their seats, and an eerie calm befell the room. “So, Bozorgmehr, this is where you seek refuge from the madness of court? Delightful! Here I feel closer to the abode of Ahura Mazda.”

“Indeed, Your Highness, the Lord’s glory inhabits this landscape.”

Khosrow glanced at each of the other four. “I wish to thank you all,” Khosrow said to his hosts, “for honoring my request to attend your meeting. I feel privileged to be here. Bozorgmehr has told me of your identities and origins. Please rest assured, I recognize you as learned scholars. Scholarship is a far more distinguished and deserving enterprise than inheriting wealth and power. I envy your freedom to seek truth.

“I have heard of your secret meetings. I asked Bozorgmehr about them. He suggested I come to this year’s meeting. Rest assured, I do not seek to know who you are. I vow on the honor the Lord Ahura Mazda bestowed on me that what is said and done here tonight, I will not reveal. You may speak freely.”

Bozorgmehr responded. “Your Highness, your presence and interest makes us proud.”

“Very well then. Introduce me to your distinguished colleagues.”

“Please forgive us,” Bozorgmehr said, “if we are secretive. The men are prominent figures where they live and work. Some live under rulers who would persecute them and their families if they knew what they

think and teach. They would be accused of heresy. One cannot be too prudent these days.”

Khosrow nodded his understanding.

“Perhaps a little background will help. I first met these gentlemen when we were schoolboys during the reign of your father, King Kavaad, at that marvel of the world, Gondi-Shapur Academy. We quickly developed a brotherly bond.”

Khosrow smiled coyly. “A secret brotherhood?”

“One dedicated only to enlightenment, Your Highness. We correspond regularly around and beyond the empire. Our scholarly association has been a source of reflection, discourse, and inspiration for us. We have shared much knowledge and probed many mysteries.”

One of the men interjected. “And other-worldly mysteries.”

“Over the years,” Bozorgmehr continued, “we have risen to important social responsibility. Many years ago, we agreed to meet annually on this night. As our studies have evolved through the years, our meetings have become controversial in the view of some, so we conduct our research secretly.”

“We call ourselves The Seekers,” another added.

“I still prefer The Heretics,” another riposted.

“Why heretics?” the king asked.

Bozorgmehr reached for an explanation. “Your Highness, as understanding of history, philosophy, astronomy, and the natural sciences enlighten the mind, blind adherence to unquestioned religious dogma becomes impossible.”

“We try to understand the anomalies of faith and religion. We study rare manuscripts and ancient texts.”

Bozorgmehr introduced the men. “I am proud and privileged to introduce my friends, brothers, and colleagues, whose light of wisdom I hope one day will illuminate the far corners of the world. To the far left is

‘Gnostic’ from a Christian city in Byzantine Anatolia, a hotbed of heretical Christians.”

Gnostic bowed slightly. “Your Highness.”

“Next to him is ‘Mithraist’ from Lake Van in Eastern Anatolia. To his right is ‘Manichean’ from our satrapy Babylon. Finally my friend ‘Kabalist’, a rabbi and scholar of orthodox and esoteric Judaism from Roman occupied Phoenicia.”

“And what do they call you, Bozorgmehr?” the king asked.

“We call him ‘Magus,’ Your Highness.”

“Is there a particular field of inquiry that interests Your Highness?” Bozorgmehr initiated.

Khosrow rose from his chair and walked to the window where he stood gazing at the darkening sky. “I want to know how true our religion really is. Can anyone say with certainty that the blood of my persecuted subjects has washed away ignorance? Or does ignorance spill innocent blood?”

After several moments of contemplative silence, Bozorgmehr began the evening’s lengthy discussion. “According to legend, many millennia ago our ancestors survived a mysterious devastation and migrated from their distant northern homeland, Aryana Veja. Our ancestors migrated here around two thousand years ago. They held complex mythical allegories as sacred oral verses. Zarathustra taught nothing he conceived himself or learned from Ahura Mazda, as our priests preach. Rather, Zarathustra resurrected and transcribed the ancient Aryan traditions.

“Later, the ancient Mesopotamian mystery traditions influenced mystical Zoroastrianism,” Bozorgmehr said. “So let me review some Aryan myths. The creation myths describe the world as round and flat, a disc. The sky was not vast and endless, they thought, but a hard enveloping shell or crystal. The myths say the

world was in a ‘perfect state’, a fertile plain with few valleys or mountains.”

“Maybe Siberia was Aryana Veja,” Carbon proposed.

Bozorgmehr continued. “The myths report a sudden dramatic shift in the cosmic geography, something that made them think the heavenly bodies had ‘fallen’. Afterward came a period of rain and transformations. Before the upheavals, they believed that beyond the peak of Mount Alborz, in the northern lands, was the Gaokerena Tree, a ‘*tree of knowledge*,’ which bore the ‘elixir of immortality,’ and the ‘Tree of Life’ from which all life sprang. The great bird Senmurv shook the tree of life to spread the seeds of life. Then rain formed three great and twenty small seas and two rivers running east and west from a central mountainous region to the ends of the earth and into the vast cosmic ocean.

“Humans, the legends say, could no longer pass from one region to another, unless they rode on the back of Srishok, the heavenly bull. Gopat Shah, the half-man/half-ox god, guarded the new world but was forced to leave. It will return to sacrifice itself on the final ‘*day of renovation*,’ when all men will become immortal.

“A later text, *The Bundahishn*, describes Ahriman breaking through the sky and destroying everything. For ninety days spiritual beings battled material demons, an apparent victory for Ahriman. But when he tried to return to his home, the spirits of the sky and of humanity, *Far-ah-vash* spirits, helped Ahura Mazda defeat and imprison Ahriman on Mount Alborz. Then the star Sirius produced rains that restored life on earth. The name of this mythically mysterious star, Sirius/Sirus, defines *spirit of wisdom* in old Persian. How could a distant star support life on earth? Why would they come up with such notions?”

Silicone prompted: “Cosmic battles, the wars of ‘immortals’, and the support of life on Earth by the star system Sirius? A mere 8.6 light years away, it has indeed inspired many global myths.”

“What do such creation myths have to do with religion?” the king said.

“Our ancient ancestors believed that the true nature of universal creation transcends good and evil. Evil, as we understand it, appears to be a more recent phenomenon. Dualism, a late Zoroastrian doctrine, suggests that two fundamentally opposed forces are at work in the universe, Truth and order struggle with lie and disorder—but who says what is true and what is not, the gods or the clergy? Contemporary Avestic scriptures present good/light and evil/darkness as separate opposing concepts/entities, not different aspects of the same reality as our ancestors believed.

“Evidently,” Bozorgmehr went on “good cannot control evil until some end-of-the-world time. What all-powerful creator cannot control its creation? Whereas, ancient myths vividly describe cosmic warfare between unearthly entities, the mythical gods.”

Manichean added: “A portrayal of ancient eras that is distorted through the ages, perhaps?”

Bozorgmehr paused for a moment, picked up his notes, briefly reviewed them and then continued: “In a rare diagram, reproduced from an ancient cave drawing in the Zagros mountains, I saw that the cave’s occupants associated life with the head, heart, and several other bodily ‘chakras’ in combination with undecipherable words, and the symbolism of serpents. Whereas, the forces of evil/darkness were associated with the skull, vultures’ claws, torturous existence, and death. Were these just hallucinations of supposedly primitive people? Or, were they some complex mysterious beliefs of our

post-cataclysmic surviving ancestors, who were taking refuge in those caves?”

Mithraist added: “Curiously, contemporary Zoroastrianism associates the serpent with *Azhi Dahaka* (Zahhak), an angel of the supposedly evil Angra Manyu (Ahriman).”

Our friends looked at each other with a sense of *deja vu*.

“Contemporary Zoroastrian doctrines treat the good and evil forces/angels, quite differently than most ancient sources, even the very ones from which Zoroastrianism was derived.” Bozorgmehr glanced at his quiet colleagues and the King. Then, he drank some tea from a slender delicate red and clear crystal glass, and continued: “It is commonly preached that Ahura Mazda created the world, light and darkness, Earth and heavens, men and creatures, and everything else. He controls the course of the heavens, and men’s destiny, rewards, and punishments, sleep and activity, and so on. However, in some rare ancient manuscripts Lord Mazda is often described in naturalistic terms. He is often described as a fair shining man, wearing a star-decked cloak, and strange ambiguous references to his “swift-horsed sun”, keeping an eye upon the Earth. His throne is in the celestial lights in the highest heaven, where he holds court and his ministering angels carry out his commands.

“Contemporary Zoroastrian description of Ahura Mazda’s angels and the evil *Deev* of Angra Manyu is a long and familiar subject. The forces of evil are often described as the worst existence, the house of lie, the realm of cold and darkness, etc. The disciples of Ahriman can change their outward form and appear as a dragon, snake, or a youth. It is preached that Azhi Dahaka (Zahhak), from whose body grows serpents, once corrupted humans with his ‘lie’. However, as my



friends and I have been researching certain ancient traditions, it appears that this lie seems to have been the revealing and teaching of sacred ancient knowledge.”

Kabalist interjected: “Lest one eats the sacred apples from the Tree of Knowledge.”

Bozorgmehr continued: “The affinities of some commonly worshipped Zoroastrian deities are quite bizarre. Ancient Magi scriptures clearly correlate the goddess Anahita with the ancient female earthly fertility symbols. The Aryan war god, Verethragna, who defeated the legendary seven-headed monster dragon/serpent, took the form of a great bird of prey, with iron feet, tail, and wings, and killed with such ferocity that the bones, hair, blood, and flesh of enemies were unrecognizable.”

Again our friends looked at each other with that strange sense of prior familiarity.

Manichean: “And how about the whole bizarre story of man’s creation from the ‘recycled ruins’ of a post-apocalyptic Earth? Where the dying of a ‘sacred bull’, yielded the seeds of plants and animals. And from the ancient man’s metal body, the Lord created the first man, Adam and his wife.”

Gnostic: “Orthodox Zoroastrian scriptures then vaguely tell us, how these first race of humans is supposedly corrupted by Ahriman. Here again, we see a similarity with the Old Testament.”

Bozorgmehr continued: “Let’s have a look at ancient Zoroastrian eschatology and the events following physical death. They believe the soul hovers around the deceased body for three days, contemplating its life. After three nights, the soul goes to the House of Judgment where its deeds are weighed before Mitra and his disciples Sraosha and Rashnu who send the soul either to an intermediate place, called Hamestagaan. Not heaven or hell, as contemporary religious beliefs hold,

but an eternal dwelling, rather a place for further training or rehabilitation.”

“The ideas are similar to ancient Egyptian beliefs outlined in the *Book of the Dead*,” Kabalist noted. “The god Anubis metaphorically measures the deceased’s heart in a scale.”

“All this sounds fantastic,” Khosrow said. “What about it?”

“I don’t exactly know, Your Highness!” the vizier replied. In any case, the ancient dealings with creation, god(s), human purpose and conduct, and afterlife seem out of context with contemporary religious definitions of good or evil, human servitude, and heaven and hell. The scriptures are also vague about the Day of Renovation.”

“How so?” the monarch asked.

“Ancient Chaldean astronomical charts predict the world will last a specific number of years from an unknown past date. When moral decline, disintegration of family and social life, and disrespect for truth, love, compassion, and faith mark the end times, accompanied by cosmic and natural calamities. The sun and the moon will dim, as earthquakes, droughts, famine, and storms shake the earth—conditions not unlike those at the time of the world’s birth.

Bozorgmehr paused, glanced at the mesmerized king, and continued: “In the end, an event resembling a shower of stars is said to mark the end time. When the savior Aushedar, born of a virgin and the ‘holy seed’, the bringer of peace and righteousness, will appear to guide humanity.”

Kabalist: “The Judeo-Christian ‘signs of the end time’, the Apocalypse, and the coming of the Messiah.”

“Contemporary Zoroastrian *Avesta* describes a renovated world where humanity will live peacefully, eating only spiritual food. But, only the worthy will pass

across the bridge of judgment and through the stream of molten metal, which will sweep over everything and purify all men to uniform perfect purity. Yet the ancient geological descriptions differ from these orthodox scriptures.”

Bozorgmehr turned the discussion. “I have outlined some awkward anomalies between ancient Aryan beliefs and the contemporary Zoroastrian dogma. There is also a link with Babylonian philosophies, and that is the specialty of my colleague.” He turned to his white-haired friend, the Manichean.

“Most people are familiar with the history of Sumer, Akkad, Assyria, and Babylon. The Sumerian civilization appeared seven to eight millennia ago with unprecedented knowledge of pottery, construction, metallurgy, agriculture, domesticated crops and animals, irrigation, medical sciences, geometry, astronomy, and the bureaucratic apparatus to administer itself. They knew of the planets and the star constellations and had an elaborate spiritual philosophy that influenced future religions. The Assyrians of Nineveh continued the Sumerian fascination with astronomy, as did others. Later, within the flourishing Babylonian centers of scholarship, Egyptian mystery traditions and geometry, Sumerian astronomy, Babylonian numerology, and Hebrew esotericism met the Magis’ magical arts.

“The Babylonians thought the universe had neither beginning nor end but recycled endlessly. The Chaldeans deified time and gave us a solar calendar and units of time. They configured the zodiac. Their need to define very large and small numbers led to the abstract concepts of zero and infinity.

“One area of the Chaldean astronomers’ work still remains ambiguous and controversial. They call it the “Great Year”. It is the inspiration behind the zodiac. It is a 25,920 year cycle, where the sun’s yearly

movement seems to pass through a 360 degree rotation – one degree for every 72 years through the twelve houses of the zodiac, meaning 2,160 years for each house.”

“They are talking about the cyclical rotational wobble of Earth around its polar axis, called Precession,” Silicone added.

“Besides its mystifying complexity, what is so controversial about this ‘Great Year’?” Khosrow asked.

Manichean Replied: “Some rare heretical texts correlate this cyclical earthly movement with the cycles of destruction and rebirth. Maybe, such phenomenon influenced historical events, and our ancestors’ myths about the world’s beginning and end. That may also explain the Chaldean astronomers’ fascination with studying the heavenly bodies.”

“As well as the Egyptians,” Copper noted.

“And the Mayans, Aztecs, and Incas,” Gold added.

Bozorgmehr continued. “The early encounters between the Magi and the Chaldean scholars evolved both their respective beliefs. Although, such influence was strongly resisted by the orthodox Zoroastrian puritans.”

Manichean steered the conversation. “Nowhere was this more evident than with the Zurvan heresy. Zurvan philosophy was influenced by the astronomical conceptions of the Chaldeans. Zurvan-akran, the essence of boundless and infinite time/fate, is seen as the original Creator of all. Whereas Ahura Mazda and Angra Manyu are lower entities, battling each other for dominion over this world. They believed that the universe evolved from a formless primeval matter, defined as infinite time and space, into all that has form and is finite. It believed the true origin and destination of the human spirit to be from the distant star constellations, but held captive by the heavenly spheres.

Hence, the fate of humanity resided in its struggle with the forces of darkness/matter exerted on it. This materialistic fatalism had a profound influence on the future Mithraism and Manichaeism.”

“As well as,” Silicone added, “Pythagoras, Socrates, esoteric Judaism, the Cathar and Bogomil faiths of the European middle ages, and the Islamic mystics and Sufis.”

“Mitra was originally an ancient Aryan god. With the blending of Persian and Babylonian mythologies, Mitra became the son-god (Shamash), to form the ‘Trinity’ along with Anahita (Ishtar), and Ahura Mazda (Bel),” Mithraist said.

“Similar to the Egyptian gods Horus, Isis, and Osiris, and the inspiration behind the virgin birth of Jesus and the Christian Holy Trinity,” the Gnostic added.

“Mithraism resembled both Babylonian astrology with Zurvan ideas. Rome’s attempt to reconcile many races, cults, and religions meant adapting and superimposing different cults’ mythical elements. Some say that had the Romans not selected Christianity, their second obvious choice would have been the cult of Mithras. Mithraist temples followed the major trade routes of Europe and Asia Minor as far north as Scotland and Germany and as far south as North Africa. They contained various representations of Mithras, usually a combination of animals arranged as the constellations named for them relate to one another. Mithras, a ‘sun-deity’ is shown as a vigorous young man sacrificing a winged bull, in the presence of a serpent, eagle, dog, whose ritual sacrifice brings forth new life. Mysteriously, the representational layout of this cast of characters is almost always identical to the positions of the constellations Orion, Taurus, Aquilla, Canis Major, and Draco.

“To me,” the Mithraist went on, “astrological representations likely refer to specific events and dates in remote antiquity. I suggest the temple art is a diagrammatical representation of actual historic events in zodiac symbols.

“As for eschatology,” the speaker continued, “Mithraism believed that human souls descend into the world at birth with the goal of ascending out of the world again through seven heavenly gates corresponding to the planets they knew. Let me read you something I recently found in an ancient manuscript.”

The Mithraist picked up his papyrus notebook, and read:

“There is a sign of the orbits in heaven, the one being that of the fixed stars, and the other that assigned to heavenly bodies, and of the soul’s passage through these. The symbol is this. There is a ladder with seven gates and at its top is an eighth gate...”

He then put down his notebook, and looked at colleagues and an intrigued Khosrow.

The Kabbalist took up the thread. “When ancient Canaan was conquered and some its populace deported to Assyria, their descendants learned of the Median Magi mysteries and Mesopotamian mythology. When Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, sacked the famous temple, and deported another portion of its population to Babylon, their captivity led them to combine their faith’s Egyptian and Canaanite origins with Mesopotamian beliefs.

“The Book of Daniel portrays Daniel as a high priest in the court of King Darius in Susa. Doubtless the Mesopotamian philosophies influenced the Old

Testament and inspired Jewish fringe cults, like the Merkabah and Kabbalah mysticism. The captivity introduced the Jews to the concepts of creation and end-days, a divine trinity, dualism, pantheism, numerology, and astrology. Before the exile in Babylon, the concepts of Satan and serpent symbolism were absent. When King Artaxerxes I asked Ezra to reassemble lost Jewish literary and religious heritage, much Chaldean and Zoroastrian influence entered.”

The Kabbalist paused, sipped tea, and continued. “Everyone here knows the legend of the sea invaders, supposedly the ancestors of the Hellenes. Less than two millennia ago, the Hyksos invaded by sea and laid waste to western Asia, Phoenicia, Syria, and Egypt. Phoenician and Hebrew captives and refugees reached the Aegean islands. Later contact with Judean and Phoenician merchants also influenced Hellenic mythology and religion. Shamash and Ishtar became Apollo and Aphrodite. Ahura Mazda, Bel, and Baal reincarnated as Adonis, and Athena is the Canaanite Anat, Persian Anahita, or Egyptian Isis. The twin pillars of Greek temple entrances resemble Canaanite and Hebrew structures or Egyptian obelisks.”

“The Greeks also adopted many abstract belief systems from their eastern neighbors,” the Manichean added. “Like the Persian Zurvan, the Greek Kronos is often represented as a winged serpent, with multiple heads of a bull, lion, and a humanoid god, growing upon him.”

“The Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* is one of the world’s oldest stories. Gilgamesh was a legendary Sumerian king, born of a human and a god, a demi-god, who yearned for divine immortality. Following many adventures along a journey with his disciple, Enkidu – whom Gilgamesh converted from ‘ape-man’ to civilized man-, the flood hero Utnapishtim tells him of a ‘secret

plant of immortality' in the 'underworld'. A serpent denies him access as 'unworthy'. Utnapishtim then advises Gilgamesh to go home and be content to live as a human, for the life of a god is only for a god," the Kabalist said. "Many later belief systems refer to such remote historical events and half-man/half-animal deities, like the lion, the Heavenly Bull, the serpent, or birds of prey. Hence Zeus' battle with the serpentine Titans, flood myths, bull or dragon slaying heroes like Hercules, Samson, Shamash, or Gilgamesh. Like Gilgamesh, Homer's *Iliad* could conceivably be construed as a coded reference to Chaldean astronomy, mythology, and geography."

"To me," the Gnostic broke in, "the puzzling question is, why did the Roman Christian establishment censure classical Greek philosophy? They could have learned a lot. When the Hellenic authorities rebuked Anaxagoras for teaching Persian astronomy and philosophy, he said, "God, or the Universal Mind, is a fire endowed with supreme intelligence. The entire universe is a single eternal living being."

"The Roman Mithras cults derived much from the Platonic school," The Mithraist noted. "In his *Republic*," he went on, "Plato refers to the Babylonian Sar, a numeral equivalent for the period between global catastrophes where the stars and seven planets are aligned as they were at the time of creation."

"The Essene broke away from orthodox Judaism which they claimed was ancient Egyptian wisdom, mostly Akhenaten's teachings. The Essene influenced the Apostle Paul. They saw human existence as a battle between the forces of light and darkness, between body and spirit. They knew ancient Asian lore."

Kabalist picked up the thread. "Several Jewish movements created mystical Judaism," the Kabalist said, "and preserved such mysterious relics as the *Sepher*



*Yetzirah* that supposedly outlines the true nature of God, the universe, and its paths of wisdom. The pictogram of Sepher Yetzirah is three-dimensional and combines numeric, alchemical, and astrological principles. Of the mystery of Sepher Yetzirah, Job 23 says, "...Know and believe that the Serpent was indispensable to the order of the world... And it is the mystery of Teli (serpent) revealed in the Sepher Yetzirah. It is 'He', who taught how the spheres move, and what turns from east to west, and north to south. This is the mystery of the 'Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil'. That is why Yahweh forbade Adam to touch this Tree of Knowledge, so long as the good and evil are linked together..." Reputedly, Abraham painstakingly guarded, and transferred such perplexing complexity for the future generations."

"I think it is time we took up Gnosticism," the eponymous speaker said. "For that we go back to Alexandria and its academy and library which contained much of the classical world's wisdom. Buddhist monks, Greek scholars, Persian mystics, and Jewish thinkers mixed freely in its halls where new esoteric creeds centered on ancient mystery traditions evolved. They affirmed union with the Divine through special knowledge, vouchsafed to very few.

"Union with the Source of all creation? Where do we sign up?" Helium blurted.

"In Alexandria, science, philosophy and metaphysics merged to understand how to harmonize all experience with the planet or the universe and appropriate their energy. The gnostics chose secrecy, because they were often at odds with the power structure of their time. In the case of Rome, the cults were popular for a while, and traces of their influence linger here and there.

"In the early Jerusalem Christian church" the Gnostic continued, "the apostles recognized Gnosticism

as the single-minded pursuit of one's own will to transcend the concept and the boundaries of morality. I have found much similarity between Gnosticism and Hellenic, Magi, Chaldean, Jewish, and Egyptian mysticism. Although their ideologies are quite controversial, it is worth noting a few here, as it applies to tonight's discussion. The Gnostics apply a radical dualistic interpretation of the Old Testament, interpreting the Bible in reverse! Yahweh, the god of this 'material world', is said to be an impostor of the true Creator, who lies above and beyond this material worldly creation. Yahweh, the god ruling this world is in reality a vengeful warrior demon, ignorantly worshipped by the masses. While, the one mistakenly accused as being evil was in truth a benevolent god. The Gnostics believed the true Creator had sent the Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, and Buddha, to combat the invasive influence of 'demonic gods' on Earth. This battle had continued since the time of Moses and Zoroaster, and was supposedly still continuing between Yahweh and Jesus, emissary of the true creator, the god of wisdom, *Sophia*. Gnosticism attracted Jewish mystics, forbidden by Jewish orthodoxy to practice mystery traditions. Still, the resemblance of some of their theories and symbolism to earlier systems is uncanny. Some gnostics believed that the 'God of Light' liberated men by sending the serpent to guide them to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The Gnostics were first called *Nasseni* derived from the Hebrew *naas*, serpent, just as Ophite comes from the Greek *ophis*, again *serpent*. Some believed Jesus was not god but rather a mortal with a divine message aimed at restoring Judaism to its Egyptian roots. At any rate, why did almost all heterodox Jewish movements—like the Essenes and the nazirites—revere serpent symbolism? Whatever his reasons, the Apostle Peter fought tirelessly, and

ruthlessly, against the Gnostic doctrine.

“Following the crucifixion of Jesus, though there was considerable confusion among those who believed *something* about Jesus. The attempt to incorporate faith in him within the context of Judaism failed, and the more universal scope of Jesus’ mission that Paul taught alone gathered sufficient adherents to create a viable religious institution, the church. That Christian church moved outward and soon reached Rome, where it appealed mightily to the religiously fervid masses but also to many among the rich and powerful. In Constantine’s era the Council of Nicaea declared Jesus Christ divine, one of three persons of the triune god, articulated as *Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit*. Constantine, you recall, saw a radiant *sign* in the night sky bearing the Latin inscription *In hoc signo vinces*. The next morning, Constantine’s troops painted the sign on their shields and won a victory that gained him the imperial throne.

“Though Constantine dabbled in other cults, Christianity became Rome’s official religion, and the emperor was baptized on his deathbed. Roman Christianity adopted much of the symbolism of Mithras and Apollo, and echoes of earlier religions. The Christian New Testament was selected from among a vast outpouring of writings about Jesus, much of which tried to claim him as the fulfillment of first one or then another ancient cult’s long delayed expectations. Following Constantine, the emperor vied with the bishops for control of the church. Once Christianity was the state religion, other variations of Christianity were condemned and relegated to the rank of heresies. The church over time persecuted dissenters and burned their books, all in the name of God. The militant Christian church has, through the centuries, repeated that ugly history.”

“Was the sign of Constantine a cross? Why did the cross become Christianity’s primary symbol?” Khosrow interposed.

“Reputedly, Constantine saw the *labarum*,” the Gnostic said, “a chi (X)-rho (P) within a circle. Its name and shape echo the ‘**X**’ shaped double axe, *labrys*, a symbol of the cult of Zeus. The Greeks also used the chi as an abbreviation for Saturn, just like the wheel-shaped sign formed by imposing chi upon rho.”

“Ezekiel’s wheel inside a wheel,” the Kabbalist murmured.

“I have seen the ‘**+**’ symbol superimposed on a sphere,” the Mithraist said, “with the lion headed youth with the coiled serpent on it—which identifies it with Ahriman or Satan, not the Christian church.”

“Countless meanings attach to the cross,” Bozorgmehr said. “The Chaldeans related it to the star Sirius. The Egyptians symbolized Isis with a cross. To the ancient Sumerians it symbolized the heavenly place, the abode of the gods. The ancient highland Zoroastrian Magi associated it with the force of light, purity, and goodness, as did the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and the Hindu yogi.”

“What you say is interesting,” Khosrow responded. “I recall the night, when you showed me the constellations through your crystal device. The brightest stars looked like blue-white crosses.”

Bozorgmehr smiled. “I am flattered that you recall your school days. Perhaps the cross reminded them of their spiritual origin and destiny among the stars.”

“Or maybe the place of their teacher gods,” the Kabbalist suggested.

“Please explain.”

“Your Highness, let me describe some of the myths’ sources. Although much of the Old and New

Testaments are historical, they were written down long after the events they report. After the Babylonian exile, the Old Testament texts were recompiled from memory, with perhaps some Chaldean and Zoroastrian overlay. Jewish religious orthodoxy rejected a good many, such as those dealing with Sepher Yetzirah, as foreign to Jewish scripture. Those who disagreed, including Nazarenes, Gnostics, and Copts, gathered, copied, and guarded the non-canonical works and disguised them to preserve their identity, message, and content. They are known as the Old Testament apocrypha and include many works rejected by *both* Jewish and Christian authorities. Some of them teach that the descendants of Cain kept traditions imparted to them before the flood, by the ‘sons of god’, the legendary Book of Enoch’s ‘watchers’, or ‘fallen angels’, who taught men forbidden knowledge when they descended on earth from heaven. Yahweh, the story goes, sent Uriel, Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael to wage war, capture, and punish them.

“Some of the heretical books deal with other subjects. Obelisks or poles, sacred trees, for example, many used as symbols of these teacher-gods, or some mysterious body of wisdom. The Canaanite *asherah* may lie behind the Hebrew Tree of Knowledge. So what did Adam and Eve really learn from it? Was it some ancient sacred and forbidden knowledge?

“Whatever’s the case, idolized poles symbolize Israel’s penchant for syncretism, and King Hezekiah pleased Yahweh by knocking down the sacred pillars—and destroying a replica of the bronze serpent Moses carried in the exodus when people worshiped it.” One wonders if ancient human civilizations revered the serpent as a symbol of some heavenly constellation like Draco? Or is there more to it?”

Kabalist added. “Satan in Hebrew actually means ‘adversary’, not evil. And the Hebrew word Beelzebub

is derived from Baal-zebub meaning ‘Lord of the Flies’, or Lord of those who fly. The Book of Isaiah relates to Satan, as a fallen angel, from the domain of the bright morning star.”

“Draco marks the sky of the North Pole,” Bozorgmehr noted. “Or perhaps the legends refer to Sirius, the morning star.”

“Sirius,” the Gnostic said, “is the morning star since it rises in the east with the sun. Lucifer, a name often associated with the devil, means bearer of light.”

“Is that not the meaning of the Persian word *deev*?” Khosrow asked.

“Deev,” the vizier replied, “and the Hindu word *daeva* derive from the Aryan word *devata*, the shining ones. Another Aryan word for angel, *far-reshteh*, roughly translates as the shining beings.”

Mithraist added. “The likely symbolism of angels, as shining beings with round halos around their heads, just like Mithras before them.”

“Perhaps,” the Kabbalist suggested, “these shining, winged, flying messengers carried a sacred message. But what?”

“Well,” the Gnostic said, “the affinities are endless. Serpent/dragon symbolism was everywhere in the ancient world. The gnostics and the Essenes associated Christ with serpent symbolism. One of their insignia is a crucified serpent with the face of Christ. Many groups associate serpents or dragons with ancient wisdom.”

“Here’s something I have never understood,” Bozorgmehr said. “Cuneiform tablets discovered in the plains of Elam and Sumer describe a mountainous plain, settled long ago by godlike beings—the watchers—who guided the human survivors of some cataclysm. They possessed unimaginable technologies, tools, and ‘invisible’ weapons. They seemed to know how to

produce nutrients from the ground, by using advanced agricultural methods. They lived in a guarded compound that was defended by ‘mystifying powers’. They were described as having interacted with early humanity. Unfortunately, the tablets are broken and provide no further information, but other Sumerian tablets claim their ancestors learned much from magnanimous gods who departed at some point. Perhaps, that inspired the myth of Eden and humanity’s loss of contact with God. They were represented by serpent symbols. Sumerian tombs contained serpentine deity figurines.”

“I think it is time to recall the legend of Thoth,” said the Gnostic. “According to Plato, the Egyptian god Thoth lived in the Egyptian region of Naucratis before the flood. He gets credit for teaching humanity numerology, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, writing, medicine, alchemy, as well as music and games. He first taught humanity about the constellations, the zodiac, and the way the earth wobbles. His symbol was a winged staff around which coiled two serpents, the caduceus. Before the flood, his wisdom was written on two pillars made of different materials buried in a deep underground vault, the Aryan *var*. The Egyptian priesthood guarded his secrets and could not divulge such wisdom in writing. Other records describe complex systems for human development and salvation from the physical body. They reveal laws dealing with the inner workings of a realm beyond the physical. Alchemy is the catchall label for such lore. Most of it is attributed to the watchers, the fallen angels, tree of knowledge, and serpent/dragon symbolism. Alchemy claims to reveal the secrets of the human soul, its original immortal state, its relationship with the universe, and its route to salvation. Yes gentlemen, faith, as it should truly be, one that delivers *enlightenment*. The coded language for such salvation according to the Alexandrian alchemist

Zosimus was "...the attainment and comprehension of the 'Philosophers Stone', this precious thing, which has no value, this polymorphous thing, which is known to all..." The symbol often presented for this concept was a *flaming heart*, whether winged or not!"

Carbon excitedly prompted. "This is exactly what my old cave companions' god, Azhi Dahaka, was holding in his hand!"

Khosrow removed his velvet purple headdress and looked at the golden pin attached to it. The image of Ahura Mazda, a winged priest who held out a circle, floated over a horned sun-disc.

"Your Highness," the vizier told his student, "the image of Ahura Mazda, which looks like a vested Achaemenid Zoroastrian priest, changed during the era of King Darius after the heretic Magi were purged. The image of the Lord Mazda during Cyrus' reign was quite different. The winged cape was more pronounced and detailed. And the crown was more like a tight metal helmet topped by a horned ornament. It was a lot like the Elamite god Ashushinak, the Sumerian Enki, and the Egyptian Osiris."

Khosrow smiled at his beloved mentor. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have heard a lot from you, but I still am not quite sure of anything."

"If that includes all dogma of any kind, Your Highness, that is exactly what is intended."

"Indeed. Bureaucracy defines the world of nation *builders*. I am bound to my role and responsibilities," the King of Kings sighed. "You, gentlemen, are *seekers* of truth and wisdom. And you Bozorgmehr, my dear mentor and Grand Vizier, what are you, a seeker or a builder?"

Bozorgmehr bowed his head and diplomatically replied. "Your Highness, I am just a humble loyal guardian of the *others*."



Our friends noticed that the first rays of sunlight had touched the serene mountain lake, illuminating its dark royal bluish hue. That signaled our friends' return to their realm.



## The Almost Invisible Darkness

*A good planet is hard to find.*

**A San Francisco bumper sticker**

*The world is ruled by very different powers from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes.*

**Benjamin Disraeli**

*The last aristocrats, men from a single social and religious caste, whose very existence is not suspected by the man in the street . . . ”*

**Roger Peyrefitte, Knight of Malta**

*Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.*

**Jean Jacques Rousseau**

*News is what someone wants to suppress. Everything else is publicity.*

**Rueven Frank; former head of NBC News**

Back at the mountaintop cave, the group was unwinding from their voyage. Lead almost had to shout to get everyone’s attention. “Would someone shed some light on everything we just witnessed?”

By habit, everyone turned to Silicone. “Believe me, I am also at odds with our experiences and encounters.”

“I hope all this will lead to the Universal Sign,” Oxygen sighed.

“Indeed. Evidently people have always searched for the Source.”

Helium humored. “Unless like these humans we have a few millennia to spare, we better find that Universal Sign soon.”

“I’d say our inquiry is kin to religion,” Sodium said. “Buddha called it ‘the realization of the Highest Truth’.”

“It seems odd that despite typical religious intolerance, they deal with the same issues,” Hydrogen said, “the same issues the heretical movements explore: humanity’s true spiritual nature, its sense of being lost or cast away, its yearning for resurrection, immortality, and union with a divine creator.”

“Similar ideas are present in many ancient sources, such as the Hindu and Avestic scriptures or the *Book of The Dead*. Ancient traditions influenced later religions that survive in contemporary human society.”

“If the same ideas and hopes inspired many faiths, then why were the so-called heretical faiths so brutally repressed? Why the need to eradicate them? What ideologies did they explore and reveal? What posed such a threat to the religious establishments?” Hydrogen asked.

“All such heresies had too much in common to be coincidental,” Gold said.

“We have noticed the similarities in mythical symbolism and tradition shared across great distances,” Silicone went on. Did they learn it from one another? Some of them had no way of communicating. The African and Middle Eastern civilizations lay in relative proximity, but what about the others? Maybe those mysterious maps somebody mentioned belonged to pre-cataclysm ocean-faring civilizations. After the cataclysm, and before the adoption of compass, open sea adventures were risky, so the survivors of the cataclysm likely survived with little probability of prolonged contact. So either all the survivors developed puzzlingly similar mythologies independently, or the myths reflect fading memories of a common pre-cataclysmic experience. Whichever, one thing is certain. Ancient

civilizations preserved the legends of their ancestors until institutionalized religions wiped away all traces of such ‘godless paganism.’ For me, the only remaining question is whether any of the ancient traditions relate to actual historical events. Myth or not, the almost identical traditions are rooted in forgotten pre-cataclysmic eras.

“The old myths have inspired fables, folk tales, and timeless masterpieces, all derived from even more ancient oral sources. Many refer to animal-symbolized deities with unearthly powers, and all link leonine, serpentine, or bull-horned gods with civilization, wisdom, and knowledge.”

“Many ancient relics show the Tree of Life between winged goats or bulls, and the Tree of Knowledge is almost always associated with the serpent,” Mercury recalled.

“Many more,” Silicone said, “refer to some long past monumental conflict when victorious warrior gods defeat the old regime of lion, bull/goat, and serpent gods. The victors are often symbolized by birds of prey and associated with obedience and order.”

“The half-man, half-goat gods appear in Europe in the early Hellenic myths. Christianity later portrayed Satan as a horned and bearded man-goat, often accompanied by a serpent and associated with the pentagram, the symbol of Sirius,” Silicone continued. “Other ancient records report heavenly wars for supremacy over Earth among beings in metallic flying crafts with awesome weapons. Are such myths just mass hallucination?”

Hydrogen posed a question. “What do you guess lies behind all the common spiritual ideas and ancient symbolisms and myths? What are they trying to reveal? Where do they come from?”

Silicone provided a hypothetical clue. “The ancient races revered astronomy and studied the

movements of the sun, moon, heavenly bodies, and the star constellations avidly. Why they associated little specks of light in a dark night sky with heavenly bodies is a mystery. Nineteenth century archeologists unearthed millennia old Sumerian clay tablets that depict sophisticated astronomical charts. Some show the solar system's spherical planets within their orbital patterns around the sun. How could they have known all that over eight thousand years ago? They associated natural phenomena with heavenly bodies and symbolized the constellations as animals.

"Maybe early ice-age humans associated the powerful natural forces with the awesome cosmos and portrayed them as gods with human characteristics, an attempt to understand the natural forces that affected their survival. Or..."

Silicone paused. "Maybe humans are not alone in the universe! Maybe early civilization did not evolve their spiritual philosophies and sciences but rather inherited them. Could the mythical sacred tablets and pillars, buried before the flood, have been remnants of pre-cataclysmic knowledge? Were those blue-skinned, flying gods in tall helmet-crowns just figments of human imagination? Could they not have been advanced visitors from star systems in nearby constellations? Sirius is only eight light years away from us. Ancient myths refer to the sacred role of star systems, especially Draco, Orion, the Pleiades, and Sirius. If those stars have planets, then maybe their inhabitants discovered Earth long ago. Has human life on earth evolved naturally without interference? Quite frankly, their disharmony may point to an unnatural evolution."

"I believe the sun will rise shortly. Time to go find some more answers," Mercury noted.

Once again the group prepared for a voyage. Somehow this time the Transportal felt different. The

light lacked its usual brilliant white luminescence, was a rather darkish red, and the force field seemed amplified by a powerful magnetism. Whatever the cause, our heroes went into survival instinct mode.

Upon arrival, Sodium vocalized its concern. "There is disturbing energy here. We must be careful."

They huddled together and looked around. They were in an enclosed arena, a large circular hall with a high domed ceiling. The walls were of solid black masonry, arching upward to a gothic dome. Gargoyles of birds of prey protruded around the edges of the arched ceiling, their watchful eyes peering down at the floor as if ready to dart and rip an unaware victim apart. The floor was paved with black, gray, and brown pebbles bound by some resin.

Returning from an exploration of the masonry walls, Calcium commented. "The building is designed to a precise geometric pattern which lets it act as a receiver of energy waves."

There were no windows or skylights. Torches spaced along the circular perimeter lit the darkness dimly. They were shaped like fearsome beastly heads. Reddish-yellow flames flicked through holes that highlighted their large, fierce eyes, nostrils, and mouths. Circling the floor of the hall were three hundred chairs in three rows of a hundred, set at slightly different levels near the walls. The chairs' black metal and velvet cushions were crowned with vulture-shaped visors on either side of the headrest, which blocked vision to the side and created a solitary presence. The center of the backrest cushions featured a large red embroidered X.

The hall was devoid of other notable features. Lead pointed to a small cylinder on a pedestal to the side of the center of the room. It was a smooth, seamless, thick plate of lead. Lead decided to check it out, and Iron went along.

On the other side of the hall was a large boxlike object covered with a thick black drape of a sturdy material, embroidered in unfamiliar patterns depicting hieroglyphic symbols.

As they stared at the odd patterns on the drape, a voice prompted them from inside the metallic threads. “You sure don’t look like any council members or initiates.”

“No, we’re just time travelers passing through,” Helium answered.

“There are awesome powers here but likely not what you are after. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Titanium.”

Before the group could respond, Lead and Iron returned with yet another new companion, a glowing giant. “Please forgive my intrusion and intimidating appearance. I am Uranium. I’ve been imprisoned inside that canister so long I can’t even remember when my half-life began. Your friend was kind enough to end my solitude by talking the rest of its type into letting me slip through. I am so relieved.”

“We’re glad to meet you both. We need all the guidance and information we can get. We see this is an important place. What are you doing here?” Silicone asked Uranium politely.

“I’m not sure. We were dug out of the earth some time ago, purified, concentrated, and stuck in that canister. We couldn’t see outside it and had no idea where they were carrying us. We heard they would manipulate our intense state of existence, and that’s all I know. I have had a bad unstable feeling about the whole thing.”

“You’re right to feel that way,” Titanium said. “I’ve been assigned to sit over this ‘holy of unholies’ for some time.”

“What on earth is that?” Oxygen wanted to



know.

“Not quite of this earth,” came the reply. “We’re not sure where it’s from. Centuries ago, when it was brought here, I was made part of its woven fabric cover.”

“What does it do?” Nitrogen asked.

“All I know is that they call it *the Ark*. It is a communication device between a ‘voice’ and the council. They call the voice *Lord* or *Amon*.”

“Where does it come from?” Silicone asked.

“I’m not sure, but none of us likes it. Once a year when the cosmic alignments are just right, the Ark works, and when it does an immense power fills this place. And it happens tonight.”

“What does the council deal with?”

“Decisions, policies, strategies, things like that. They discuss the past, the present, and the future, not only for humans but also all of us terrestrials. Occasionally, they retire a member and initiate a new one. Sometimes, they meet without the Ark. I can tell you that these three hundred men are movers and shakers in the human world system. They hold powerful positions in major political, economic, scientific, academic, financial, and media organizations. They control everything. They believe to be servants of a cause, the grand design for earth and humanity. Their initiations involve complex rituals and oaths of allegiance, obedience and secrecy. They consider only extraordinary candidates, those who have risen through the social ranks to a certain echelon of worldly importance. Once recruited and initiated, they’re in for life. If they break the codes of conduct, they are ritually executed. I have witnessed a few executions. I have seen the Ark levitate a victim in mid-air, torture him, crush every bone, burn them or bleed them through every orifice until death. One of the Lord’s favorites is to

decapitate the victim and de-flesh the skull and its display on a stake as a trophy.”

“Another familiar symbol,” Gold noted.

“Evidently this Ark channels powerful energies from a distance,” Silicone surmised, “and is configured to some astronomical orientation.”

“I have heard the caretakers refer to a *great eye* or the *bird of order*,” Titanium said.

“Have you ever heard anyone mention the nature of the Lord or the voice?” Mercury asked.

“No. But I know that its real name is a mathematical algorithm that can neither be said aloud, nor even known. It is sacred and secret. I believe an ancient tablet with that information is hidden away. Only very few know where.”

“We heard on our last journey,” Oxygen said, “that ancient wisdom symbolized creation and goodness as light or the sun. Darkness is the absence of light, right? It’s sure dark here.”

“Invisibly so,” Titanium said, “because nobody outside knows what happens here, although the decisions made here affect everything, even us.”

“Please explain.”

“I have heard economic reports that emphasize the planet’s true wealth of this planet. They mean minerals. Apparently we are the planet’s real treasures.”

“Do you mean that the Lord wants to harvest Earth’s minerals?”

“That would clarify a lot this planet’s unfortunate history, wouldn’t it?” Silicone concluded.

At that moment our friends heard a faint noise like the chatter of a whispering tuxedo-clad audience, awaiting the arrival of an orchestra. The sound neared until they heard a heavy metallic door turn, screeching on its hinges. Through the doorway they saw the silhouettes of a large group of men dressed in black

robes, gloves, leather masks, and tall, cone shaped hats. They entered the hall in silence and marched to the seats. As they arranged themselves, the friends observed that each had a red embroidered 'X' on his robe and a small white skull on his headdress. They stood by their chairs, awaiting something.

At the last entered a tall, thin man, obviously the leader. He held a mechanical device in his hand. Making a 360-degree slow turn, he glanced at the assembly, and they bowed under the weight of his gaze.

He spoke in a deep voice. "Brothers, we await the moment. It will be soon now."

The man nodded to four assistants who approached the Ark silently, lifted it with some effort, and carried it to the center of the hall, a spot marked with a symbol—two red keys in a crossed layout like a large X. They set the Ark down gently and, as if handling a precious object, removed the drape to reveal a shiny metal box covered with engravings not unlike the design on the drape. It stood on an exotic wooden pedestal. Atop the Ark on either side were two winged humanoids, each with one wing pointed down, the other stretched toward the center of the box. They had human bodies, and one had the head of a fierce beast, the other of a bird of prey. Between the tips of their upward-stretching wings was a clear red spherical crystal. From each side of the box protruded large plaques depicting a large red 'X' rising out of flames. The upper slanted lines of the 'X' sign feathered out like wings, while the lower lines ended in claws. One claw held a saber and the other, a human skull. Above the 'X' just where the two lines crossed was a single eye. Quite inhuman, it gazed with a cold, probing expression.

Tin, Copper, and Silver said, "The Eye of Amon!"

Silicone whispered. "An oracle."

The leader put the mechanical device in a pocket in his robe, then lowered his head and slowly raised both arms. Suddenly the crystal began to glow red, until it lit the entire chamber. Our friends heard a humming noise of increasing amplitude and pitch, until even the building began to shake.

The sound lasted a while, and then suddenly ended. A sphere of red plasma now hovered in mid-air over the Ark. All the Council bowed and looked down in respect, fear, and obedience.

“Praised be our Lord,” prompted the motionless leader.

The rest of the assembly cried, “Amon!”

After a brief silence, an un-earthly, piercing voice resonated from inside the red plasma. A voice our friends would never forget addressed the Council. “Greetings, our select ones.”

All stood quiet and absolutely still.

“We convene in this year,” the voice said, “marking a special period in Earth’s evolution. The world, our creation, undergoes significant transformations. Humanity is about to embark on a new adventure that will elevate its development. As the end of the Second World War approaches, new beginnings await you. New tasks and challenges face you, Councilors. Tonight, we will discuss new policies that will guide the next millennium of your history. Before that, however, I want to review the relevant facts, events, and policies of the past thirteen millennia since we embraced your existence and gave you civilization. You may be seated now.”

Everyone sat and stared at the red plasma.

The voice resumed. “As you know, we undertook to guard your world thirteen millennia ago when your ancestors were little more than beasts. They ravished the earth, stained it with their refuse, practiced

cannibalism, lived in filthy earthen holes, and had no civilization worthy of mention.”

“That is absolutely not true!” Carbon cried angrily. Silicone signaled him to be quiet.

“They sat idly and stupidly until it was time to eat again. They hunted anything that moved with stone weapons. If they found no animals, a lost or captured member of a neighboring clan would do. They lived in filth and disease and died young. Despite their hardships, they bred day and night like biological reproduction units. At night, they huddled in holes, afraid of man-eating animals, the wind or darkness. Such were your ancestors when we decided to become their guardians, or gods. Of course, the forces of evil were also around, leading humanity astray, corrupting them with evil teachings. Still, the forces of good and order overcame, and we took the primitive human race under our protective wings. Our angels came to Earth to condition humanity and erase the effects of evil. That was the beginning of humanity’s road to salvation, which will some day raise it to the heavens. Unfortunately, evil was rooted deeper than we thought. Some humans went on practicing and worshiping evil ways, and thought of themselves as demi-gods. It became evident that their sinful memories had to be erased, once and for all, by conclusive means. The slate had to be wiped clean of corruption. About twelve-and-a-half millennia ago the flood annihilated those sinners. The select ones of that time were advised to save themselves and their families any way they could. After that, the planet changed dramatically. The irreversible loss of flora and fauna necessitated the introduction of raised food as opposed to hunted or gathered. Our angels devised appropriate genetically altered crops, bred domesticated animals, and taught humanity to grow cultivated food. Gradually humans settled into farming

communities. We gave them further technologies—mathematics, fired clay, writing, games and music. They learned to extract metals from ore and manipulated their environment in previously unimaginable ways. With sturdier tools, they cleared forests, diverted rivers, carved mountains, built roads—and dominated or conquered their neighbors. Large scale organized warfare was born. No development was accidental. Humanity needs constant hardship and anxiety to evolve.”

“A pack of distorted lies so far,” Carbon muttered. “I knew a different world at least four millennia before these guys showed up to make themselves gods and angels.”

“Humanity’s additional powers necessitated laws,” the voice continued. “To that end, we set up a ruling noble class. To sate their hunger for spiritual answers and to deflect the old evil teachings, we taught new doctrines of religion and priesthood. The new religions assured that humans first and foremost recognized their true god and no other. Efficient religious machinery was indispensable for maintaining social order in a world that faced the reemergence of evil. We realized that if all humans spoke the same tongue or talked about the same ideas, they could not challenge each other, compete, and grow. They would also be hard to control as their numbers grew and they became increasingly organized. Different languages and different versions of the same religious teachings prevented idleness and stagnation. As long as they all recognized the only true god, was all well? Absolutely not. You must understand man’s real nature. Humans are still animals. By nature, they cheat, lie, kill, steal, envy, hate, and destroy. Man is incapable of disciplined cooperation, much less compassion. Instead of working together, they connive to destroy one another. Instead of

striving for the common good, they are jealous. The strong kill or exploit the weak and all other species, mercilessly and without hesitation. They obey and understand only one thing: law and order. Earth has always been a planet of juvenile delinquents. To rehabilitate them, we have turned it into a planet of labor and work. There is no other way to evolve humanity to an acceptable civilized state.”

Our bemused friends resented the slander of their home planet.

“In the millennia following the flood, planetary conditions stabilized. Food production increased in most places. Arid places without food or water persisted, so their inhabitants produced tradable goods. Soon enough they began to raid for loot, and everyone began invading or defending like a bunch of armed wild animals. Barbaric anarchy was widespread as they learned about long distance travel, transportation, and organized warfare. Only a new order could stop the waste of productive labor resources. We set up regional ruling empires with standing armies, rigid rules, order and stability. Successive empires ensured orderly progress. Religion and military force are effective evolutionary necessities.

“The regional imperial model worked well for a while, but rapidly rising world population and unequal distribution of wealth created socioeconomic unrest. Brute force needed an underlying religious foundation, so an era of holy empires and holy wars replaced the past, and civilized nations assumed the moral right to rule the barbarians. Discriminatory faith replaced comparative civilization. Supranational religious institutions formed or cooperated with the ruling classes. For centuries the religious-kingdom social system worked well, though when the world’s population surged uncontrollably, we provided new technologies to

improve living conditions, technologies that increased economic activity through power-based mechanization, such as steam-powered and hydrocarbon-fuelled systems, an industrial revolution that created new merchant classes. The new bourgeoisie engaged in economic activities unlike the feudal agricultural systems. Initially landless, the bourgeoisie swiftly reduced the old aristocrats' idly generated incomes, a transfer of wealth and power that caused revolutions, wars, and upheavals.

“As always, our elite were in key positions to guide the transformation of the industrializing societies along the planned path. Capital was the key lubricant in the machinery of change. During the last 350 years, the industrial powers colonized the world's underdeveloped regions. The world's rich nations became lazy, arrogant, and demanding. New socio-political ideologies evolved. Calls for human rights emerged. Inevitably, sacrilege crept up the social ranks, affecting our designs undesirably. We needed new and more complex socioeconomic orders. *Materialistic* orders that work with different models of planning and control, fascism, communism, and capitalism were among the options that could contain an increasingly populated and sophisticated world. They sedate their citizens with promises of freedom, equality, and prosperity, and hence secure their obedience. Of course we supported them with effective propaganda and a dominant military-industrial establishment. To transform the world from colonialism to a capitalist-communist-fascist order we needed a couple of worldwide wars. Two wars that crushed and restructured the old world, so that no means of production could be rejuvenated without capital...our money. Camouflaged as ‘aid’, we achieved collateralized control of all productive resources.

“World War I stripped Europe of its colonial



privileges, bankrupted tsarist Russia, and transformed it under the communist model. Germany opted for fascism, and the ensuing Second World War destroyed and crushed industrial Europe, Japan, and China. That was the real purpose behind those two utterly destructive wars, to topple the old regime and reshape the future world.

“Tonight we note that humanity has harnessed the powers of the atom and will use it against Japan, not only to end of the war, but also to serve as a warning to future humanity.”

All our friends turned sympathetically to Uranium, no longer so radiant.

“Before I take up our future strategies and policies, I need to remind you of the Directives given to the Council on May 1, 1776. They outlined our policies for the Industrial Revolution. They called your attention to capital and the mass media, as well as other evolving fields. In the modern world, knowledge, energy sources, communication channels, and new military and civil technologies play crucial roles in daily events. We need new doctrines and strategies to implement the *New World Order*.

“First, human nature is more bad than good, so the best government is by force and terror, not by academic discussions. Every human aims for power, and rare are those unwilling to sacrifice the common good to secure their own. What has restrained humanity historically? First brute force, then law, which is force disguised behind arbitrary guidelines.

“Second, right is might. Our power must remain invisible. The end justifies the means.

“Third, a human mob is blind, senseless, slack, unstable, unruly, and neither understands nor respects even its own welfare. Left to themselves, people come to ruin from dissensions over selfish interests and power.

Without strong authority, the masses sink into chaos. Guiding despotism leads to civilizing discipline.

“Fourth, freedom and equality are only notions. There is no equality in nature. Nature produces inequality of minds, characters, and capacities, and otherwise prioritizes natural laws. Human law must follow the same logic but less visibly. Our method is force and make-believe, force in political affairs, concealed in diplomacy. Deceit, treachery, and bribery are our method of government.

“Fifth, we engage the human animal spirit with its material desire, selfishness, and greed. An institutionally educated class, headed by the money aristocracy, will replace the rule of so-called moral men.

“Sixth, the masses may elect servile leaders. But, these leaders shall know little about government and turn it over to our army of advisors and specialists, bred and trained to rule world affairs. Whereas, constrained education must be utilized to maintain nominal mass literacy.

“Seventh, humanity needs wars. Besides facilitating our economic agenda, they neutralize humanity’s excess energy and wealth. They arouse humanity’s deepest and darkest animal instincts.

“Eighth, the press moves people’s thinking and can lay the groundwork for our agenda. We exert influence from the shadows. The media’s purpose is not to inform, but to form public opinion.

“Ninth, poverty is our ally. Only poverty turns humans into virtual slaves, which is their only practical historic state. Humans are not poor because the rich and the privileged exploit them, but because poverty has always maintained order and control over the planet.

“Tenth, our goal is global human bondage, regardless of freedom or equality and based on obedience and servitude. Cyclical economic shocks will

engender disenchantment and brutishness and foster an aversion to morality and spirituality. Material gain will become cult of selfish materialism without spiritual compassion.

“Eleventh, economic and financial monopolies we control will amass colossal wealth, overseeing international bodies pretending to overcome war, hunger, and despair. We are humanity’s saviors from chaos. People must come to believe that only a ‘one world government’ can save them and must knowingly and willingly submit to it.

“Twelfth, military and police power are essential to fight wars or threats. We need insecurity, terrorism, and war. We must create and control both terrorists and the international agencies that confront them.

“Thirteenth, our operatives must excel in commerce, science, administration, law, economics, and the media. We will groom and select people for key leadership positions. But, they shall always have weaknesses, like shady habits or inconvenient secrets, so we can ensure their loyalty. We will have agents everywhere to control all governing and administrative bodies.

“Fourteenth, we define freedom as the right to do only what our laws allow. Humans must never have freedom. They are incapable of it. Judging and administering the law must rest in our hands.

“Fifteenth, we will not allow spiritual beliefs or religions other than the ones we promote.

“Sixteenth, we will control assemblies, clubs, and societies of all sorts so they can spread their tentacles into all aspects of society.

“Seventeenth and finally, obedience and secrecy are essential and uncompromising. You must punish anyone who breaches our established order. Exemplary punishment of evil is a duty.

“After the war we will control most of the fascist, capitalist and communist nations, their colonies, their economic production, financial wealth, military-industrial establishment, technological institutions and firms, research academia, media organizations, and energy companies. All future members of human society will be simple cogs and wheels of the giant production machinery of this planet, just as they have always been. For most of their lives, humanity must work, or be consumed by their bread-earning endeavors. Their life, identity, and ego shall be defined by their work, and consumed by what they own and owe. For a small sheltered piece of their own beloved planet’s ‘free’ surface, they will have to pay an exorbitant amount of money and interest –as compared to what we will pay them for their labor. Humans shall labor for thirty of their lives’ most productive years just to pay back the capital, borrowed to procure their earthen dwellings. Thus, they will ‘freely’ slave away, consume, and borrow. Yes, they have freedoms, but only to choose their field of slavery! The basic patterns of their lives, what they eat, wear, listen to, watch, their fashions, infatuations, political opinions, idols and celebrities, or recreational choices will all be determined and owned by us. We create, and control this ‘matrix’ of delusional freedom. We shall control all of them, even their political puppet-show stooges. They can vote or object all they wish. Yet we hold the economic and political strings. As for their work, our academic curriculums train narrow-minded, single-field specialists, who believe higher education has made them smart. For the uneducated, we offer the old recipe of sex, sports, alcohol, and other sedatives. We will also create, groom, and control, their enemies. Humans need enemies, and they provide an excuse to quell dissent, disguise the real issues, and mobilize the masses.

“Manipulate humanity’s physical desires. Give them rich, famous, and sexy role models. Condition them to believe that material nature is their only real existence.

“Another potent motivational factor is the ego, the evolved version of animal survival instinct, self-perception and preservation. The ego promotes self-centeredness and detaches humans from one another. Promote competitive, insecure, jealous egos. Promote unitary egoism, and destroy compassionate harmony. Egocentrism, consumerism, and materialism shall be the religion of the future. For as long as humans are ignorant of their true identity, and connection with the universe, they will remain lost, disillusioned, and manipulated creatures. A laboring human mind, whose virtual world is filled with energy consuming, incomprehensible hodge-podge of misinformation, will never be able to rest or think straight, let alone progress.

“Another major issue the world will face is environmental change. As I told you before, the post-flood world underwent significant climatic changes that still continue and will accelerate with the increasing consumption and pollution. The post ice age climatic changes are still going on. As ice and forest cover diminish, the world will get dirtier, dryer, and hotter. The warm, fertile regions that nurtured ice-age civilizations are still heating and drying at worrisome rates. People will soon suffer severe droughts or run out of drinking water. From that will come food shortages, more pests, insects, and disease. The oceans will rise and inundate the low-lying coastal zones. Future wars will be for drinkable water. Councilors, I do not have to tell you the outcome of all that in a world of over ten billion destitute humans. Extensive police powers and military control networks will be needed to protect people from themselves and from natural calamities. To

justify all that, we must stay involved in developing threats, especially terrorist networks. Our operatives will finance and arm religious fanatics to be our pawns. How else can we justify global militarization, spying, and police control? There is no other effective control for the potentially uncontrollable near future, where otherwise there will be severe global chaos, wars, and genocide.

“Councilors, the new order must come to power everywhere in the first two decades of the next century. Nation-states will become regional cultural and administrative units of a supranational world government. That is our long-term strategic objective. First, we will dominate all national governments, and then organize a few large global trade blocks according to commercial and geographical criteria. National governments must willingly give up control of legislative, commercial, and social policy matters. Governing bodies must become continental rather than ‘national’. National politics must be trivialized. By then economic production will have long been global. Later the supra-states will merge into various international bodies. Then, all those groups will converge as a global government –E Pluribus Unum (one out of many). Fake referenda and the usual democratic sideshows will provide cover, but no matter how much we try, people will not give up their rights and freedoms easily. We need such disorder and chaos that people will welcome a world savior with open arms. And that savior will be a strong militaristic world government that brings order out of chaos. In the meantime, continue to mislead and confuse, and be sure people believe everything comes from the ‘God’ they imagine.

“Councilors, the final, crucial, and potentially threatening variable is timing. We do not have a lot of it. Over the next century ‘galactic alignments’ will turn against our favor. Evil still lurks out there! As ever, it

stands to wreak havoc in this world. We must be diligent in our determination, and the rapid execution of the stated strategic policies. With this, I will now leave you.”

Then the red plasma field disappeared, leaving the assembly in an eerie silence. The Councilors rose, joined hands, and like zombies began singing a hymn.

Deviant from others’ solemn silence, Hydrogen objected: “How can humanity ever progress, if their minds, lives, and their freedom to think and choose is so strictly controlled?”

“Friends,” Mercury whispered, “though we cannot see the sky, I know dawn is near. We must prepare for departure.”

As the brilliant white flash returned, our friends could only think how good it felt to escape that hellish den of the *almost invisible darkness*.





## The Vessel Of Life And Light

*Tell me what is being done on earth that the earth is so afflicted and shaken?"*

**Noah in the Hebrew Book of Enoch**

*They say that if the flood, which occurred in the time of Deucalion (Greek Noah figure), destroyed most living things, the inhabitants of southern Egypt survived more than any others.*

**1<sup>st</sup> century BC Greek historian Diodorus Siculus**

*What ferryboat shall be brought to you? Bring me It-flies-and alights.*

*The earth speaks, the gate of the earth god is open, the doors of Geb are opened to you. . . .May you remove yourself to the sky upon your iron throne.*

**Excerpts from the Pyramid Texts of Saqqara, Egypt**

*And that their inventions (knowledge of heavenly bodies) might not be lost, upon Adam's prediction that the world was to be destroyed at one time by the force of fire, and at another time by the violence and quantity of water, they made two pillars, one of brick, the other of stone; they inscribed their discoveries upon them both, that in case the pillar of brick should be destroyed by the Flood, the pillar of stone might remain and exhibit these discoveries to mankind; and also inform them that there was another pillar of brick erected by them.*

**1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish historian Josephus writing about the antediluvian world's inhabitants**

*Stelae in the land of Seiria . . . inscribed in the sacred tongue in hieroglyphic letters by Thoth, the first Hermes, and translated after the flood from the sacred tongue into the Greek language . . .*

**Contained in the letter of the Monk Syncellus to Ptolemy**

The Sun gods went behind the rock gates of heaven.

## Ancient Japanese Manuscript

That dark night, fiercely marching clouds obscured the moon and the stars, trampling across the sky like black-clad warriors.

Gold broke the group's traumatized silence. "It is rather curious. Unlike other earthlings that co-exist in harmony, humanity is in a state of imbalance and chaos. Certain things about them are insensible, like overpopulation, insatiable consumption, or destructive interactions with nature."

Oxygen added. "What troubles humans?"

"Buddha always said that it is only hardship, poverty, despair, and material struggle that transforms people into monsters," Sodium replied.

"Humans are generally self-centered. They seem unaware of their true purpose in life, to find their path to the Source."

Silicone answered. "Indeed, humans are a successful, dominant, but disharmonious species. They abuse power, whether wielding a stick, sword, or atomic power."

"But beauty is embedded in human souls. Young children are angelic. Maybe, surviving their desperate adult lives transforms them."

"I agree. All humans instinctively recognize and respect goodness."

Sulphur summed it nicely. "As if a reflection of the *"Divine Fire"* resides in the depths of their consciousness."

Titanium had been quietly dealing with a lingering issue. "What future 'galactic alignment' was the Voice talking about?"

Soon, the Transportal whisked the group away. When they arrived, Helium exclaimed, "Great! We love mountains and lakes."

Indeed, lushly forested highlands and a clear blue lake snaking out of view behind a distant mountain peak delighted their eyes. The lake's long, narrow shape identified it as a melting glacier's end point, now teeming with marine life. Countless birds hovered above, repeatedly diving into the cold, clear water. Not too far from our friends, children swam and played near the shore. Narrow plumes of white smoke in the distance and the faint sound of mothers calling their children presaged a human settlement nearby.

Old evergreen forests covered the mountainsides and the lakeside plain. Other species of younger vegetation hinted at a slowly warming climate, which did not escape our friends' attention as they tried to figure out their whereabouts.

"I see several kinds of birds and vegetation I remember seeing only in the pre-flood library records," Silicone said. "Some are extinct in our era. Friends, I believe we may be in a pre-flood epoch."

"How do you figure?" Mercury asked.

"Most of the flora and fauna here once existed in large numbers, according to the records at the library, but the flood washed them away. Since then, most of them have been extinct. That's why I believe we've been delivered to that age."

"Who built your library, the gods?"

"I have never known."

Just then Nitrogen returned from its usual aerial canvass and directed everyone's attention to the near distance. "There's an assembly of some kind."

The group saw a fairly large group of old men and women walking up a hill and headed for them. Within minutes, they reached the lakeside plateau where the crowd was gathering. From there they saw that the snake-like lake stretched all the way behind the mountains.

The distant plumes of smoke now looked like dancing white serpents rising to the heavens. The children had left. The sun was below the horizon, turning the lake a deep purple that reminded them of their night at Bozorgmehr's lakeside villa.

Most of the old people wore simple white robes, though some wore colorful capes, hats, or ornaments. They were all quite old and gray. They walked calmly, contentedly, steadily, albeit most used canes. Our friends noticed a glow of peace and tranquility in their eyes. The humans of their era were not so serene.

One by one the elders reached the hill, greeted one another, and embraced joyfully. Many others approached.

"How can any one village have so many grannies?" Helium wondered.

"I doubt they're all from the same village," Oxygen said. "The way they greet shows they haven't seen each other for a while. Perhaps, many are from neighboring regions."

"They must be here for some important event. Look at them!" Indeed, hundreds of old men and women were scrambling up the hill, some helping the others.

Then Iron spotted a shrine formed by a cavity dug into a large boulder. Many dozens of candles and clay oil lamps burned beside the shrine, some shaped like serpents or with serpents and dragons engraved on them. Inside the cavity was a crumpled metallic object.

"What on earth is that?" Iron asked.

"It must be an alien," Phosphorus guessed.

A voice from inside the object answered. "True, we are very rare in this world but not alien to it. I am Krypton."

"My! I've heard of your kind, but I never thought I would have the pleasure."

"Please, the pleasure is mine. I just sit here idly

to be adored as a sacred object, but you all sound so worldly.”

“Why have these old folks put you in this shrine?”

“As best I remember, we were part of a flying craft. I recall being cast down at some point, after an explosion. Then these people’s ancestors found us and brought us here. They still look after us.”

“A Vimana?” Chlorine ventured.

“What’s going on here tonight? Is this a regular event? Who are these people?” Silicone fired three questions.

“I’ve seen most of them before. They come here regularly to make offerings and sing hymns to their benevolent gods. Sometimes they gather here for talks, celebrations and so on. I believe they’re from the nearby villages and towns, but they rarely gather here all at once. There must be a special event I’m not aware of. That one over there is the High Priestess of the nearby village. She’s the official caretaker of this shrine.”

They looked at the High Priestess. She was a tall woman with long, snow-white hair, and bronzed skin. She wore a flowing white robe and sandals. Her eyes glowed intensely from her wrinkled face, a kind of grandmotherly expression engrained in most children’s memory. She held a wooden staff shaped like the head of a snake. An embroidered blue ‘+’ adorned her robe. Our friends saw that as a good omen.

People approached her with seemingly important inquiries that she answered. Our friends saw that everyone who talked with her wore an expression of joy and astonishment. After they talked to her, they engaged each other in intense discussions.

The group briefed Krypton about their journeys and inquired about their surroundings. “This place is a highland paradise. Where are we, and in what era?”

“I know that we are in the only significant highlands in northeastern Africa. As for the time, I guess that’s relative to your point of reference. I do know that people here tell of a great cataclysm that shook the earth and the heavens a few millennia ago.” Krypton replied.

“We must be in the mountains of the Horn of Africa, the land that will be known as Abyssinia or Ethiopia. A land of proud, independent people who have many ancient traditions and myths.” Silicone added.

“But Ethiopia is arid. This is subtropical landscape.” Mercury objected.

“Remember,” Silicone cautioned, “we may be here during the time when millions of cubic miles of ice was thawing in the geological equivalent of the twinkling of an eye. The atmospheric moisture caused coastal floods, formed large lakes and great flowing rivers, and brought on torrential rains. The face of our world was transformed for millennia. Ancient records refer to a much greener north and northeast Africa, Middle East, and other places like coastal Peru. Arid now, they were once home to early post-cataclysm recovering civilizations. Agriculture was an absolute necessity after the loss the flora and fauna that fed earlier hunter-gatherers of the ice age. The African Sahara is a very young desert. Studies show it was a green savannah up to around 9,000 B.C. From about 14,000 B.C. it rained here plenty. The climate was cooler, cloudier, and wetter, which may explain the evidence of water erosion around the North African landscape. The climate changed after the global flooding of around 10,500 B.C. Sand slowly buried ancient Egypt, but her people cherished the memory of bygone eras when the gods were in their midst.”

Silver: “Does that explain the evidence of extensive water erosion at the monuments of Giza?”

Silicone: “It is claimed that these monuments are

a little over four millennia old. But, between four to three millennia before our era, during the time of 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Pharaohs, both the Valley Temple's severely eroded stonewalls and the Sphinx's body were refaced with new masonry. They indisputably recorded such renovations on stone tablets placed nearby. So, if four thousands years ago these monuments were already severely eroded to require renovations, then it is safe to assume that they must be much older. The Sphinx's head was never refaced with new masonry, and unlike its lower body it does not show any sign of serious erosion. You can still see traces of its headdress's red and white stripe colorings. I wonder if it was just resculpted, and what kind of a face it may have originally possessed."

"Do these monuments hold secrets of a bygone epoch?"

"I suspect that you folks may be right," Krypton said. The people here talk of gods roaming about. I will come back to that, but first, I want to ask Silicone about a strange story I heard from a couple of pilgrims. They described a land far to the north which suddenly became a frozen abyss where the sun and the stars came out for only one long day in the whole year."

Silicone recounted the story of the pole shift and its effect on Siberia, the ancient Aryana Veja. He finished by saying, "It was an era of traumatic events. Countless ancient myths recall the survivors' struggles and of mysterious civilizing gods who descended from the heavens to help them."

The sky had now turned dark, and only the hilltop bonfires and the crescent moon lit the surroundings. Everyone was eagerly anticipating something, though our friends did not know what. Hydrogen addressed their new friend. "You said these people speak of gods who roam the earth. Tell us more."

“Consider that,” Krypton replied, “these peoples’ ancestors commonly used the word *god* to mean any stupendous natural entity or event. They called the star constellations, sun, moon, and the heavenly bodies gods. Also powerful natural forces like lightning, the seas, storms, earthquakes were adored.”

“So, were there really gods who guided and taught them civilization? Are they just mere fantasies about cosmic phenomena?”

“I don’t quite know how to answer you. As I said before, I was part of a fantastically fast flying craft, until the accident brought me to this rocky crevice. I have seen superb flying crafts in the northern skies now and again. I’m as amazed as the people here, who drop to their knees and put their hands together to show respect for the winged gods, as they call them. They are supposed to come from north of here in the land of the mighty river. The elders never fail to remind their young ones that those gods saved life after the catastrophes. They say they came right after the calamity and taught the survivors to build shelters and settlements, make tools, use fire, grow food and breed animals. They taught them about weather and the seasons. They are still in contact with humankind’s great leaders. Their contact here is the High Priestess.”

“Have you heard of any Egyptian gods called Ra, Osiris, Horus, Isis, or Thoth?” Copper asked.

“They speak a different language and name their godlike characters differently. All I know is what the people say or sing as prayer hymns. There is a gap between the godlike beings and what they see, hear, understand, and believe. They don’t understand the gods’ technologies, so what they say needs to be deciphered.

“There are strange stories about the first god-kings guarding the earth after the calamity and helping



regenerate life. They were superhuman. They had great mental, physical, and psychic powers. They manipulated objects magically and had unfamiliar acoustic powers, what the people call the “word” or the “unspoken language”. They apparently live much longer than humans. They are taller than humans. Their faces shine, their eyes are bright, their skin is a shiny blue. They wear strange clothing and large helmets that generate magical powers.”

Our friends looked at each other. Sounded familiar.

“They have known of their gods for a long time. A group of them has lived alongside the surviving humans since the last major cataclysm. People believe they come from the land of the Mighty River to the north.”

“The Nile,” Silicone explained needlessly.

“They monitor the world, assisting, organizing, and re-educating the survivors, who sing hymns of gratitude before meals or sleep, or at shrines like this. They never force anything but rather promote mutual cooperation. Their assemblies feature consciousness-elevating music. People say they have altered plants and animals in their scientific centers to adapt them to domestication. One created regional learning centers where he teaches select elders writing, sciences, building arts, and the study of the true nature of existence. They say he understands everything and imparts knowledge and wisdom to the worthy for future safekeeping. They tell their children he is out when the moon is a crescent-shaped like tonight and may visit them in their sleep, bearing gifts. The crescent moon is his insignia.”

“Thoth!” Copper cried.

“Are these gods associated with serpent/dragon symbolism?” Oxygen asked.

“Indeed,” Krypton said, “one symbol for them is

a serpent/dragon creature. They symbolize the god I mentioned with two serpents coiled around a winged staff, a symbol from their heavenly world.

“Their hymns speak of their gods’ technologies. One about the journey of people who die goes this way:

The gods who are in the sky are brought to you. The gods who are on earth assemble for you. They place their hands under you. They make a ladder for you that you may ascend on it to the sky. The doors of the sky are thrown open to you. The doors of the starry firmament are thrown open for you.”

“We’ve heard of the ladder before,” Mercury said.

“Others may explain my origin”, Krypton said.

“The king is aflame, moving before the wind to the sky and to the end of the earth. The king travels the air and traverses the earth. There is brought to him a way of ascent to the sky.

The earth speaks. The gate of the earth god is open. The doors of heaven are opened for you. May you remove yourself to the sky upon your *bjā* throne.”

“What *bjā*?”

“In ancient Egyptian it meant *the metal of heaven* or *divine metal*. The Egyptians used it later to mean iron, once they discovered it.” Silicone explained.

Our friends watched the elders chatting, or gazed at the scenery. Like a heavenly mirror, the calm lake

seemed a perfect backdrop, reflecting the crescent moon and the stars. The High Priestess and a few elders assembled on a rocky crag overlooking the lake and talked intensely as they watched the sky above the lake eagerly. Something important was in the air.

A sudden commotion interrupted their pensive silence, and everyone stood suddenly, turning excited eyes to the northern skies. Some put their hands together and began praying and rejoicing. The High Priestess raised and extended her arms and began to sing a hymn.

“I think I see a light moving too fast to be a star,” Titanium said.

“It’s a flying craft. I sense its force field,” Krypton added.

Our friends were excited at the prospect of seeing a vimana. Would they also meet the mythical savior, the dying gods of antiquity? They began to share the people’s jubilation.

The moving light grew brighter, crossing the night sky rapidly at a low altitude. Finally it descended slowly, maneuvering flawlessly toward the northern end of the dark lake. They saw its bright contour and flashing blue and white lights.

Its flat, round body was a symmetrical airfoil that sliced through the air in a gliding motion, all the while generating an intense radiant light. Then while still at some distance, the craft suddenly stopped and hovered about twenty feet above the surface of the lake. It turned and approached the onlookers. Our friends saw a shining base rotating about a central axis, and heard only a quiet hissing.

“A flying gyroscope,” Silicone suggested.

“What powers it?” Uranium wondered aloud.

The flashing strobe lights went off, and the craft dimmed. A humanoid entity emerged from a hatch at the top and stood motionless as his tall, slim body rose

above the craft on a shining circular platform floating in mid-air. The metallic platform consisted of two round plates, separated by a luminescent energy field. The elders knelt in respect.

The entity wore a shining white cape over a tight silver-blue suit. On his upper left chest an insignia caught our friends' attention: a '+' sign inside a circle—⊕. He held a golden staff, its handle a reared dragon with serene, half-closed eyes. He wore a large metal headgear, a half-elliptical canister on top of which rested a deep blue spherical crystal the size of a walnut. Around the canister coiled two metallic serpents, reaching a zenith and supporting protruding clear flat panels on either side.

As the god approached they saw it was over seven feet tall without any body hair, an elongated face, and shining skin that glowed like the moon. His elongated eyes were larger than most humans', their deep blue shining like sapphires. His skin color tone was slightly blue-hued like a cloud-covered shallow tropical sea.

“Judging from his complexion and eyes, I think he is from some a place without much light. Perhaps that is why he has come at night,” Silicone commented.

The metallic platform stopped and lowered to a small cleared area covered with wildflowers. The elders were silent and motionless. The god's helmet began to emit a dim blue light, and after a moment the god began to address the crowd in a language Krypton understood. Our friends were amazed that neither the god's mouth, nor lips moved. His audible telepathic words came from somewhere in his helmet. “My children, my friends, be at rest.”

The High Priestess remained standing, her hands together. She looked down as she addressed the visitor. “Your Highness, my Lord. We are overjoyed to be in

your presence. We have eagerly awaited this moment since you sent word of your coming. I have done as you asked and gathered your disciples this night.”

The entity, whom the priestess called *Guardian*, nodded gratefully when she set an exquisitely enameled blue terracotta jug containing liquid on a platform. His body, as well as his helmet, increased in brightness. A woman among the onlookers asked the Guardian why he had come to them.

“We come from a world not unlike yours. It has a star and moons. It is far from here. Not many of my kind can visit your beautiful world as frequently as they wish. That is why some of us stay here among you.”

The woman asked, “Guardian, where is your world?”

The Guardian looked at the sky and pointed upward. “There. That is where my people live.”

“He’s pointing to the direction of Orion and the star Sirius, right?” Mercury murmured.

Silicone nodded. “Yes. They are in the same part of the sky. Many ancient civilizations revered them. But which one is the Guardian’s star system?”

“We have much water there,” the Guardian said. “That is why we love water and are at home in it. But our planet gets less starlight. Your sun is too intense for us, so we are creatures of the night here. We have been visiting your world for thousands of Earth years. We have older memories of this world than you do. Earth is your home, but we also feel at home here. We believe in living harmoniously with all the cosmos. For as long as we have been here, we have played an important role in your planet’s wellbeing.

“Why did we come? There are many intelligent life forms in our universe, all at different levels of development. Fundamentally, all life forms share one thought: the search for the nature of existence and all the

queries that naturally arise from that field of inquiry. All beings are, however, bound in some degree to a material dimension of the universe. Everywhere in the universe, living beings experience consciousness. They feel and are aware of themselves and their existence. They know fatigue, hunger, happiness, affection, or sadness. The physical body is a shell with needs, and limitations in strength, ability, and presence in time and space. The body is a vehicle for the spirit, a material shell that extracts energy and minerals from its surroundings to survive and be comfortable. Yet that is not our true essence. Our bodies host our spirits, which are formless and immaterial.”

The Guardian detected confusion among his audience, and changed his tack. “Let me tell you why we came in the first place. All star systems and planets are configured differently. Planets vary in size and mineral composition and abundance. Advanced entities travel beyond their own worlds to explore others. We value your world’s minerals. Since a very long time ago, before your ancestors existed, we have visited your planet. They found various subspecies of primitive humanoids, living simply. They avoided us strange visitors. Then despite our policy of non-interference, something happened. Around 135,000 earth-years before now, a visiting mission stayed a long time. Forced by the isolation and tempted by curiosity, our visitors befriended a group of Homo sapiens. The transfer of civilizing information gave them a competitive advantage, and over time, they replaced the other humanoid species. After that, your world and ancestors became our moral responsibility. Many millennia passed until that dreaded event 4,500 years ago.”

The Guardian paused, its shining face traumatized. The luminescent halo diminished considerably, surely an indication of love and

compassion. "He must be referring to the pole shift," Silicone murmured.

"My Lord," the priestess asked, "did other catastrophes befall the world before the last one?"

"Yes, my child. A similar event destroyed almost all life on earth millions of years ago. Giant marine life, amphibians and lizards, and intense vegetation filled the oceans and the land. An asteroid collided with Earth. Almost every living thing died in a very short time. Billions of decomposing organisms sunk into layers of the earth's crust. The 'bitumen' you use as waterproofing or fuel is the remains of their decayed organic mass. The last calamity was milder because the asteroid did not hit Earth directly. The asteroid's gravitational shock wave and its tail of rock, dust, and superheated compressed gas whiplashed the planet. The earth's magnetic field and crust slipped, causing floods, earthquakes, electro-magnetically charged storms, and volcanic eruptions. It wiped out most life on earth, including our installations. We sent assistance from various places at once."

"The Sumerian myth of Tiamat whose tail whipped the world?" Phosphorus suggested.

The Guardian continued. "I can not imagine what would have happened to this beautiful world had the asteroid hit it head on, but the devastation its shock wave caused was bad enough. Unfortunately, due to time-space relations, it took us years to get here. What our rescue teams found filled them with grief and horror. Black smoke from the volcanoes and massive fires darkened the sky for years. Most life was crushed into an organic pulp. Walls of water had swept great swaths of land clean. Only the higher ground escaped the floods. Only remnants of life survived. Formidable challenges confronted us. The survivors were a community of savages, thrown back to the Stone Age.

Hardly any trace of civilization remained. When we found them, your ancestors were ignorant. Only rare old survivors recognized us. Others related us to relics like stone figurines, cave paintings, or oral traditions. To them we were the gods who created the world returning from heaven. They rejoiced to see us, which made our job somewhat easier. A quick scan revealed the extent of the job of restoring the world of humanity to advanced civilized life. Most larger animals were extinct. The starving humans had resorted to war, pillage, and cannibalism.

“Our teams fanned out across the world to find, rescue, and re-civilize the survivors, scattered across the world’s scarred face. We restored water and food supplies, sanitary conditions, and reeducated the people. Our scientists produced mutant versions of plant and animal life that could adapt to Earth’s new climate. We introduced technologies, life sciences, social laws, and culture at a rapid pace. Most important of all, we reintroduced the study of existence, alchemy. Cults grew up around us, our life regenerating powers, and civilizing miracles. We became creator gods, roaming the earth doing good deeds. At first we did not mind the characterization, since it made our work easier. But our wiser leaders pointed out the risks of our being misperceived. When societies undergo technological and social changes too quickly, many become disoriented. A civilization needs spiritual maturity to adopt the powers of technology. Otherwise, decadence supercedes enlightenment.”

The Guardian paused. He closed his radiant blue eyes and grew somber. His tall shining body somewhat withered, and visibly dimmed in luminosity. Everyone wondered in anxious anticipation, about what was storming through his superb intellect. “I am here tonight to warn you. The melting polar ice masses, moved to



warmer latitudes by the calamitous polar shift, have been rapidly thawing. This has brought about instability. The Earth will be changing again. A new catastrophe is upon you, through which many of you will not survive.”

Everyone froze in disbelief. Only Silicone understood what the Guardian meant. Silicone remembered the event that turned it into a wandering vagabond.

“Within months,” the Guardian said, “a massive flood will inundate most of Earth’s surface. Only the highest land will be spared.”

The Guardian paused while his audience digested the news. Some women wept, others comforted them. Many gazed into the distance. Why was the creator not kinder? What was the purpose of so much misery? It was all hard to understand.

The Guardian continued. “Melting ice has for millennia been gathering far to the northwest of here behind a frozen earthen damn, creating a giant inland sea at an elevation higher than the oceans. Should the frozen wall fail, the release of water into the world’s oceans will be catastrophic. We know it’s weakening. We believe it will fail. The only question is when. Our analysis shows that the resulting flood’s tidal waves will sweep most of Earth’s surface. Only the highlands will escape. Even here your life will change. Most life forms will be lost. It will take years of global flooding and rainstorms to eventually redistribute the water around the globe.

Silicone commented. “It is well documented that only one such lake, Lake Agassiz, at its peak, once occupied an area of 110,000 square miles, covering most of what will be known as Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan, in Canada, as well as North Dakota and Minnesota, in the United States. It had formed from the melting ice in less than just 1,000 years. It is believed to

have eventually drained through the St. Lawrence Seaway, and leaving behind only the five Great Lakes. And this was just one such lake. It is also believed that the Hudson Bay, in northeastern Canada, may have originally been a gigantic melt-water lake that due to its immense built up pressure, broke its earthen barrier and poured its waters into the ocean.”

The Guardian continued. “There is no time to waste. You, the elders of your people, must do many things. That is why I have called on you tonight. Other briefings are happening all over the world with the elders of all highland humans. Tell your people to pack for survival. They should take enough to last a few months. Only those strong enough to make it to the higher peaks will survive. You and your families should get to high ground at once. Even these mountains will go under water. There is no hope for the lowlands people. Take as much food and water as you can. The seawater will ruin everything, so take any grain or other food plants you can. What you save will be your food after the flood. What you don’t preserve will probably become extinct. Try to save the animals. Take a pair when you can and food for them. That is your task, my dear friends and disciples.”

One of the elders, trembling, asked, “My lord, how will our children know when it is all over and safe to descend? They cannot farm in the mountains.”

“The tidal waves will take weeks to subside,” the Guardian said, “but no one should descend for months, because more floods may come. They should not resettle the lowlands for years, since the soil will be either saturated or saline.”

“Where will you be, my Lord, during all this?”

“We will leave soon, and most of us will go home. Only a skeleton crew will remain at the orbital station to monitor events. I will be one. We will contact

your leaders in the mountains to help and then reassess the situation. That is, if we are still alive up there.”

The High Priestess asked concernedly. “Why my Lord?”

The Guardian replied. “The flooding will surely destroy our entire ground-based defensive machinery, command and control centers, data banks, library, and supply systems. Without them, we will be effectively helpless up there in orbit. So, this may also be my farewell visit. My beloved children and friends, as always, our fates are bound together.”

“What will become of our children and their children without your guardianship?” a weeping elderly woman asked.

“Things will get worse. Most of our work will be destroyed or buried. The times before the flood will become mythical. You will not be able to contact us. In time, people will question the very existence of a time when humans and guardians lived together as friends. Without our light, darkness will prevail. The ‘language of light’ will be forgotten, along with the ability to understand the powers of radiant energy. Survivors will speak different languages that are limited in scope yet extremely complicated. People will grow ignorant of their neighbors and learn to fear and despise one another. People will live shorter, unhappier lives. Human society will be militaristic, materialistic, and discriminatory. Ruling warrior classes will govern a world of injustice, suffering, and neglect. Compassion, kindness, and consideration will be signs of weakness. Opportunists will suppress the true science of existence, alchemy, and replace it with ideologies to confuse the masses or condemn those who seek the highest truth.”

“My Lord, what of all you have taught us? There must be a way to save it for future generations.”

“You give me hope,” the Guardian said. “I have

assembled you here tonight to ask that those who survive must dedicate yourselves to a sacred cause. You must teach your children the arts of civilization and science. You must indoctrinate selected disciples in the spiritual arts and create depositories of such knowledge in highland sanctuaries and guard them. Preserve your knowledge by passing it to your disciples orally and write it down in stone, so that one or the other may survive. The followers of darkness will try to destroy it and persecute its guardians.

“Human souls will not evolve sufficiently to escape the gravity of the physical world. Instead of joining their stellar source, they will be trapped in the four dimensional realm, a dysfunctional evolutionary pattern. The resulting stagnation will make people hopeless. Like a school of students who always fail, they must return to mortal life. The world’s population will grow to unnatural, unsustainable levels. Salvation depends on you and your successors, the guardians of wisdom.”

“Will we ever have your guardianship again?” the priestess asked.

“Possibly my child. The Guardian closed his eyes as if traveling to another part of the universe. “You call the galaxy we share with many different life forms the Milky Way. In about twelve-and-a-half thousand years, space-time portals will reopen and let us bypass the long journey between us. Then we will return to Earth. We will meet again. Our destinies have always been intertwined, like two serpents coiled around a common axis, straining toward the heavenly Source.”

The Guardian paused to assure itself of everyone’s attention. “Our great stone pyramids of our ground base are practically indestructible. We will remove the harmonically resonant mineral matrices of those structures, the “magic crystals” or “tablets of

light” as you call them. Their doors will be shut and sealed. They will fall silent and serve as emissaries from a lost mystery—and more.

“The great pyramids are durable, their majesty is timeless. Inside and under them are chambers full of records, advanced knowledge, and wisdom, all encoded in crystalline minerals, everything we have taught you and more. Some day people worthy of wisdom will discover them.

“And somewhere within the complex, the Chamber of Destiny reveals the Universal Sign, the sacred emblem of wisdom. It lets worthy initiates face the source of all creation. Only the enlightened are worthy of that privilege.”

“My Lord, have you beheld it?”

The Guardian shone brightly and smiled. “It is a glory to behold that cannot be . . .” The Guardian stopped, closed his bright blue eyes. “It is the highest truth, the origin, destination and destiny, everything about everything, and our nothingness in that everything. Do you understand?”

Our eager friends focused on every word.

“You are the guardians of the sacred message. Be careful to whom you offer your wisdom. Yours is a selective and secretive society. Your responsibility and destiny is humanity’s survival. Salvation rests in your hands. Will you be ready and dedicated?”

The elders rose and bowed in unison. Such display of devotion was admirable from a group of humans who were about to face such catastrophe.

The lake’s calm waters reflected the sky’s oncoming dawn hues of purple and orange, like a serpent shedding dark skin for lighter.

“I will go now. Be brave. Save and spread the message.”

The Guardian moved toward its platform and

stood on it. It gave its friends a haunting last look.

Hydrogen pointed to a blue teardrop rolling down the Guardian's face, just as the creature turned and pointed to the '⊕' emblem on its chest.

## The Source Is Destiny

*I and the Father are one.  
The Truth shall set you free.*

**Jesus Christ**

*I am god.*

**Sufi mystic Hallaj (858-922 AD), executed by Muslim religious authorities for refusing to renounce that statement.**

*God is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere.*

**Hermes Trismegistus**

Shortly after our friends reached their mountaintop cave, intense discussions resumed.

“Humans aspire for heaven.” Helium commented. “Wouldn’t you want your soul to live among those great beings? Who knows? Maybe one day we can get this hole to send us there too.”

“Given everything that has happened since that era, it’s no wonder the world is full of troubled human souls,” Sodium opined. “Theirs is the sadness Buddha felt from the “specks of light” trapped in Earth’s astral regions, reincarnating continuously, living miserably.”

Carbon initiated: “Civilization re-emerged after the flood through the efforts of the Guardians’ disciples. Those instructed by the ancient gods. The benevolent Azhi Dahaka, Osiris, Viracocha, Quetzalcoatl, Vishnu, and countless other pagan gods, who later become merely mythical tall, shining, blue-skinned, dragon/serpent gods, wearing large elaborate crowns, and possessing magical powers.”

Calcium added: “By Noah, Manu, and over 600 other global flood heroes.”

“Survivors that saved many crops and animal and plant species. Descending from the highlands, they settled and cultivated the nearby fertile river valleys in Egypt, Sumer, Elam, the Indian subcontinent, and Chinese river deltas.”

“Pay attention to the historic symbolism embedded in the epic of Gilgamesh. A “demigod”, Gilgamesh civilizes Enkidu, a savage “ape-man”, perhaps a reference to the primitive post-cataclysmic humanity. Together, they embark on a journey to find the source of immortality, a reference to hidden wisdom being protected by a serpent guardian. Throughout this epic, one is also introduced to the sacrificial heavenly bull, the multiple stages of danger and disillusionment confronting a seeker, as well as the flood hero.” Silicone highlighted.

“Quite similar to many ancient spiritual myths that describe some ancient cataclysms, a Tree of Life or knowledge, garden of Eden, the elixir of immortality, various godly guardians, evil breaking through the sky, a final ‘day of renovation’, and the returning god that will make humanity immortal.”

Phosphorus speculated. “The fabled buried double pillars of sacred knowledge may have reincarnated as the twin obelisks, the twin pillars of Greek, Jewish, Templar, and Masonic temple entrances, or the twin minarets of Muslim mosques.”

“The ancient Egyptians typically represented these sacred pillars with serpents coiling around them. The winged version of this later became the Caduceus, the symbol of sacred sciences.” Silver added.

“Ironically, the Canaanite reference for the sacred poles, ashereh, means sacred tree in Hebrew.” Silicone prompted.

“Friends,” Mercury interposed, “the sun will come out soon. We must get ready.”



“For another uncontrolled journey to yet another unknown era and destination?” Uranium sighed.

Hydrogen proposed. “I’ve been wondering about that. After all, we’ve learned much about humanity, the world, the universe and its source. Was it random? There must be a way to direct ourselves through the Transportal.”

After a minute’s silence, Helium turned to the meditating Sodium and Chlorine, and said, “Okay, you two, snap out of it. You’re really beginning to resemble Buddha.”

Suddenly, Sodium and Chlorine jubilantly embraced. “Of course!” Sodium let out. “How could we have missed it all this time?”

“Yes”, Chlorine acknowledged. “Teacher was showing us the way, but we hadn’t understood.”

“What are you two talking about?”

Everyone tuned in to the unexpected exchange.

“Do you guys remember what Buddha said just before we parted?” Sodium asked.

Chlorine rushed a response. “He said, ‘Never lose heart in your chosen path. Remember this carefully: once you have learned to focus your hearts to the wisdom of creation, then you shall find the way to your destination.’”

“What if the Transportal responds to some hidden wisdom? If that’s so, Buddha gave us the answer with that advice. We have never lost our desire to find the Source, right? Maybe if we focus all of our senses, we can interact with the Transportal,” Sodium optimistically suggested.

“The first people I saw using the Transportal seemed to know exactly what they were doing,” Calcium confirmed. “They knew all about their journey and their destination, but I don’t have an idea how they got there.”

“If,” Silicone mused, “Earth is an intelligent conscious god, it interacts with worthy earthlings.”

“Let’s try to focus our consciousness,” Mercury urged, “and see if we can guide the Transportal.”

“It’s certainly worth a try,” Silicone concluded.

The dawn began to light the mouth of the cave. Our friends wondered and hoped excitedly. Once again, they all embraced, and this time they focused on the time before the flood, more than twelve thousand years earlier—and the Giza complex. After signaling their readiness, they joined the Transportal. When the brilliant flash cleared, they found themselves gazing at three pristine pyramids covered in mirror-like polished white stone, reflecting the sun’s light like glowing gems. They were flawless, breathtaking. Just then a small flying craft similar to the Guardian’s vimana flew swiftly by.

“We did it! We’re here!” They shouted and leaped for joy.

“These pyramids are beyond imagination,” Calcium said.

“No humans could have done that,” Titanium ventured.

“Aren’t they aligned with the earth’s cardinal directions after the pole-shift?” Mercury asked.

“You’re not wrong,” Silicone corroborated. “The margin of error in that alignment is 0.015%. And their sides are equal in length (755 feet), with a margin of 0.1%, and they meet at an almost exact ninety degrees. With its thirty plus foot high capstone, the Great Pyramid rises 481 feet, and its apex projects precisely over the center of its base. Some of the inner stone blocks weigh more than fifteen tons. Even in our era, few cranes can handle such weight. How could men have quarried and perfectly cut such giant blocks with bronze tools? How did they haul them hundreds of miles and raise them hundreds of feet with such accuracy? The

Great Pyramid alone required over two million giant blocks. The polished white casing, vandalized to build Cairo, would have covered twenty-two acres. The joints between the layers are so tight you could barely insert a piece of paper into them.

“But wait,” Silicone added, “there’s more. The Great Pyramid is a perfect scaled-down version of the northern hemisphere. Many other mathematical, geographical, and astronomical data are encoded within its properties. The thing is perfectly proportioned to the planet. We could discuss them for hours. Whatever they are for, they were built precisely in tune with the planet.”

“How can people believe they’re just tombs?” Oxygen asked.

“The world’s most elaborate stone coffins that never held corpses!” Helium humored.

“I spot the Sphinx and a couple of other structures to the right,” Nitrogen reported from aloft.

The group followed Nitrogen’s lead. They noticed that the landscape was no arid desert. It was a savannah of green grass, shrubs, wildflowers, and trees.

Soon they stood before the Sphinx.

“My goodness, it looks so different now,” Copper marveled.

“Evidently, its head was reshaped at some point,” Silicone said.

“And look. No veneer stones on the body.”

The Sphinx’s appearance did not surprise them. It had the body of a lion and a head that resembled the Guardian’s—the same eyes and facial features, the same crown. The Sphinx sat in the middle of a pond where swans, geese, and other birds swam.

“Check out the other structures over there,” Calcium said. “Have you ever seen such perfection?”

Our friends turned to see two buildings, one-

story structures with walls and roofs of large monolithic stone slabs perfectly cut and interlocked. They lacked windows, but each had two doors opposite the Sphinx. One also had an entrance that opened to the right of the Sphinx that opened onto a causeway that led to the Great Pyramid. Through the openings an intense light pulsed from inside the structures. Even from a distance, the friends felt its oscillatory energy on their tiny bodies.

“Given the circumstances, I suggest you all wait here while I try to get some answers.” Silicone assumed the lead.

“I’ll come along,” Calcium offered.

They embarked on a fact-finding foray. The rest stayed behind, silently admiring the majestic perfection about them. Some wondered what the planet would have been like had the flood not deprived it of the Guardians.

As Silicone and Calcium approached the structure at the end of the causeway, the pulsation affected everything around them. The structure vibrated silently, though not mechanically. Every part, every atom of the place, seemed to resonate in unison. As they got closer, the radiated energy became more evident.

“Was your old library like this?” Calcium asked.

“No. This is altogether different.”

They went straight in and walked down a long corridor to a T-shaped hall supported by two rows of rectangular columns. A quick glance confirmed what they anticipated. The stone masonry was featureless, flawless, and immense, perfect monoliths weighing several tons. Around the perimeter, stone pilasters separated niches carved into the solid rock wall. In each was a smooth slab of clear crystal that dimmed and glowed with the same pulsating frequency.

“Well,” Silicone said, “We both see our own kind. Let’s get busy.” Calcium went for a stone masonry wall, and Silicone approached one of the pulsating

crystals.

After a while they returned to their friends, waiting anxiously near the causeway. “So, where to?” Helium asked.

“Every piece of stone in this area,” Calcium said, “was cut, shaped, transported, and lifted into place by harnessing the power of energy fields, either light or acoustic. Sophisticated mathematical knowledge, of unknown levels to earthlings, was used in their design. They are tuned to the planet’s harmonic heartbeat.”

“Different types of crystals,” Silicone continued. “As well as the whole complex perform specific tasks.”

“What complex?” Nitrogen called down. “I see three pyramids, the Sphinx, and these two structures here. That’s the complex?”

“Just like the Guardian said, there is a big underground compound,” Calcium said.

Hydrogen turned to Silicone. “Can you find your old library from here?”

“It’s a few hundred kilometers north.”

“Great!” Helium hooted. “Does that mean we need to hitch a vimana?”

“Well, not tonight,” Silicone replied.

“I propose we spend our time exploring the place,” Titanium said.

Krypton agreed. “If we can find a way inside the complex, maybe we’ll find information for our next journey.”

“But how do we find our way around the place?” Phosphorus asked.

“The structure next to this one,” Silicone said, “houses a technical archive containing the blueprints of the entire complex.”

So the group trekked to the second complex in the dark, with only the crescent moon, the symbol of Thoth, illuminating their way. Once there and inside,

Calcium and Silicone investigated and hurried back. “In the back!” Silicone hissed.

They went down the central hall to the rear of the building where they found a long, narrow room, its walls covered from floor to ceiling with monolithic crystal panes. Silicone approached them, and one of the panes slowly emerged from its slot and lit up. Everyone drew near and saw an intricate diagram of lines, geometric shapes, and symbols.

“It’s an overview of the whole complex,” Mercury observed.

“That’s what I asked for,” Silicone said. “Referencing the general plan, I can then ask for specific maps. It’s the old way of doing things that I haven’t forgotten.”

“There are the pyramids and the other structures,” Mercury said. “Not much else above ground. But down here there’s an extensive construction. Do you see?”

“Yes,” Silicone said, “it’s the underground complex. It’s huge.”

Phosphorus interjected. “Wait. Look. Over there to the west, near the Great Pyramid below that little hill.”

“It’s . . .” Mercury spluttered, “I can’t believe it. You’re right!”

“I see it,” Silicone said. “It’s the Guardian’s insignia, ‘⊕’.”

“Is that why he pointed at it? Could it be...?”

“I know what you mean,” Hydrogen said. “It’s certainly worth a try.”

“Even if the Chamber of Destiny is there,” Silicone cautioned, “getting there won’t be easy. But let’s go.”

And so our friends rushed to view several different map panels, and studied the way to the

subterranean location marked with the Guardian's insignia. On their way back to the central hall, Silicone and Mercury stopped at the hall's exact center, puzzled. Mercury pointed at a circular kryptonite plate embedded in the masonry floor tiles. "It must be right here."

"What?"

"The entrance to the underground passage!"

Krypton approached the plate and merged into it for a few seconds. Moments later the plate began to turn and slid beneath the stone floor tiles to reveal the entrance to a dark tunnel. Phosphorus was first in, whereupon he began to shine. Everyone followed before the metallic plate closed behind.

Our friends entered the Giza underworld. Masonry blocks of exquisite workmanship lined the tunnel. They followed past large intersections where Mercury and Silicone conferred and selected the next route. Once in a while, they heard the sound of an underground stream.

"I feel like Gilgamesh," Silicone said.

"Why?"

"When he and Enkidu went looking for the lost city of the gods, they searched for tunnels beneath a Mt. Mashu in some mythical desert."

"Does anyone in our time know about this underground labyrinth?"

"Well, perhaps. Since the 1970s archeologists have been using ground-penetrating radar here and lots of places. Underground networks have been detected. In the 1990s, they entered tunnels under the Sphinx, but the Egyptian government stopped the work."

Rounding a bend, they reached a huge cavernous space where a large subterranean lake, fed by underground springs, filled water canals that disappeared from view in many directions. At several places, sculptures of strange looking symbols, figures,

and landscapes adorned the cavern walls. Light-emitting crystals provided brilliant illumination.

They figured they were about halfway to their destination. Sulphur asked Silicone what else he knew about the Giza complex.

“Much of it remains unexplored. One can still see a hole near the Sphinx’ tail where a ladder leads underground to a chamber underneath. Officially, it’s sealed cavity that leads nowhere. The two structures next to the Sphinx are called as the Valley Temple and the Sphinx Temple.

“As I mentioned before, the most interesting stuff is scientific. In various places, the Great Pyramid encodes the earth’s mean surface temperature, the center of the world’s land mass, the cardinal directions, the dimensions of the planet, the mean distance between Earth and the sun, the seasonal equinoxes, and the number of days in a solar year. The Great Pyramid identifies universal mathematical constants like pi and the golden ratio. It also refers to the duration of Earth’s precessionary cycle, 25,920 years.

“Both the King and Queen’s Chamber contain sloped shafts, a few inches wide, that run all the way up to, but not through the Great Pyramid’s exterior surface. Also, the facing stone layer is missing, so the official theory that they are ventilation shafts is not very convincing. Building horizontal channels opening to the outside would have been easier and more useful. Inside the Queen’s Chamber, they were hidden behind several inches of stone. When 19<sup>th</sup> century English explorers found them, they could only insert an expandable rod into them. Not until 1993 did somebody design a machine to penetrate and explore them—but ran up against a limestone hatch with copper fittings. So much for the ventilation shaft theory! Ten years later, a hi-tech robot drilled a one-inch hole through the door and put a



camera through. With the whole world watching, it met another stone blockage further up. Seems like the shafts were purposefully designed to be inaccessible to the technologically unworthy.”

“Well, what *are* these shafts all about?” Lead asked.

“Well,” Silicone went on, “suppose they were meant to channel, aim, and project an energy beam, some kind of signal or beacon. Beams powered by the earth’s energy fields, and focused and channeled by the Great Pyramid, would go right through a bunch of thin stone layers, probably meant to keep animals and debris out.”

“What were they aimed at?”

“One shaft in the King’s Chamber points to the stars of Orion’s belt, and the other, at Thuban, the star that stood above the north pole before the pole shift, the brightest star in the constellation Draco. The shafts in the Queen’s Chamber aim at Sirius and Ursa Minor, though the constellations have shifted a little over so many years.”

Silicone, Mercury, and Phosphorus stopped and scanned the surroundings. “As I figure it,” Mercury said, “whatever the Guardian’s insignia marked on the map must be right around here somewhere.”

“There is nothing obvious here. But, having come all this way together, I’m certain we are not lost.”

“I am sure of it,” Mercury persisted. “It must be here somewhere.”

Helium humored. “Well, something as significant as the Chamber of Destiny would not have a flashing sign hanging above it!”

Meanwhile, Calcium edged up to the tunnel’s wall and disappeared.

While waiting for their friend, Krypton recalled Guardian’s comments. “The Guardian said that only the

worthy could find this complex hidden in the mountains of stone. And that you need wisdom to reach them.”

Krypton had barely finished when Calcium reemerged through a tiny opening between two blocks in the wall. “This way. Hurry! I have arranged for a path to the Chamber of Destiny.”

Everyone sprinted to pass through the solid blocks of granite. They began to feel a mixture of eagerness, ecstasy, and tranquility. They were about to confront the Universal Sign. Would it be a sign of the Source? Or perhaps a way to the Source? If there was a way to learn about the Source of all creation, the Universal Sign was the key.

They emerged in the Chamber of Destiny. Phosphorus quickly illuminated the space, but they saw nothing. Constructed of masonry blocks, the room was empty, barely large enough to hold a few humans. Near the top of a wall, they spotted a tiny hole that pierced through to the rocky hillside in which the Chamber of Destiny was embedded. A narrow beam of moonlight peered dimly through the hole. And that was it!

“That opening faces east,” Mercury said.

“Ventilation?” Nitrogen suggested.

“Maybe for the rituals the Guardian spoke of?” Silicone ventured.

“Look over here.” Calcium pointed to a barely visible feature in the room, carvings on a section of the wall, a hieroglyphic text, unrecognizable except for Krypton.

“It’s a really old writing system I can barely understand. It must be quite ancient,” Krypton concluded.

“Can you make sense of it?”

“Here is what I can make out.” And Krypton read, “Behold the mighty Sign. Obey this to seek enlightenment. To seek eternal existence as a star.

Withdraw the veil of darkness. Partake the high vibration. Bound are you in a plane. A vibratory trap of the heavenly bodies. The Sign reveals the key to freedom, the highest truth. By the sun, see the Sign. Embrace the light. For the light reveals the Source.”

“I knew we weren’t lost,” Lead crowed. “The Universal Sign is here somewhere!”

“Yes, but where? Is there anything else on this carving?”

“No,” Krypton said, “nothing else.”

“It is not readily visible. We have to look as the enlightened see.”

“I believe there’s another clue,” Silicone said. “‘By the sun, see the Sign.’ Maybe it’s visible only in sunlight or maybe when the sun comes up.”

“But that’s when we have to leave,” Oxygen protested.

“The Transportal has taken us to so much wisdom, and it got us here. Maybe, we’ll get a glimpse of the Universal Sign just before it takes us back.”

“Hopefully still in one enlightened piece!” Helium smirked.

“We’ll face our fate together. How much time do we have left?”

“The sun will rise in a little over thirty-three minutes,” Mercury answered precisely.

Calcium returned from an investigative foray. “I’ve been looking around to see if we’re missing anything. This place is bare other than this carving. But there’s a plain small blue crystal pane in the western wall. It is so perfect it seems otherworldly. Everyone here says the Guardians brought it and installed it when they built the chamber. Supposedly, it has a special purpose but nobody knows what, even though they’ve been here since the place was built.”

“Remember,” Oxygen said, “the Guardian said

the pyramids' secrets are not visible to the unworthy.”

“The guardians are more advanced in those special ways. They understand the harmony of the cosmos. That’s why they glow and have psychokinetic powers.”

“Some invisible energy interacts with matter,” Lead said. “That could explain the Transportal’s power.”

“Divine fire, divine light, universal mind, cosmic soul,” Hydrogen recited the past journeys’ encounters. “What do you guess it all means?”

“It must be what the soul is made of,” Copper said.

“The soul of the universe?” Gold asked. “I remember the way the Guardian described the Source—the highest truth, the origin, destination and destiny, everything about everything, and our nothingness in that everything.”

“But what about us? Are we worthy to have a ka or soul like humans? Can we perceive the Source of all creation?”

“The last lines tell us to comprehend the Universal Sign. For only then will the source of all become visible. We must embrace the light, for the light reveals the Source.”

“We have to follow those instructions exactly,” Silicone said. “Try to embrace whatever light we find. Understand the Sign by remembering everything we’ve learned together. The true understanding of the Universal Sign and the mysterious light reveal the Source.”

As always, Helium tried to help everyone relax “This blue tablet may just be our *philosopher’s stone*. If we can comprehend the *elixir of life* or light or whatever it is, we may have our own alchemical awakening.”

“Friends,” Mercury warned, “the time is near. Only a few minutes.”

Then there was silence. What did they feel? They felt so strongly . . . what? Respect, friendship, love, all of those, or perhaps a sense of boundless connection? They felt they were all part of the same body. Did they not all belong to Mother Earth? Did they not all come from the same source? They would have wept if they could. Did that mean they felt the love and compassion Sodium saw in the teardrop on Buddha's face? They realized they could not have come so far without each other, without their combined natural strengths. Hydrogen, Oxygen, Silicone, Nitrogen, Helium, Calcium, Carbon, Gold, Iron, Copper, Tin, Silver, Sulphur, Potassium, Lead, Sodium, Chlorine, Mercury, Phosphorus, Titanium, Uranium, Krypton: how far would they have reached without each other? Not as far as they had, to be sure.

They had shared the same destiny all along—the Source. *The Source is destiny*. Perhaps that is the highest truth. Only if the complex humans could understand that all earthlings share the same source and destiny, then more earthlings would become worthy and take part in the next apocalypse, end days, or a transformation and renovation.

Through the small east-facing opening of the perfect masonry wall, dawn's purplish-orange light beamed through to announce the sun's rising, the god of the solar system. That messiah of Earth appeared to illuminate all earthlings and dispel the darkness.

Had our friends become worthy? Would they see the Universal Sign? Could they understand its meaning and power? And if so, would they get a glimpse of the Source before returning to their world? They felt neither fear nor anxiety, only intense anticipation.

The dawn twilight grew stronger. They could see the Chamber of Destiny more clearly. No décor, no colorful designs, no egotistical declarations, no

pretentious ornamentation. Just an unassuming humble room. In the brighter light, they studied the blue crystal in the western wall a smooth crystalline plaque without symbol, engraving, or carving. Where was the Universal Sign? Then they remembered: through the sun, see the Sign. Should they wait for the sun to guide them? They were only worried about the Transportal's brilliant white light arriving too soon.

Then all at once a narrow beam of light shone through the orifice in the wall and cast a small circle of light onto the northern wall. The circle was near the plain blue crystal and getting nearer. Some closed their eyes, maybe hoping to delay the Transportal.

But not Hydrogen. "Look!"

The narrow sunbeam lit the blue crystal, and the unassuming tablet began to radiate a brilliant blue light throughout the room.

"Look up."

At last, the Universal Sign appeared, a blue holographic image hovering in mid-air at the center of the Chamber of Destiny. Our friends immediately recognized the ⊕. But no ordinary circle rounded the sacred symbol, ⊕, but rather a serpent swallowing its own tail rotated slowly around the ⊕. Around the rotating serpent were hieroglyphic symbols.

Krypton read. "*The One is the All.*"

"Look at us . . ." someone shouted.

They looked at each other. They were transformed. They were worthy after all. They were able to perceive their own true nature. They all looked the same. Indeed they were the same. Throughout and deep inside their solid-seeming physical bodies, they saw only fields of rotating light, trapped, whirling, shining, astral fields of light. They no longer looked like simple earthlings, but like stars, constellations! That was what

they were made of, not matter but energy fields, divine fire, divine light. They could now see beyond the material world's four-dimensional limitations. There is no such thing as matter if one is worthy to see a vision of true universal existence.

Just before the Transportal flashed, they looked at each other with newfound recognition. They had achieved illumination through an epic odyssey of enlightenment. They understood the meaning of the Universal Sign. They had finally understood that the ***Source was within them, and they, within the Source.***

*Light arose in things not seen before.*

Buddha

*If you look into even a grain of dust, you shall find a "sun" dwelling inside it.*

Unknown Sufi mystic

*The Truth is found in all things. Wherever I glance, I see it.*

Baba Taher, 11th Century Persian poet and mystic

*All for one, and one for all.*

From *The Three Musketeers*, by the 19th century French Freemason, Alexander Dumas