



JUSTICE

By James D Connolly

Justice

Book Three:
The Knowledge
Trilogy

James D Connolly

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jdcdotruth@gmail.com

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PREFACE

Welcome to *The Knowledge Trilogy*. This trilogy stands on its own, as do the others before it, but it also makes up the last three books of the *Department of Truth Series*. The first book, *Knowledge*, seeks to look at the evolving ferment of society, what our participation in its evolution might look like, and what truly oppresses us. The second book, *Volition*, addresses some important aspects of the nature of human will, as well as aspects of relationships and family life. This book, *Justice*, looks at the nature of Justice, the insistent self, and the evolution of unity. These books cannot reach the depths required to do real justice to such wide and essential themes, but they seek to explore some important aspects of these subjects. It is my hope that all readers may enjoy them, from teens to older souls. They are stories to be enjoyed and adventure in, with much meaning to ponder.

Justice is the final book of *The Knowledge Trilogy* and the final book in the *Department of Truth Series*. It looks at the boundaries of human life and how the ego can seek to subsume the greatest within us and threaten take people away from their high destiny. It talks to the inevitability of a mature, just, and unified humanity; explores *The Power* and the nature of our link to the Creator as one human race. Justice is a huge theme, so hopefully this book's exploration of some of its nature may add to greater understanding of this essence of our reality, and how it may be exercised among us as humankind.

I hope that the whole *Department of Truth Series* provides some inspiration and cause for self-reflection, as I wrote these books to that end. *The Knowledge Trilogy* certainly finishes off the books that came before them, and in its themes completes them as a true series. I also hope that even the nature of writing and storytelling can be gleaned from the whole series, as these last three books, while attending to important themes, were just as much about exploring storytelling. My greatest hope is that you may simply enjoy the adventure, and gather some meaning; but also, that the stories may create more exploration and meaningful conversations.

So, as in all my books, this is my dance with you; my own perceptions, inspired by life and The Baha'i Faith. This book, just as the others I write, cannot seek, and do not seek, to represent my Faith. This is a work of fiction and entirely comes from my imagination, in spite of parallels with Baha'i history and principles, as my symbolism and adventurousness, well, just wander as they do. I suppose what it seeks to be mostly, is something to enjoy, and something to mull over, or to reflect on.

I hope you enjoy *Justice*, the revealing of connections between the main characters of the whole *Department of Truth Series*, and I hope you enjoy the other two books, *Knowledge*, and *Volition*.

“...The light of men is Justice.”
Bahá'u'lláh*

* Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Bahá'í Publishing Trust Wilmette, Ill. 1992, pp 66-67)

Appearances

Mother found herself in The Great Chasm. Beside her was a tall rangy young man around sixteen years old. They regarded each other as the sun began to rise over the almost vertical rocky wall that towered up high behind them. This wide rift valley's cool air began to warm, while mist still rose off the water of a small river which flowed by in front of them. Its flow was not great, but it was constant, and it snaked naturally across the wide fields to the other far great rock wall, as it wandered down the chasm. A series of weirs were set in its course here and there, and some larger outflows could also be seen coming off its widely meandering flow.

It was an open landscape with no large trees, at least from where these two visitors now stood; just fruit and nut trees of various species in small orchards, and tidy open fields of cultivated plants, all watered from small releases on the sides of the weirs, and off the larger outflows. The

outflows came off the river itself; some natural flows, others quite obviously hand-dug into the landscape. Small water wheels sat turning with the flow from the many small releases, but their use did not seem apparent.

The visitors could see some small sheds and dwellings made of earthen blocks, scattered sparsely across the landscape. There were a few people about them and other souls working in the fields. The buildings seemed like pioneer homesteads beside newly created fields that spread across the width of the chasm to the other great rampart in the far distance, and these fields reached much further up and down the chasm than these two visitors could now see. It was indeed *a great sight* on such a desert planet as this; it's sands now high and unnoticed above them, on both sides of the chasm.

A quite special twelve-year period in the development of the Faith of Nov-Cikel, Edossd was now drawing to a close. Many had spread down along this chasm, and built new homes and lives here, while some brave souls had *gone out* beyond its warm embrace to face the wider world and share the healing message of their Faith.

The sun's warming rays were appreciated by these two souls and there was a deep bond of love clearly between them. It surprised the young man because he did not know this old woman. He remained quiet, sensing the need to wait; to see what this place was, and who this person standing beside him was. A recent interaction with some older souls, which still loomed large in his mind, had most certainly taught him to be silent and wait. The old woman smiled as she now put her hand on the young lad's shoulder.

"It is good to see you here. You are *so* young. It has also been *so* long since I have lived on a corporeal world, so it is *lovely* to be here. It is *wonderful* to be here with you now."

“Do I know you?”

“You don’t know me yet. I am a child in your community, back on Earth. But of course, that was long ago for me; *for us.*”

“Okay,” said Able smiling, feeling even more the bond of love in her last two words, but still with questions in his eyes.

“We will come to know each other very well as young adults. I have heard your stories of travelling to a desert planet and of your adventures with your friend Dossd. Now it seems that I may be here with you for a time. *Great* is His grace to me.”

“You mean, I *will* get home?”

“*Yes*, you will.”

Able was elated at that, as he had been cast here by accident some years ago and had not been able to return. Then his curiosity about this old woman, made him ask, “If you are a child in my community, are you in some kind of time schism?”

“No. I am simply following my pathway. I have passed on from that life. *Time* lost me long ago. I have been beyond time and space now for...well...I don’t *actually* measure it anymore. Cycles and meaning are the measures there. I have been beyond what you call life for so much meaning and for almost infinite cycles.”

“That sounds amazing.”

“Yes, but it’s very thrilling to be *here too*. Are we on Temelj?”

“I think so,” answered Able, looking around, and up at the orange sky. “The sun seems right, and the air is the same. The night sky will tell me for sure.” A light then dawned on him, and he said, “*The Chasm.*”

“Yes, *it seems* so,” responded the old woman, now smiling like the young girl who had listened to the stories of Able and Dossd’s quest for this place so long ago.

She had missed *so much* ‘the knowing of little’ and the *beauty* of a physical life’s surprises. She lived in the eternal places, and while they were ever abundant, creative, and love itself pulsed through all things, she missed the experience of more limited knowledge. She missed a more limited being. She missed the joy of unfoldment, of things as yet unknown, and the tests of the soul. She still treasured her experiences of being up against the wall spiritually in her first life on Earth. So great were the gifts of doing higher things from a pure motive in that physical life, and she loved ‘*the tussle*’, as Able’s grandfather had often put it.

“Let’s take a look around,” she suggested, pointing to a small cluster of buildings further up the chasm that sat snug in against the colossal rock wall.

“Sure,” agreed Able, and they wandered off, following a small path that seemed to go there.

As they walked along, looking about them, Able asked, “A lady sent me here. Did she send you too?”

“A lady?”

“Etera. She said she had some work for me to do. She said that it was important work, but it needed to be voluntary. It’s a shame that Dossd hasn’t been brought here too. He *so* wanted to find this place.”

“Maybe, on your return you can inform him. The people here must know where it is in relation to other places on the planet.”

“Sure, but they’re going to take away my memories of this place, and my time here, when I return. That was one of the conditions,” explained Able, a little sadly.

“Maybe he would like to find it himself anyway; within the wisdom of his life and the will of The All for him,” offered the old woman.

“Yes, *he would*,” agreed Able, now smiling, and realising that this woman *did* know of Dossd and his nature.

Able had been through a good deal of change since coming to Temelj, and lately, so much change that his mind was beginning to struggle with it. Right now, it was ramping up even more. Who was this old woman? Whose child was she in his old community? What work did he have to do here in the Chasm? There were many more questions, but it still felt very right that *he was* here; even though he was also a little anxious that he may lose touch with Dossd if he was here too long.

They continued looking about as they walked along, and it wasn’t long before they came to the small group of dwellings that they had seen from the spot they had been delivered to. A woman came out of one of the dwellings; she noticed them and began to walk towards them. Her home was dug into the base of the great sheer rock wall; seemingly carved into it. It had one transparent oval window taken from a downed alien spaceship, and a thick canvas sheet hung in its carved-out doorway. She smiled as she now came to them.

“That’s her. Well...she looks a lot younger,” explained Able.

“May I help you? You seem a little lost,” enquired the very tall lady.

“*You* sent me here. But you were older.”

“Really! Oh, my goodness! Where are you from?” she asked, a little confused, and not at all knowing what the lad was talking about.

“I came through The Appearing City. You asked me if I would like to do some very meaningful work,” explained Able.

“And I, simply *am*, my dear,” explained Mother, by way of her own introduction. “I come from a very essential reality,”

Etera began to gather herself, remembering her dreams, her prayers, and her great wish for The Chasm to develop. She now sought to detach herself a little and sit back in faith, but her lower nature still fought her, as this happening was more than a little unusual.

The old woman smiled gently, with eyes that said that it was alright to feel as she did. The younger lady could feel a great depth in this woman; depth, far beyond time.

“There are many *unseen* souls helping you here, so please do not think it strange that I am here,” added Mother, for Etera’s ease. It was no mere understanding of the deeper nature of things, as she could see many reaching from Nearer to aid the work here; souls that Able and Etera could not see.

“It *is* strange; *really* strange,” commented Able, smiling, and very sure of his view. Even though he had *already* been through plenty of what would be seen as was *very* strange, on his home planet.

“I am called Mother, and this is Able,” said the essence, again, to help Etera reach more acceptance of what was before her.

“*Really* strange,” repeated Able, still smiling; knowing that his uncertainly would help the young lady too.

The young lady smiled at his comment, as she gathered up his thoughts, and saw that he was not lost or lying. But she could not gather anything from the older soul with him. She then laid her concern aside with trust and faith in the designs of her Lord. She was purple skinned like Able, but considerably taller than he and Mother. Able had not seen a bare footed Icer before, as she had the dark hair and blue eyes of her race. She was also confused about this short alien who looked and dressed like a Sandwalker. He even had purple skin, like all the native inhabitants of this planet, Temelj.

There were questions in both of them as she launched into an explanation of The Great Chasm; its people and its purpose. At the end of her explanation, she stated that, “A great Foundation is to be laid here. It seems that if my dreams are correct, and you are to be trusted, I *may* have brought you here. I have prayed for aid to come, and it seems you have. Such is *The Power* it seems.”

“How may we be of service?” asked Mother, knowing that the reason for their appearance here would be found within that.

Etera smiled wide. “I do not know, as I do not know you, or what you may bring. But I am sure that work will be found, or you will find it. There is always plenty to do, as we are just starting really and there is so much to build. You, as we all do here, will have a place within the evolution of the Beautiful Way.”

The two visitors smiled at each other; Able again, feeling a bond between him and the old woman; one definitely beyond his knowledge.

“Come; let’s seek the guidance of the Council,” suggested Etera, now finding her feet a little. “They may orient us, or send us to a Caretaker for advice,”

The Power

*“The Almighty hath not created in man the claws and teeth of ferocious animals,
nay rather hath the human form been fashioned and set with the most comely attributes and
adorned with the most perfect virtues.*

*The honour of this creation and the worthiness of this garment therefore require man to have
love and affinity for his own kind, nay rather, to act towards all living creatures with justice
and equity.”¹*

They wandered up a meandering pathway at a gentle pace. There were many other walkways branching out from it, forming a great organic network of larger and smaller paths up and across the rift valley. The path they now walked together crossed the small river here and there; across weir walls, or on steppingstones in wider shallow sections of it. After a time, they crossed over some of the outflows, as the river turned away from the path and wandered out across the fields and rich soils of this deep chasm. The great rock ramparts were about eighteen kilometres apart

mostly, and as they walked further up the chasm, the more developed the fields and small groups of buildings were.

As they walked, more people came out of dwellings in the great walls, and out of the small earthen dwellings they passed, to begin their days and their work. Some stood talking while small groups of them sat in devotions together. Yet others ate breakfast together on open benches. There was nothing particularly formal in what they saw; even the small prayer gatherings felt very organic, but with a particular spirit. These were all part of the fabric of this place, and it was lovely rather than strange to the two visitors.

These people, those indigenous to this planet at least, were much taller than Able and Mother. Able had grown tall, but still seemed short among these people. He was also definitely an alien, even though he dressed like some of the locals and had purple skin, as he had been on this planet for some time. He was thirty to fifty centimetres shorter than these beings, and even Etera, who was short by local standards, was much taller.

“This Council; is it spiritual, or organisational?” asked Able, not knowing much about the actual reality of this place; a place that his friend Dossd had sought for many years to find by walking the deserts of Temelj. Dossd himself knew little of The Great Chasm, as such was its mystery to him too.

“All Councils here are ones of Justice, in essence. They see to the wellbeing of all here as each Council guides the development of a particular local area. We develop all the areas so that many others may join us here in time, and we are slowly adding new areas, as new souls arrive to help develop them,” explained Etera.

Able knew of such institutions on his home world, seeing in this place the same spirit and sense of purpose. He thought that it would be good to see how the processes, institutions, and new organs, of this burgeoning Faith had progressed here. He had not been interested in such things before he had been cast away on Temelj as a boy. He was not particularly interested then, and had just liked meeting up with friends at what they called The Feast. His aging since being cast away to this planet, as well as the copious time for reflection while walking its deserts, had called forth more interest in, and wider vision of these institutions and aspects of his Faith's growth. He would come to learn just how alike the institutions of Earth and The Chasm were, and how young those of Temelj were right now.

They walked past a wide oval, yet semi-irregular, stone walled animal pen, with three trees providing shade partially there. These trees were much larger than any he had seen so far, and the dry stone wall enclosure opened up onto a very low open hill. The animals grazing there were a joy to behold. Able thought that they *had* to be from another world, as these creatures were not desert creatures. "*Maybe they're Icer animals, of the wet mountains, or from an alien ship that crashed through the portals,*" he thought.

He then looked back to Etera. She looked Icer, but walked like a Clanswoman, and he wondered where she hailed from. "Are you Icer, or of the Clans?" he then asked, without thinking.

"Ah, I was going to ask the same of you. You seem to be a Walker, but you are alien."

"I am from another world, but I have walked almost four years the deserts of this world. I travel with Dossd, a Sandwalker. I am both, I suppose."

"You *are* both; *no doubt,*" she said, mostly from the way the boy spoke and walked. "I am of royal lineage; royalty of *both* these great peoples. I am a half-breed, hidden by my Icer

appearance in an Icer kingdom for a long time. I eventually found this place and decided to be a bridge between my peoples rather than choose between them. I will use all I have learned, in time, to reach out to them. *I will go out.*”

She said the last small phrase with real honour; almost like a prayer. It was not to her boast, but the ones who *went out* from this place were the noblest of souls. These souls could not stay in comfort when their world cried out for the Message and balm of Nov-Cikel, Edossd. This world was split into two worlds; that of the Icers and that of The Clans, and there was great breakdown growing within both of them. The Icer’s were of the great wet green mountain ranges; The Clan’s, and their telepathic Sandwalkers, were of the deserts. It was at the Dawn of a New Day here, so all peoples were feeling the heat of the slowly growing and impending storm of change. Even if they did not know what it was, they could feel its heat and smell the gentle rot rising from the compost of their weakening institutions.

All things were in process on this planet and The Chasm was no different. In fact, the process of building in The Great Chasm and the process of disintegration beyond its high rock walls were inherently linked. The institutions of this planet, beyond its walls, were definitely still far better than chaos, but how long they could stave off its wretched grip was anyone’s guess. Most felt the underlying breakdown; some thinking that they were glad they were old and leaving this life soon, while others were greatly concerned for the future of their children and grandchildren. It seemed that honour and caring were falling away, while new childish social physicians made up endless new ideas to hold the current order in some health. Others, of course, sought the resurgence of outmoded ideas and structures to feel safe on the ever-shaking ground of societal breakdown. Some places, like the Icer Western Mountains, still held firm in their ways though; even though Icers of the North experimented more.

But the egg must needs crack to bring forth its new life, just as the old tree must fall to be compost for the new seedling. Times of great change were hard, but as much as there was great upheaval, there was also great grace and opportunity. Souls who lived in such times of change on any world lived in *great* times, *especially* so in a time of the burgeoning unification of their planet. So much had been done here on Temelj; so many had laboured before this Day could come. It was not just the work of those of this Day, but of every Day before today, of every people, and every Great Messenger Who had graced this planet with Their footsteps.

The three now entered a village of earthen block houses built on a gentle rise above a large natural outflow, much of it sheltered in the shade beside and beneath the great wall of the chasm. Etera headed towards a greater building. It was protruding out of the rock wall and partly dug into it. They walked through the large doorway into an open foyer, then up to a desk that sat to the front, and to the side, of a hallway to other rooms beyond it.

“We need to talk to a member of the Council. Could you arrange an interview?”

“We?”

“Yes, we seek an interview.”

“Who is *we*?” asked the lady, standing at the side of the reception desk.

“We...us,” waved Etera, indicating herself, Mother and Able.

“I think you should *sit down*, my dear one.”

“You cannot see them?” asked Etera, a little wide eyed and smiling just a little too.

“Are you unwell?”

“It is fine. It seems these are mine to see to,” stated Etera, as she turned and walked out the door, not in the least self-concerned.

She was a soul of action and faith, long since removing herself from the concern of how she looked or what any soul may think of her. It was only her God’s gaze that ever shamed, or elated, her. She had also experienced misunderstanding, envy, and judgment; due to her different ways and the claims of her genealogy. There was very little pride in her though, as her high love only left room for a deep and driving responsibility to The Power’s call on her.

Another person further back in the office exchanged glances with the lady who had pointed out that Etera was alone. Sadly, they were expressions of just a little judgement and superiority. The Chasm was of course a place of transition too, like any place really, and each person had their own soul journey within that transition. While there were many of both races and a number of alien beings working in harmony here, the new culture was still a child, and many within it still had much to learn and unlearn. Most hearts here *were* humble though, and the beauty of the message *was* manifesting more and more in the people and the new culture here, but time was required, as it is in all things that grow. Some of the local Councils had even struggled early on, but the unity and high spiritual bar envisaged by the Messenger Nov-Cikel, Edossd, was striven for every day. The *process of transformation*, individual and societal, simply went about its business in this place.

Nov-Cikel *had* explained that love and justice were the antitheses of self and superiority, and that the process from one to the other would take continued effort on the part of every soul. He expounded in the same text that love and justice were so core within the nature of each other that they could not be separated; also, that the knowing of one, helped a soul know the other. He

explained that only these two mighty intentions driven deep into the heart could heal the great cultural divide between the Clans and the Icers. He finished by stating that when the hearts of all Temelj had transformed, that then, and only then, would the great deserts of Temelj begin to grow green again.

As they walked down a different pathway back through the fields, Able asked, “Why can’t they see us?”

Mother had a very slightly disappointed look on her face. She would have loved to be corporeal again; to test her heart against the material reality and her own physical limitations. “I know why they can’t see me. I am long gone from worlds such as these,” she mused.

“It is a test of faith. We will see what The All’s will is for us, as we walk towards it,” stated Etera, very plainly.

“You are like Dossd. He is noble, and *sure* like you,” commented Able.

“I am just a servant.”

“I understand. But you sure do talk like a Walker.”

“I’m telepathic, just like the Sandwalker’s of the Clans. No *woman* has been known to be a telepath before me. I believe there *must* have been others, but there is usually no quarter for half-breeds or what most see as anomalies, in either culture. I can’t *really* be sure, but I believe that some may have perished at the hands of their own people.”

“I know an Icer telepath. Her name is Eedra...well, I know *of* her. She is *definitely* telepathic. Her father is a Hunter Lord named Enom Clovek.”

“I know this name; this family name, and I have heard of Enom. His daughter you say?”

“Yes,” answered Able.

She stopped suddenly, looking at Able intently, saying, “It would seem that you are out of time.”

“What?! Are we leaving already?” asked Able, looking down at himself, as if he could watch himself disappear.

“No, you are out of your timeline. This time here must be an earlier time than your years with your Sandwalker. Enom is only a youth by now and there is no way he has consorted with a Clanswoman. That is the only way he could have such a child. His family are Hunters of the Strong Rock; of what we call The Majority Order. His own father would end him if he crossed any such line, and without favour, gladly leave his carcass in the desert to be consumed and forgotten. Edron Clovek is immovable.”

“I *know* of her. I was *hunted* by her. Dossd has even communicated with her...” Just then Able stopped short. He now knew who Eedra’s mother was, who the woman allegiant to The Power was, as he could now see the clear family resemblance. He was not about to play with time, or this soul’s life. He had played with powers that he had no clue about in his use of the amulet; the device that had cast him to this planet as a boy, and he had learned his lesson.

Mother clearly saw the halting of Able’s words, as Etera walked purposefully on. Etera had noticed it too. Being a telepath, she had also seen some symbols in the boy’s mind. It made her feel confident that she was on the right pathway; a confirmation sent back from the future. She

would 'go out', and she would have a child. She smiled to herself at this, giving inner thanks to The All.

Etera did not seek any more of Able's thoughts. It was not right that she even gathered some of them without his permission, and she most definitely wanted to savour her life as it unfolded. Her telepathic gift had made some people here untrusting of her; the Icer people, that was. She had found much comfort and trust in some of them though, as well as an almost adulation from the Clan folk. She had played down that adulation as best she could without seeming uncaring of their ways, as she knew that humility, even before honesty, was the guard and fertiliser of the soul.

The All, Nov-Cikel, and The Power, held her heart totally captive. The All was the Creator, Nov-Cikel, Edossd the Messenger, and The Power was light from the Creator that the Messenger shaped relatively for this people; for this planet, in this age. The Power was an amazing potential force that not only transformed individuals and the social order of self-aware beings, but now also protected itself, so it was inviolable.

The writings of Nov-Cikel had been very clear; ones enshrined and protected in His clear choice of the one soul who could, or would ever, Interpret this new Message. Even the powers and boundaries of the institutions that would rise were clearly written down within it. Like the greatest of mountains, it had a deep foundation and it stood immovable; but sadly, not in the eyes of those whose hearts were not as Etera's was. Some of them, even now, plotted their way to power, or to undo this new Faith; some of them were deluded about their own person, others a little too proud of their own learning, and yet others still clearly wanting to show the supremacy of their own culture.

GARRAN WAS HAVING A GREAT DAY, yet it was just another day on planet Earth. Some new grafting that he had been working on, was taking well; some older grafted trees were now even flowering. He just had to wait to see what the fruit would be like. But from his previous experience he knew that the graft *taking* was the only *real* hurdle; trusting that the fruit would be good. The graft had to be set and bound well though, so it was protected and had the best chance to take. It had to move along with the power inherent in nature, yet guided by his gifted knowledge.

There was great force in nature, that no matter how many grafts or how many man-made hybrids on hybrids were made, plants would more than likely find a way to return to their original nature. Millions of years of evolution had built strong genetic resilience, so over time their true nature would return if generally left to be; as would the planet. “*No matter the destruction,*” he now thought.

Being a young adult, his thoughts then went to him maybe doing terra-forming work in time. He loved to read about the work of a farmer in country Australia, who with logs, grading, digging, and planting different types of trees, had held the shallow groundwater in his soils. It still trickled through the landscape, but more slowly due to hold points within the changed structure. By understanding and working with nature, his ground works had changed the nature of the whole area. Garran knew so much was possible, as scientific exploration of terraforming was also growing due to extra-planetary aspirations, as well as the evolving work of local land-care groups and tree planting efforts. He felt very hopeful about all this as he now turned to walk to the house.

He then saw a sudden flash of another place, then another flash of it, and back again. It seemed the world around him changed to another world and back, in a flicker. It was as if turning

on an old fluorescent light; a flicker that was intent on turning on fully. The flicker grew until he found himself in a strange and wondrous place, with creatures of all kinds; soul-bearing beings moving in and out of gold domed, white walled, buildings. He was gobsmacked. He just stood there, wondering *what the hell* and *how the hell*.

One of the beings, who looked amphibian-human, came over and asked if he was new, then commenting, “You would have to be, with *that* look on your face.”

The words broke Garran out of his stupor, and he smiled at the creature in front of him with wide eyes. It was then that three officious looking humanoids saw him, and made their way to him, after coming out of one of the buildings. They were tussling a little with each other for their place in Garran’s welcome and looked quite ridiculous the way they jostled for position and righted their clothing as they walked. The amphibian, stepped back, confused at the attention that this newcomer was receiving, but a little amused at all the *hoo-hah*.

“It is such an honour to have you here! Such an honour!” said the lead man, his head almost dancing; beside him, an extremely confident and learned face nodding in seeming humility.

“Where am I? What is this place?”

“Ohh, nooo!” cried the third man of that strange company, quite glad in a way that his superior may have made an error in calculations in bringing Garran here; one that *he* would *no doubt* step forward and remedy.

“I am *sure* he is okay. *It’s just the sudden change*,” almost squealed the head man of the welcome party. “*Are you okay?*” he then asked, with a scrunched-up face and a wince.

“I’m okay. I was working on some grafts...”

“*Graphs!* Oh, *goodness!*” expressed the third man, as if there was something in that comment that he knew all about; something the head man didn’t. He then shared a sadly supportive look with this lead man, followed quickly by a false caring glance with his other colleague.

The Sahona laughed out loud, then said, “Come with me my friend. Let’s go for a small walk.”

The two walked off while all manner of talking and interesting faces went on among the *welcome team*; that is, if those two words really accounted of the nature of those three soul’s efforts.

“Where is this place?”

“Nobody really knows. It appears and disappears here. I don’t even know where *here* is. But it is a place of passing, of change, and a place of learning.”

“Does everyone get such a welcome?”

“No,” answered the being from Wai Nova. “You must be special. They seem to know the special ones, even though they don’t seem to have a clue about much at the moment. They were quite funny.”

“Yes. I suppose so,” said Garran smiling, then asking, “How did I get here?”

“This is in the world within all worlds; part of their deeper nature; a very essential part. You really haven’t left where you came from,” explained Hoa.

“Okay,” said Garran, now sitting down on a park bench.

“And there is no real time relativity *here*, so don’t be concerned about time passing in your reality. You will most likely just wake the next day they say.”

“That’s, helpful...”

“My name is, Hoa.”

Garran smiled, “Thanks, Hoa. I’m Garran.”

“Garran!” almost pronounced Hoa, quickly standing up. “*Please forgive me. I did not know.*”

“Please, Hoa. I am just a standard human. I don’t know why you’re all reacting so strongly. I just need a friend right now.”

“Well, you have one. It is my honour,” answered Hoa, almost in tears, and now understanding all the *hoo-hah*.

THE YOUNG MAN SAW THEM OFF. He was tall and strong, and the two youths harassing the old lady had seen the confidence in his gaze. This inner-city neighbourhood was changing, and they had heard of this strong confident young man and what he was doing here. They had seen how he was bringing that same confidence to the eyes of many others in the neighbourhood. One of the two youths even wanted to be like him but did not yet have the individual will to free himself from his peers.

It was a shame, because many young boys like these, and girls too, died of meaninglessness here. Meaninglessness was a greater killer and even greater war-maker than most would realise. It

brought about death in drunken car accidents, also from drugs to suicide. People need meaning and Sam had thankfully found it like a river flowing through, gushing through, what most only saw as a desert of steel, cement, and breakdown; a seemingly cold empty and forgotten neighbourhood. *Every place* has people, so *every place* has meaning. Love creates bonds, these bonds create purpose; meaning is found, and this draws even more love and purpose. If effort is applied, it can multiply and water all around it copiously.

He turned to the old lady, “You’ll be respected now, as you’re due. The neighbourhood is changing, and you’ll find people are working together more; carin’ more.”

“Oh, I’m nothin’, but thanks, young man.”

“*You are made of stardust,*” he stated. “*We all are,*” he added, smiling gently at this human soul.

The old woman started to cry, saying thank you through the sobs. “But *I am* just an old woman; one who has lived a hard, and definitely not so perfect, life. I have simply *survived* here. I deserve no high praise, young man.”

“We’re *all* ordinary *and* a bit flawed, but we’re *noble* too,” expressed the young man, with a great degree of certitude.

The old woman’s bent back straightened up a bit as he said that word. “Maybe *we are,*” agreed the old lady, beginning to believe it herself.

“Where do you live?”

“Just down the road there,” she said, pointing to it.

“I know a family down there. Let’s link you up.”

“Are they okay? I mean...I am a bit to myself.”

“It’s up to you, I s’pose. But they’re *good people*. We *need* each other and we’ve left things go, and left people too separate, for *too long*. People connecting and being a community again is a *powerful* thing. I’ve *seen* it grow and I’ve seen people grow stronger.”

“Okay, young man. Who are you?”

“I’m *Sam*, ” answered the lad.

“Okay, Samuel. Mine’s, Grace.”

“Very pleased to meet you, Grace,” said Sam, smiling gently, and turning to walk with the old woman along the road.

Grace felt more energetic than she had done in a very long time. She could feel something special in simply walking with someone. It was a nurturing feeling, and she could now feel a change coming. She looked up at the lad as they walked. She wondered about him and saw how confidently he walked. The boy’s strength then seemed to pass to her, now feeling strong, as well as energetic.

In a short time, they sat in the kitchen of the family that Sam had told her about. She was filled with even more life now, as the energy of kindness and family flowed into her. It was like how she felt with her own family. Her relatives had long since left this place, the older ones through death, sadly, and the younger ones for work and other life reasons. She had lost touch with them all, except for one grandniece who had kept up contact. She lived a long way away and Grace had not wanted to move, even though she had been asked a few times. It was strange, but this gentle

conversation and cup of coffee made her want to stay here even more now. *Life* had brought *life* to her, as well as the wish for more of it.

Sam eventually left, saying his goodbyes, and heading out into the night. He was satisfied with things as he walked back along the footpath, until he saw the frames of two men ahead of him, just outside the wide reach of a streetlight. When he had first come out of his friend's house these men had definitely not been there. It was almost like they had just appeared there. They looked well dressed, in suits, which was not *at all* usual for his neighbourhood. It was *very* odd, but he kept on walking home. He was heading towards them, but on the opposite side of the street. The two men then started coming across the street on a line of direct intersection with him. One then pulled out a short stick, about half the size of a broom handle, and Sam started to run.

He *just* outran them to the end of the street and turned the corner to find a net flinging towards him. He dropped instinctively low to the ground on his hands, belly, and toes as the net went over his head. Then he was off again. He raced down a small backstreet that led into a local park. In the park he saw someone sitting at a table; one of three tables under cover. The man there turned, matter-of-factly, and as Sam got closer, he realised this man had the same suit on as his pursuers.

He pulled up his run, and stopped, as he and the man regarded each other. Sam thought he would just get this *done with*; whatever it was. The way the man sat at ease seemed to tell him something too.

“How you goin’, Sammy boy?”

“Who are you, and what the hell’s goin’ on here?”

“It’s me...Arty.”

“Arty Bloomfield, well I’ll be damned,” said Sam, with a small smile, and a *‘What are you up to, Arty’* look in his eye.

“You did well. It’s not that easy gettin’ past Agents like that. I told ‘em you’d be a handful,” commented Arty smiling, as four Agents, two men and two women, now spread around the park, forming a perimeter.

“So, I see you’re doing some good things here in the old neighbourhood, Sam.”

“Yep, it’s *more* than time things changed...*What do you want, Arty?*”

“I work for *The Agency*, as we call it. We think you have what it takes to be part of its work. It’s by appointment only. The higher ups have been watchin’ you for a while now.”

“You want me to help you with the drug gangs here, or sumthin’?”

“Ohh, it’s much bigger than *this place*, boy.”

“This place *is* big, and watch who you’re callin’ *boy*, Arty. Training or not, I can *still* take you.”

“Whatever you wann’a think, Sam. We aren’t cops, we’re Protectors. Our job ranges over crazy distances. We do stuff that keeps order.”

“What order? You couldn’t even keep your room tidy, as I recall.”

Arty looked away to show Sam just how small his comments were, and added, “We keep order Deeper and between the realities.”

“The realities?” responded Sam.

“Between the physical universe that you know and the worlds Deeper,” he explained, as he looked back with a relaxed, but somewhat serious, face.

The young man just smiled, then chuckled a bit, but not so much that it was not manly; at least as he saw it. Sam Deveroux was a tough kid, if you could call him a kid at nineteen years of age. He had made mistakes and run with a bad crowd early on; Arty being one of them. But that had all changed one day when he had found a small book sitting on the ground. It was full of short verses; ones that took his heart away from him and gave it to the nobility enshrined within them.

He had read that book over and over and over, and he began to change, eventually getting away from the likes of Arty. He started to protect those in his neighbourhood who couldn’t help themselves, which had eventually turned into community bonds growing as a matter of course. People naturally joined together and were taking back their neighbourhood. They even started building good things together, a community garden, a little food co-op, and activities for children. It even began spreading beyond his neighbourhood and he and others were now often asked to come and speak at other local halls nearby.

Arty’s expression had not changed, adding, “We are trusted, and we protect, just like you do here, Sam.”

“Not that I am buying any of this fairy-tale at all, but how the *hell* would a guy *like you* ever be trusted by *anyone*?”

“People change. Some even transform. *You* are a case in point. You’re a hell of a lot more than *you* once were, boy. So, why can’t *I* be?”

“I don’t know what kind of drugs you’re on, Arty. But I don’t want any part of your space cadet games. I’m heading home,” pronounced Sam, and with that, he headed out of the small enclosure.

Sam Deveroux always did what he said he would, and Arty, knowing him, took the opportunity and brought him down with a pulse stick charge to the lower spine. It took longer than most to bring him down, but Arty knew that too, so he kept up the charge until the young man was unconscious. He laughed out loud as the other agents moved in. They were shaking their heads and smiling.

“He is all you said he was.”

“And *some more*,” added one of the ladies.

“Okay, let’s take him home.”

“Home, Sir?” questioned one of the men.

“Deeper. Back to The Agency. He needs the words of an older head and to see some things, then maybe he’ll relax into it. Even if he just turns around and travels back here, he’ll have some proof of other realities. Hopefully his own questions will draw him back. Guys like him don’t like itches they can’t scratch, and they love new challenges, so he will fall to service eventually.”

“We all came in *voluntarily*, Sir. Is this *right*?” asked one of the Agents, still not even sure that his boss should have pulsed the kid for as long as he did.

“Comes all the way from the top. Apparently, that kind of will and determination can’t be wasted *just here*.”

“But he’s started something here,” offered a lady Agent. “People need him yet. They need more momentum.”

“It’s all in place. The Design will roll forward here. People need to stand up and rely on the Guidance, not on certain individuals. It’s never just about one person; it’s always about *The Power*, and people taking care of *their own* future.”

HOA AND GARRAN TALKED WITH EACH OTHER ABOUT THEIR WORLDS. Garran would have loved to visit Wai Nova but could feel that there was another purpose to his appearance here. As they talked, and the welcome committee went back inside one of the buildings to do more calculations, a lady spotted Garran and smiled. She then made a beeline for him, and he could sense from her demeanour that she would uncover the meaning of his coming here. He also had new senses here; ones he always had, but had not used, or only felt occasionally under his conscious thoughts.

“Hello Garran. It’s an h...”

“Please don’t say it. I don’t like this low-level adoration. It makes me *very* uncomfortable. Just tell what you have to tell me.”

The lady smiled and regarded him. She saw things in him that he could not yet see himself, but because of his words, she saw his state right now. It was far earlier in his life process than she had thought, but it must have been the right time, as she knew things tended to be.

Etera had been sent here, to the Appearing City, after she had left the physical world some time ago. She had died while bringing forth a child. It was a decision in the end, as her physician

had made clear the dire risk all through her pregnancy. She had *known* that it was right to have the child, so she had let go of life to let her new-born daughter take her place within it. Such is the power of a mother and a truly spiritual woman. This woman had suffered greatly at the hand of friend and enemy. She had taken on great risks and challenges in *going out*, becoming strong due to all the heavy winds of her rather short terrestrial life. She had failings like all do, succumbing to her lower self at times, but that did not stop her in her duties, and it did not stop her dying so her child could live.

“Hello Garran,” she said, still having to stop the natural need to say what an honour it was to meet him. “I am Etera. You have come here to be sent on to another place. This is a place of transition.”

“Ohh!” exclaimed Hoa. “*Now* I get the nature of this place. I thought it was about youth, a place of learning, or reaching adulthood, or change...But it’s *transition*.”

“Yes. All transition,” confirmed Etera, smiling gently.

“And all transition is about change and learning,” added Hoa.

“And process, and patience; effort and love,” added Garran, as he thought about his orchard work.

“Yes!” said Hoa, very excitedly, and then he was gone.

“I was just getting feel at home here and you go and do that to my friend.”

“I didn’t do it. He did. He learnt what he came here to learn. None stay here long. We all come and go from this city; or more truly, it comes and goes from us.”

Garran smiled, not really sure what that meant, and asked, “So, where am *I* going?”

“Well, there *is* a place, or you still may choose to go home again. You do have a choice. You may go to Temelj, a foundation planet, and work to aid the process of growth there, or you can simply go home.”

“What kind of work?”

“I don’t know that fully. I believe that your current skills may fit this place like a glove, but what plans The All has for you, well, that is beyond me; and us all. Life’s complexity and magic creates a constant fountain of learning,” she explained, *for him*, for *his* awakening potential and unfolding life.

You see, she certainly *did* know his role there, at least part of it from her past. She also knew that he would accept.

“So, it’s mine to see when I get there?”

“And His, but isn’t everything, somewhat *both* in the first life?”

“I suppose so, and yes, I would *definitely* like to go.”

“There is one stipulation to your travel. The Department does like to keep things in order.”

“The Department?”

“Enough is to say, that I work within it. The stipulation is that on your return, as you transition back home again, you will lose all memory of your travels; of this place, and Temelj. You will keep the knowledge you gain, but no memories will remain. These remnant

understandings will rise unbidden, but *so* naturally that they will seem to be thoughts and strengths that you believe you are just discovering.”

“So, I have nothing to lose then.”

“I suppose not, but memories are precious things, and more important to us than we imagine. All learning sits within them, and wisdom grows from the soil of our experiences.”

“Sure, but I will *still* go.”

“Just to be sure...know that there will also be the pain of grieving for what you have lost when you transition back. You will *not know why*, so it *may* ask a lot of you.”

“I will still go,” reiterated Garran, not even a little unsure.

“Good. Then I will see you there.”

Before The Doc could say anything to that, he found himself in another place. He had appeared on some stone steps leading down into the great valley that had been formed from huge tectonic forces millions of years ago. He was about halfway down to the chasm floor below, on a walkway carved into the almost sheer rocky wall.

He looked out at the high wide view of the fields, the dwellings, waterways, and pathways, all the way across to the other great rampart. “Well, here we go, Garran,” he said out loud to himself, as he set off down the steps deeper into the chasm.

SAM WOKE ON HIS SIDE ON A COUCH. He saw the wooden door moving away from him; or was he moving away from it. A man in a white coat turned from a wooden desk on the other side of him and said hello. Sam getting the impression that the man worked standing up.

Sitting up, he saw that he was on some kind of open floating platform about four meters square. It was moving steadily out from the wall. As he looked up, all around, and then down, he seemed to lose his bearings and his balance, so he held on tight to the couch. There were no railings on the platform; only the standing desk, some low wooden cabinets on two sides, and the lounge he had been deposited on in the middle. Two ends of the wooden platform were completely open to what Sam saw as *down*, and it was an impossibly long way from the platform to the wall that would meet him, more than abruptly, if he fell.

When he gathered himself, he saw that he was within a mighty sphere of wood that seemed the size of a planet; kind of a smaller, inside out, planet. It was a massive structure with endless doors; doors of all kinds, almost completely filling its singular and impossibly gargantuan spherical wall. The great sphere even had an internal atmosphere. There were some clouds dotted here and there and they seemed to be raining purposefully on particular doorways; and raining down on all angles to the sphere's wall. There were also other platforms moving on various angled flightpaths in its inner atmosphere; while in the air, right in the centre, and stationery, a warm glowing globe lit the great continuous concave spherical wall. Sam could somehow feel that *it* actually held the great sphere itself in place.

"Don't worry, even the best of them loose their balance here; even one fellow who knew *plenty* of sudden change in his existence before he got here. He will cause you quite a good deal of extra work," explained the man.

“So, you know me?”

“Ahh, now *there’s* the natural detective in you. Seeking out the salient facts.”

“I don’t know about that. I just want to know what *the hell’s* going on.”

“Sure, *Agent Deveroux*, ” shot The Doc, like it was a little payback from another time.

“I’m not an agent, so don’t try any of your mind tricks on me. Just tell me what I need to know.”

The Doc smiled, “Well, Samuel, it seems that your efforts, your particular makeup, or both, have brought about a call to service in The Agency. They have sent you here in the hope that your belief in the genuine nature of their offer will grow from seeing The Seed and talking with me.”

“The Seed?”

“This place of growth,” he answered, as he waved his hand around at the vista. “It is linked to endless worlds and realities.”

Sam looked around, then asking again, “So, you *know* me?”

“An older you, yes.”

“Well how can I leave what I’m doing at home, even if I did believe all this was real?”

“*Trust*, Sam. The transformation in you from those Words you found is available to everyone, and you leaving your neighbourhood will have two effects. Firstly, it will make the others stronger, letting *them* stand; letting them know it was not just another soul who made them strong, but courage and other things that come from *inside them*. And secondly, when the Creative

Word finally finds them, they will be able to use *its* transforming power to grow them and their neighbourhood even stronger. The Design is always in process and people have to grow.”

Sam shook his head, then saying, “That should not make sense to me, but I can feel it’s right in my gut. So, what’s your deal? You some kind’a shrink?”

“I have many facets, as do we all.”

“Don’t give me riddles?”

“Give you *facts*, Agent?” asked Garran, with an open smile, and showing Sam just how natural he would be as an Agent.

“Now you’re playin’ with my head,” said Sam, smiling a little; just a little.

“Yes, I am, Sam. But you can *feel it*, even though you didn’t notice before. You know it fits you like a glove, and you can be a lot of help to endless souls if you take on the work. You are a natural Protector, and I am sure you would even be able to visit your old neighbourhood at times.”

“I still don’t want to abandon them though.”

“Be assured that they won’t be left alone. We are *never* left alone.”

The young man looked down, then out to the vista in front of him just as a cloud drifted by the floating platform on a completely different tangent. “So, what do I call you?”

“I have many names, but Doc will do for you.”

“Okay, Doc. You better ring your buddies in that Agency. I’m in, at least on first appearances. I’ll take a look, but *no promises*.”

“That’s all they ask,” replied The Doc, just as the platform now settled in front of a different doorway behind Sam.

Young Deveroux noticed the perfect timing and wondered at this creature he was talking to, smiling as he said, “You got *skills*, Doc.”

“We have all been granted much. Oh, and watch your back, Agent,” said the Doc, smiling, as the door opened, and two bailiffs came to the door.

“The Judge requires your presence in her court,” said one of them.

Deveroux turned to The Doc, asking the question with his face.

“Just go with it, Sam. There will be nothing ordinary for a while.”

“Okay,” he answered. “See you later, I suppose.”

“Yes, Sam. See you then, or *seen* you then,” he finished, with a wide smile.

GARRAN LOOKED AROUND, THE ALIENS WATCHING HIM AS HE DID. Garran had spent some hours wandering around The Chasm looking at the tree husbandry and the horticultural practices here. He could see that the people here were farmers; at least the ones with blond streaked hair and green eyes were. They wore simpler clothing too. The others seemed to be just learning how. He loved their purple skin; the green-eyed ones had very deep purple skin. No one seemed to challenge him, or ask him his business, which seemed a little strange. They just nodded in gentle respect, smiled, and kept about their work.

There were very different types of creatures here. Most were the tall framed purple skinned ones; the blue eyed ones, and the green eyed blondes. It was not long before he worked out that the very few totally different beings that he had seen must have not been locals; local to the planet, especially because of their highly varied physical makeup. The locals were *very* tall creatures, towering over him and the odd outsider he saw. The blue-eyed ones had dark hair and were a little more guarded than the others. He could tell that they were from quite a different culture to the green-eyed blondes. These tall locals wore very different apparel, and the blue-eyed ones wore sandals, the blonde ones no shoes at all. Their purple skin was quite natural looking, even beautiful to him.

It was an unbelievable adventure wandering here, while he started to consider how the other more varied beings here had evolved and what their worlds may have been like. They were so different, yet were all clearly humanoid, just as in the Appearing City. He ventured to consider that the development his own species and these other self-aware species and were akin to someone gardening. At least with Garran's mind it did. Most things were seen within the construct of the organic world, orchards, species, and fruiting trees, at this stage of his life.

He eventually sat down on the wall of a small weir; to one side of it where water did not flow over it. He sat and wondered at this place, not at all trying to control his experience. He just watched as a child would in a new place, but also like a scientist; curious and observing. Garran could see how his knowledge and skills would be put to use here, while unconsciously putting his hand in the water. Something rough and alive moved against it. He jumped up, thinking how remiss he had been in taking care in an alien environment. There could be any kind of animal in the weir and the river.

A humanoid being of another type then suddenly jumped out of the water and onto the weir wall. As all the other humanoids, he walked on two legs and upright, but he was green, with deep brown eyes. He was just a little hunched and his knees bent in his current stance. The creature's head went to the side as he took in Garran's appearance. His head was bald, as was his body, and he only wore an off-white loin cloth. A brown and deep green speckled skin rose up his arms from the back of his hands, and from the ends of his thumbs, which sat naturally opposite to our own, and there was webbing between his fingers and toes. The rough speckled skin continued up along the outside and back of his arms, over his shoulders, up the back of his neck and the back of his head. It also filled his back and the back of his legs down to his heels. It was thick, tough, and raspy, but his palms and webbing, all his front, and face, were smooth and lighter green, like a frog's skin.

"Hello," said the being.

"Hello," replied Garran, each looking at the other in the same way.

"Ahh, so you are a man of science?"

"How do you know?"

"I study organic life; plants, but mostly animals of all kinds, even the parts of *us* that belong in that kingdom. You have the same gaze as I. You are *definitely* a creature of science," he said, quite confidently, yet ever so joyfully.

Garran smiled, so elated at this meeting with a scientist from another world, and some water came to his eyes. "I *am*, at least I have just finished studying. I work as an orchardist, but I can't begin to wonder at what conversations we can have."

“*Praise, The Power.* It will be *good*. When I first crashed here and hid in a pond below an Icer mountain I thought I was in hell. But today I am in Ahadne. I am Acktan,” expressed the being, feeling the same sense of wonder as Garran.

“I am Garran,” he replied, smiling, and theorising that The Power was quite likely their word for God. The theorising mind of a scientist is a mind of wonder; its process an unfolding one, so he was not totally correct.

“I have some samples to finish gathering. Then you may come to my house for dinner, and we can begin, what I hope, will be *many* conversations.”

Garran nodded, saying yes. The being nodded back with a smile on his face, then turned and re-entered the water. He waved, submerged, and swam easily away under the surface.

A CIRCLE OF LIGHT SAT JUST ABOVE A STONE PILLAR. The pillar was about the height of the heart of the indigenous people, and it was very ornate. The circle sat in the air, upright, and its light was pure. None but Nov-Cikel, Edossd and The Interpreter were ever allowed to enter this cave. It sat in a simple cavern deep within a great barren mountain range that was like the head of a great serpent at the northern end of the Chasm. This rift valley wandered southwards from it; meandering gently, like the body of a somewhat outstretched serpent. This cave was not far from where springs had brought forth good flows of water; water that now ran as a small river down through The Great Chasm.

Nov-Cikel, Edossd had been led to the springs and had given instruction to the workers where to break the rock. The Chasm was a forgotten place, a place apart, far from the trade routes

of Icer airships in the air, and even further over the horizon from wandering Clan traders on the ground. The Icers, those with the blue eyes and dark hair, had no love for this rocky range, as barren rock was of no use to them at all. The Icers lived on wet, rich wooded, mountain ranges, and were sailors of the sky, while the Clans worked the soils below these Icer kingdoms, utilising the water that trickled down to the desert floor. They traded with each other, but more so, the Clans were taxed in crops by The Icers as rent for the water that fed the food they grew.

The rest of the planet was desert of all kinds, but mainly somewhat endless seas of high white dunes. So, the great green wooded mountain ranges of the Icers, were like great islands on an endless sea of sand. The blonde-haired Clan folk with darker skin and green eyes, were of the deserts and fields, and had no technology. The Icers guarded their technology fiercely, as the status quo on this planet suited them in terms of power and wealth. Not that all of them were reprehensible, or well off, and some of the Clans were still quite violent. It was like any other world and any other groups of peoples at this stage of their evolution.

The light on the pillar went out, or more so faded from sight, as a figure now entered the dark cave. The hooded creature shone a lantern around the cave, studying the small pillar and some carved symbols on the wall. *“The Interpreter and Nov-Cikel Himself have been the only ones to enter here before today,”* thought the intruder, feeling very alive and honoured, in a sad strange way. The creature was intent on power staying in the *right* hands, so was seeking every advantage in this time of change in The Great Chasm. Nov-Cikel’s mission was to bring Heaven down to Temelj and to usher in a complete and all-encompassing social change. This sad soul strangely thought that *they* were somehow destined to help that come about, in the *right* way of course.

THE COURTROOM HAD NEVER SEEN THE LIKES OF SAMUEL DEVEROUX. The Judge had let him have it with both barrels and then some more. The boy had way more fight than any who had appeared before her though. He knew himself, knew what was right, and he didn't get all upset like most that came there. She had failed to rile him, because of his nature, the level of his life's challenges, and because of the last thing that The Doc had said to him.

He simply stood his ground, not being emotionally manipulated by this master of drama. She just kept pounding on him, not believing the strength of will that sat immovably there. It was immovable, because it was aligned with those Words that he had found all those years ago as a very young teenager...well...as well as, a *little* bloody-mindedness. He had made the wisdom in that book part of who he was; he had made himself his own particular version of those words in his thinking and what he did. The Judge watched him keenly as she put him through all sorts of testing, and the audience...the gallery...was *most pleased*, and very entertained *today*.

After the gavel had fallen, Samuel was escorted to his cell to reflect on his failures; ones that the court and all the carrying on of The Judge had made apparent to him alone. The Judge had watched him leave with a sparkle in her eye. She liked this one. She could see he was made for the work ahead of him and she made that clear to the gallery after he left. Much serious discussion passed after the '*guilty*' were removed from this court. The consultation was actually quite serious and kind, only ending as another soul fronted The Judge. As the new defendant entered the court, the Judge went back into mode, and an Agent in the back of the gallery got up and walked out of the room.

The bailiffs took Sam to his cell, leaving him there with no explanation. Not that he asked. One or the other would then bring him food from time to time, pass a comment or two, and be

gone again. He just blank stared them or ignored them, and it was late on the second day that they both came down the passageway to his cell.

“We have somewhere to...”

Suddenly they were all at a doorway. “Wow. That’s the quickest...”

“Yeah, it is,” said Sam, to the bewildered bailiffs, as he turned the knob and began walking through the door. “See you ‘round...*I don’t think so,*” he added, as he closed the door behind him.

He opened the door and the noon day light flooded in. It took his eyes a second to adjust. Right in front of him was a surprised Etera. She was set back on her heels, as he had unwittingly entered her personal space when he had stepped through. She had just been about to enter her dwelling when Sam had walked out of it through the front door flap. He did not stand back, as indeed a gentleman should. He was lost in the moment, as was Etera. Then finally realising the situation was disrespectful he stepped back and nodded his head a little.

Etera was glad for his courtesy and could tell that he was strong in the spirit, as well as spirited, by how he held himself. She liked that, but her respect would immediately be tested. Sam was not used to being confused so his walls were about to come up.

“Who are you?” she asked, tentatively.

“That’s *my* question,” he retorted, strongly, with his chin out a little, and unwavering eyes.

A small standoff ensued while each waited for the other to answer. It was intense, and underneath that, humorous, but stubbornness seemed to rule the moment.

“Well, one of you needs to answer,” chipped in Able, while Mother just watched the goings on with good humour and some interest. They had only just returned from the seat of the Council.

“I am Etera. Why were you in my house?”

“Your house...okay...my apologies. I just came through a doorway, and well...*here I am.*”

“Through my door?” asked Etera, confused.

“Through another door, but it’s this door,” said Sam confidently, but having no real clue how it all worked.

Etera pushed through the canvas flap as if expecting to find something different beyond it. She only saw her home though, so then ushered the new arrivals in and made sure the canvas door was drawn fully closed. She did not want more useless talk growing around the chasm on the subject her talking to imaginary folk, as she assumed that Sam was also not visible.

When they all stood in the cool shade of her home, she said plainly to Sam, “I prayed for a gardener. I didn’t pray for *you.*” But, as our thoughts are prayers, she actually had.

“Don’t I look like a gardener? I’ve been gardening my neighbourhood for years now, and it’s lookin’ pretty damned healthy.”

Mother laughed. She knew who this young man was now, as she had met him later in his life. Able too, would meet an older Sam in the future. On this very planet.

“You are late to us, though we two, have only ourselves, just arrived,” said Mother, looking to explain, and to reset him a little from his defensive position.

“I am *right on time.* But *what for,* I don’t know.”

“You are out of time-sync, and you are far from home here,” offered Mother.

“With all due respect, lady, I’m where I am, and here *now*, so that’s all I got’ta know.”

Etera could not believe his strong will, but it was a useless wall at the moment, not the bridge it needed to be.

“You are out of time-sync. We *all* are. We *believe* that’s why they can’t see us,” offered Able, smiling.

“Who can’t see us? Listen, smiley Jim...” and then Deveroux got lost. His words stopped as his mind crashed, but his stance did not change. He had been adjusting quickly to the constant and sudden changes, but he could now finally see that he needed to relax with it more. Sam was used to being *sure* and just *charging forward*. These recent changes also had him more on guard, and *deep down* he wanted to prove himself to The Agency. He then took in a deep breath, sat down on a bench, and asked, “Okay, so where am I?”

“Finally!” expressed Etera, making clear her distaste at his behaviour. She too took in a deep breath. “You are on the planet Temelj at the time of arising planetary unification. I prayed for help, and you have all come. I don’t know why *you particularly* are here...”

“Sam.”

“I don’t know why you are here, Sam, as I often prayed for a person good with water; well, that and a gardener of plants, not *kneeborhoods*,” explained Etera, not knowing what a neighbourhood was.

Sam sighed again, realising clearly now that he had just made things harder for Etera and himself, so admitted that he was just beginning as an Agent. He also explained that he was only

aware of a single reality only a few days before and was not given any instruction before turning up here. He was just sent here and admitted that he was now wondering a little if he was truly fit for this kind of duty.

Mother went over and sat down beside the young man, asking the other two if they could step outside for moment. They were quite curious, but complied easily, because of Mother's way and out of respect for her obvious wisdom and age.

"Once, a long time ago," she began, "you brought my husband home to his family on Earth. I am very thankful to you, as that was where I met him. You *were* an Agent, and much older, when we first met. You were close to handing in your badge and retiring then, and you seem to be at the beginning of that journey right now. So, *Agent Deveroux*, let go and trust. Allow your path to unfold. You cannot force it. Confidence is not about always knowing what to do, or even immediately being able to do it."

"Yeah, sure. Got it," answered Sam.

"For you now, understand; understand that time and place are more so markers of meaning, and your pathway is cycles of learning that open and close. Time has little consequence in your coming work; distance too. It's more about trust and reliance now. You will travel in and between Nearer, Deeper, and Other Places; as well as corporeal worlds such as these. Agents work in many realities and as you get a feel for all this, and the nature of change, you will find your balance; *trust and allow the flow of your new pathway.*"

"Okay. That helps. I'm not used to bein' weak like this. But what do I trust?"

“Trust The Creator. Trust whatever guided you in your neighbourhood, as you seem to have done good work there. Trust you will learn. But be *where you are*. Do *what is in front of you*. Like your instincts called you to, just before. Corporeal worlds like this one all work to the same laws, the other realities have theirs too. You will have to learn on your feet, and I am sure there will be training in time. You have to learn to be a little weak for a while; also, a little humble, it seems.”

“Sure, lady. I get it. *Boy*, this stuff sure got crazy, *suddenly*,” expressed Sam. He was also a bit upset because he had felt really confident when he left his cell; after time for some reflection there. He had thought that he *had* his bearings, but his house of cards fell as he entered another unexpected place. He had just assumed he was going back to The Agency or home for a while. But such is the nature of our unfolding life, and at times a sudden succession of changes or new challenges assail us, one upon the other. They are, though, gifts of learning and hidden grace.

“Just let go to the process; take time and *feel* out why you are here now.”

“Feel it.”

“Ask what is important and wait for a word, or words, or a feeling,” offered Mother, “or simply wait for what will come as you walk here.”

Sam, being Sam, asked The Creator immediately what was important, and he saw his first encounter with the Agents and the radiant flash of a circle of light behind them. His gut told him these were the important things, but then he *‘maybed’* until his mind crashed. He regathered himself though, as he thought, “*Keep it simple, Sam. Trust what you saw. Wait it out. No questions for a while. Just do it as it comes.*” He was learning to use the human powers of trust and acceptance; powers he had not been aware of within himself before. His new pathway was offering

him awareness of these, also helping him not *just* rely on his inherent strength. He was now even *feeling* that some real challenge was exactly what he needed. He could feel himself growing and he *liked that feeling*.

When we feel the growth afforded us by greater challenges, when we feel ourselves growing spiritually, when we see that we have more potential than we once thought, we *feel alive*.

The Caretakers

“Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation.”²

Enoss Lenik was genuinely impressed by what had developed in this area since his last visit. He was more out and about these days, especially since the passing of the Interpreter of the Way of Nov-Cikel. He had been close to The Interpreter and missed her wisdom and gentle strength. All in the community of Nov-Cikel, Edosd missed her.

The Interpreter had passed, and The Great Council of this young Faith had not yet been formed, so there was no point of clear authority right now. The path of this belief was at a critical juncture, and as any vacuum seeks to be filled, this Faith was vulnerable right now. Enoss was one of the Caretakers, hardworking and respected souls who were to complete the work of bringing in The Great Council. Indeed, with the death of The Interpreter all adherents were caretakers of a

sort, but this small group of respected souls were considered the leading caretakers, becoming known as such. They were unwritten stewards of this Faith until the coming inception of The Great Council. Its powers had been clearly delineated by Nov-Cikel, thankfully, and it would have authority when it was formed.

The Caretakers had no authority and wanted none; they just naturally led the work as they had done before. The people of The Great Chasm were simply happy that they were there and were learned in what needed to be done. The Rock of the words of Nov-Cikel was still with the people here in this unsure time of transition, as was memory of the work and ways of the Interpreter. These things held authority for now in people's hearts, and truly, these were the Authority that would underpin the new Great Council. The Guidance of this Faith's evolution was safeguarded in these.

But as The Great Council was not yet formed, it had raised some uncertainty here, bringing with it, rumblings of all kinds. So, until the new institution could be formed, and the reigns of this new Faith held firm within it, this Faith was vulnerable to dangers of schism, ego, and even collapse.

It had been some years since the passing of The Interpreter and the vote for the new overarching institution of twelve souls was now not far away. It was written that the Great Council would be the Authority, not its members. Humility and service needed power those individuals who would serve on it. In any case, most souls here just kept developing the chasm, and building the Beautiful Way that they had been guided to build, since The Interpreter's passing. She had given much energy to growing this Way and had thankfully left much insight on its intricate structure and its beautiful mechanisms. This Way, laid down by The Messenger Himself, was not

to be changed or added to, even by The Interpreter. It would be, *no less*, a New Ship on which the peoples of Temelj would sail into the future; all together.

Wonderfully, this chasm was where, many eons ago, the self-aware beings of this planet originally evolved. They had spread out and gone far and away, but they were now soon to be one again. They had gone out from this birthplace and fractured into many peoples around this globe, until, after many thousands and thousands of years, inexorably becoming two peoples; Icer and Clan. The cycle of separation was nearly completed, and the new age of full unity not only beckoned it had already been initiated by the Revelation Nov-Cikel, Edossd.

It was now, that Enoss saw Garran. He had not seen this creature before. He had known many aliens, but not of this kind, and as he walked over to him, Acktan showed the deep respect he held for any Caretaker. Enoss smiled and bid him to relax as he introduced himself to the newcomer. No Caretaker was comfortable with any praise or special treatment. They did their best to be on the same footing as all here, even though there was a deep respect for them and for the selfless hard-working people they were.

“Hello. You are new here?”

“Yes, hello,” replied Garran, while mimicking naturally the respectful stance of his fellow scientist.

“Welcome. I see you have made good company with Acktan. Was your escape and coming to us difficult?”

It was a natural question, as all aliens were hunted and quickly exterminated on this planet, so any alien who made it to The Chasm was indeed fortunate. The Icer Hunter Lords were good

at, and very committed to, their work. They saw the aliens that usually crashed through the portals to this planet as vermin; dangerous to the order of things, and the bringers of disease. There was no quarter and no mercy, even though many of The Icers did not agree with the policy of extermination.

The Icers were in charge of the planet and the Clans served them in a manner of speaking; all the while, despising their power over them. There was no real justice; only suspicion between these two populations, and the belief of each's superiority over the other. Many of the Clans hid and sheltered aliens just because the Icers hated them, while others were untrusting of *anyone* beyond their clan group, so even fewer aliens survived here. Schisms, troubles, decadence, distrust, and breakdown were also growing *within* both cultures. Such was the nature of life beyond The Great Chasm.

“Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day. Its tribulation is continually deepening. ...Its sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness, inasmuch as the true Physician is debarred from administering the remedy, whilst unskilled practitioners are regarded with favour, and are accorded full freedom to act. ...The dust of sedition hath clouded the hearts of men, and blinded their eyes.”³

“No real difficulty, but it is strange being in a strange place,” answered Garran.

Enoss was surprised, as all aliens had horrific entries to this planet. Random wormholes snatched them from space as they travelled between other worlds, and brought them here, only to be met by great Icer airships and the hunters bent on their eradication.

“No difficulty? How so?” asked the Icer Caretaker, with a calm, but interested, face.

“I was sent here.”

“You were *sent* here?”

“I just appeared here. I was recruited to serve here. I am an orchardist and well versed in plant and tree science.”

“This is not possible,” stated Enoss, clearly uncomfortable with Garran’s answers. “Maybe you are in shock from your entry to the planet, or a little lost from your journey through the deserts to the chasm. I think you should visit our counsellors.”

Acktan looked surprised, thinking that he had been remiss in finding out about Garran. Garran now looked to his new friend, only to see the same response as the Caretaker in his eyes.

“I’m okay, *really*,” he responded. “Though it does take a lot of faith and acceptance to be taken from a day at work and suddenly visit two other worlds.”

“Two other worlds?” asked Enoss, trying to understand.

“I found myself in The Appearing Place and was recruited there to work here.”

Enoss looked down, as Acktan grimaced. It was *very* awkward, but both showed a deep kindness as they then looked at each other.

“I will take him to Esnon,” suggested Acktan, to Enoss. “He is good with minds, and I am sure Garran will be of great use, no matter,” he added, very uncomfortably, while trying to reassure the traveller as well.

“So, no others have come here like me?”

“No. Of course not,” answered Enoss, trying to be more frank.

“Garran, will you come with me to see Esnon?” asked Actktan, trying to reach a shared and respectful place between them all.

Garran turned to Acktan, and said, “I understand how you both must feel. This kind of travel is *certainly new* to me too. It won’t change the facts, but I’ll go for your ease of mind. It might help the situation.”

“Thank you for your good grace,” said Enoss, as Acktan proffered Garran to the direction they would be going in, and they bid the Caretaker good day.

Garran knew that more words would be of no use right now. He just hoped that the psychologist may be a bridge of trust; but even then, he was not sure, as he would not have believed this kind of thing either before today. Enoss still looked concerned, but more for the timing of this situation, not so much a lost soul’s words. The vote for The Great Council was soon and any word of this kind of thing, at this point, may complicate things.

He then called after them, and as they turned to him, he made a request, “Could I ask that the two of you, and Esnon, no matter the outcome, keep this between the four of us? The vote is soon, and these years of uncertainty are finally coming to an end. Any idea of someone *simply appearing here* at this time would not be helpful.”

“Certainly,” agreed the alien scientist.

“No worries, for sure,” agreed Garran. “I just did *not* see this coming. I *assumed* it was *normal* that people were being sent here like me.”

That seemed to alarm Enoss even more. But he was thankful for this visitor’s good grace, and again made that very clear to him as they parted. The two scientists then walked off up the chasm and Enoss Lenik walked on down it; deep in thought.

“So, what is the vote?” asked Garran.

“Well, to explain properly, you come at a time of change and after some years of uncertainty. Nov-Cikel, Edosd appointed The Interpreter of his Revelation only a year before he passed. The child was just eleven years old. It too was a time of uncertainty, as when Nov-Cikel passed there were problems with people accepting such a young soul. The girl suffered a great deal at the hands of some, while many others, unsure of this choice, had their faith shaken. There were those who stood with her and supported her though, but it was hard for one so young. In time though, and by her sufferings, she became what she was destined to be; a wise and humble soul who led them in the work for nearly sixty years.

These current years of uncertainty began with *Her* death. She was tasked by Nov-Cikel to form a Great Council that would lead and guide this new Faith after her passing, but it was not yet done. In any case, the Caretakers kept on with the work of readying the community for it and bringing it to be in Her absence. This time is now finally near, and Enoss, like all here, do not want any waves that may unsteady the coming of the vote. The people of this community have been tested these last years, and the formation of The Great Council will see things finally settled and its foundations firmed.”

“Oh. I see. Well, I need to keep a low profile then,” offered Garran.

“It would be helpful,” replied Acktan.

MOTHER LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW. She knew what her service was to be here after walking to the village and back, but now gazing at what lay outside, she began to consider how she may go about her work. She was a life essence, a natural force existent in all life of corporeal worlds and within their processes. Her reality was essentially of the spirit, but her work manifested in physical life.

All things of the outer material realities and of the deeper worlds are of spirit essentially. Spirit is the life force of all things and their deepest reality. It emanates from The Source in myriad forms, each playing its own particular music, as is His Will. We are spirit and may use the spirit too, as we are made in the likeness of God, but as all things, we remain within the boundaries set for us.

Her eyes then smiled, as her heart jumped at some movement outside. It was Acktan and Garran walking up the chasm. “I have found my focus here. I am off now,” she said, as she faded from sight. The rest of her words were heard after she was no longer visible. *“I have found your gardener. I will go and help him.”*

Able smiled. He was glad that she had found her work, but was still not sure about his, and Etera was a bit frustrated about what to do with these two lads. She was very happy, or more so relieved, that Mother had found her place, as well as thankful that The All *had* sent a gardener. Meanwhile Sam was trying to disappear like Mother, and of course, failing, but did not fail at all

in entertaining the others. When he finally realised that *he* was the entertainment, he stopped and said, “It was *worth a try*. It can’t get any *crazier* than it already is, and if other people can’t see us then *who knows* what’s possible.”

“I believe Mother is far more than just a person like us, Sam,” offered Able.

“I would say...no doubt at all,” added Etera.

“So, what are you here to do boy?” asked Sam, transferring some of his own confusion on *his* role here onto the lad.

“I don’t know, Sam. I’ve been wandering in the desert for some years now. I am good at finding food and tracking; good at directions where there aren’t any.”

“Well, you don’t sound like you are a whole lota’ use *here*. ”

“Are you always so...” asked Etera, as she was cut off by Sam’s response.

“Honest?”

“*Blunt, disrespectful, and annoying,*” finished Etera.

“Oh, love, you are *hurtin’* my feelings,” said Sam, with a cheeky smile on his face.

“Able will be of use no matter his skills. He is *willing*. He is a *servant*. He *knows* what that means.”

“Is that *all you got?*” challenged Sam, becoming a wall again.

“He is respectful, and *unlike* you, he has some *class*. ”

“Like I said, you are *hurtin’ my feelings*, darlin’ ,” retorted Deveroux.

Able found himself having to laugh. He also couldn't help thinking that Dossd would have shortened this lad up by now, and put him firmly in his place, or have left him to the desert until he crawled back into favour. Humility is a powerful learning tool and Sam seemed to have very little. In any case, Able liked him, seeing that both Sam and Etera would be learning a lot from each other; *like it, or not*.

Etera now shook her head and looked into the man-child's eyes. She kept his gaze, seeing much in them as she gathered some of his story. She did not usually take a deeper look without permission, but these were strange circumstances. The young man kept her gaze, with no fear, and no embarrassment, as he knew what she was doing. She had made it clear that she was psychic when they had ventured outside to test if the local people could see Sam or not. As she now reached deeper; she saw great pain, violence deep in his childhood, and struggle his whole life. She also saw the Word of his world and how he had come to live from it, but also the raw stupidity of a young man. None of which he was ashamed of. It was him, and he let her see.

"You certainly are an *honest* man," she commented, not knowing that he saw a lot in her eyes too. He did not need telepathic abilities to gather her soul. A person's eyes and bearing are somewhat a window; but truly, our actions tell others who we really are.

Young Deveroux didn't know it yet, but he was a natural Agent. He had grown up hard and had to know how to read people. There were so many lost and broken souls in his life that he had grown a dog sense, as well as learning to trust his gut, rather than what he thought about someone or something. His generally hard attitude had grown from his environment too. It had been a protection mechanism, even while it *was* somewhat in his nature.

“So, what do you think?” he now asked, asking if she saw any leads to what he was here for in there.

“I don’t know Sam. I still don’t know,” she admitted.

“Well, what have we got? Let’s reflect on what brought us here,” offered Able.

“Oh, *geeze*, not some *namby pamby* spiritual *hokum*. Let’s gather *evidence*.”

“It’s the same process, Sam,” responded Able. He was in no discomfort around Sam, even though the young Agent had been *working him* since arriving. Able had been through a lot too, enduring what many could not have. He had also gathered skills and strength from two very deep wells of the religion and culture of two worlds; his own, and Dossd’s.

“It’s not the same,” retorted Sam, and Able realised that, right now at least, there was no to be no retreat in this young man of the street.

Able then simply got up and went for a walk to reflect. He knew *his* way and he would follow that. He trusted in what Dossd called the *still air of reflection*, and at other times his instruction to *walk as the breeze bids*, meaning to do what one feels to do and so follow the innate knowledge of the spirit inside. Right now, he needed to do both. He followed the breeze up the carved stone steps to the desert above, the one’s that Garran had entered by. He felt to wander *there* a while; to walk and reflect. The childish barbs that had followed him out the door were of no account to him. Sam’s way was simply not his, so he did what he saw as useful.

Etera on the other hand had definitely had enough. “I think it is time you left.”

“Oh, com’on!”

“*You* need to find out *why* you are here, and I need you *out* of my house.”

“Sure,” said Sam. “You *got it*, sister. I didn’t ask to come to this *backwater* anyway.”

“I don’t know why you were sent here. I can’t see *any* reason why,” she shot back at him, as she opened the canvas door for him to leave.

Sam walked out into the sunshine and Etera wiped her hands of him. She had seen so much in him, and while he was seemingly strong, it was all a bit raw and confused. He had powers that he did not know how to use well, so he would not be helpful, or useful, until he did. He just did not seem to know how to work *with* people.

“*You don’t play well with other kids*,” he thought, as he headed off along the pathway down the chasm. It was a memory of a comment from one of his teachers very early on in his life. He saw his lack. But he had had to defend himself in his own home as a child, as well as outside it later in his life; backing down outwardly got you beaten up or even dead with the people he had rolled with. His pure unadulterated will had saved him in some heavy situations in his early youth, and he *had* put that power squarely behind the neighbourhood change. But he now realised that he had to grow a little in other ways; *that*, or he couldn’t play with the grownups here. He was also not happy at something that now occurred to him; that maybe this overly adamant part of him may have held back, or *eventually held back*, his own small community at home. Sam did not like these thoughts; he did not like them at all.

LASSD WALKED UP TO GARRAN. It was now three days after the horticulturist and Acktan had returned from their meeting with Esnon. He had talked of his findings with Enoss Lenik, in

consultation with Garran and Acktan, and they had all decided to simply keep the nature of Garran's appearance to themselves. The counsellor had found Garran to be very stable and coherent, also seeing no intention in this man from Earth to stir up trouble here. The alien simply wanted to go about his work and continue what he called his wonderful conversations with Acktan.

Mother had been with her father, unseen, since she saw him walking with Acktan. It was wonderful that she had been able to connect with her husband in his younger days, and now her father in his early corporeal life. She had felt that it was not right to let Able know the full truth of their union, one that still existed in the next life, and she would remain unseen while watching and supporting her father in his work here. But it was such a joy to experience these souls she loved so dearly this way. She wondered at the wealth of this connection with her family here, yet just allowed its meaning to unfold for her, and its joy to fill her.

Garran now turned to Lassd as he neared. This Sandwalker saw a very *different* spirit within him. Lassd was of the Clans. He was a Sandwalker of great repute who had not taken, nor wished to take, the name Caretaker, though he was often in their company. He had found the Great Chasm in his wanderings in the desert. He had *gone out* many times since then and was well known for his faith and reliance. He had spent most of his time among the Clan folk of two places particularly, but he had visited many others. He had only recently returned for the forming of the Great Council; only returning here in the past if he was summoned by The Interpreter. He was quite old now and curiosity showed in his eyes.

"Hello," said Garran, still struggling to understand the nature of the strange vibrations of this place as he talked.

The Chasm was a place of one language. While all spoke their own language, it somehow became the language of others when it reached them. Each time they spoke, vibrations existent within The Great Chasm changed the sounds of their particular language immediately the words escaped their mouths or throats. Even the hand claps of one particular alien changed to words, but the strange thing was that while hand gestures were quite different, the general body language of all races there were evidently quite alike; well, except for the dancing aliens, but they were so honest in their dance, and their actions so true, that the meaning was always clear to others. There was something about this dancing form of expression that held a depth and power that the most erudite soul could not reach by merely speaking.

“You are new here?”

“Yes, just glad to do my work,” answered Garran, which had Acktan immediately at ease, as this was Garran’s first test at keeping his silence.

“I am a telepath. I was a Sandwalker. May I be free in your thoughts?” he asked plainly, as all Sandwalkers did.

Garran smiled, a little taken back by the immediate way of this Walker. The old man had not even introduced himself.

“You may see *his* thoughts too,” ventured Acktan, but then realised that it may not be a good idea for him to see Garran’s secret. He then settled himself with the thought that Lassd was thought of highly, and virtually a Caretaker, so it would be okay.

“Yes, you may see *mine*,” stated Lassd, again, very plainly.

“Sure. I believe that would be okay,” agreed Garran, as he received a nod from Acktan, and because he had gathered the respect that the alien scientist held for this old soul. But on his reply, he did not totally feel at ease. It was not about keeping his secret. It was something else that he could not gather.

“This is the way of my path, and the communication is much clearer this way,” communicated Lassd telepathically, to introduce Garran to it.

Garran laughed with sheer joy at the experience, sending back his thanks, with a picture of him bowing to the older man.

“We only bow to The All,” he said, out loud, and *very* plainly, but the inner symbolic language of this rebuke was far greater in force than the words he uttered outwardly. It was almost like a heavy punch to Garran’s heart. So much so, that it shocked him deeply. It showed, and he now looked at this older creature differently. The orchardist stood there, not willing, or *not able*, to speak, or even send his thoughts. He was not sure *himself* which of these it was, but he definitely knew that he was not at all okay with the old Sandwalker’s inner rebuke.

“That is a shame,” said the Walker, hearing loudly Garran’s silence, yet remaining at least, outwardly stoic.

“It is a shame,” rebuked Garran, finally making it clear that he was not at all happy; trusting a strange an inner sense telling the horticulturist to hold his ground firmly.

The Walker then smiled, and the many eyes that had gathered around these two seemed somewhat amazed. A Sandwalker, especially one of Lassd’s generation, were not smilers; let alone that no one talked to a such a respected elder the way this alien just had. He was so highly

respected, and no one ever really had cause to talk to him that way, due to his usually good demeanour, and despite his, sometimes, seemingly harsher plain talk. The plain talking of this Sandwalker *had* affected other hearts here in lesser ways before, but it had never been so openly expressed.

The man from Earth did not understand the faces of curiosity around him. He also did not understand Lassd's apparent lack of concern after such a heavy rebuke. The Walker still stood where he was, in silence, and Garran could not turn his gaze from him; or more so now feeling that he *would not*. He had not felt such a strong will within himself before today. It was like he was more than he thought he was somehow, and it felt very comfortable. He had generally been honest and mostly kind with others. He did not usually like confrontation at all. But today, right now, it was very different, and the Walker felt the will within him.

The telepath looked in wonder at one so sensitive and yet so strong of will, curious at how it could be, as these were both indeed deep and wide within this creature. He then felt something even more powerful, but as he gazed deeper the telepathic connection suddenly shut off. It was his turn to be shocked; as such an ability was new to him in a non-telepath.

Lassd then looked down, seeming to gather himself, and said, "I must apologise. You do not know our ways. You see, praise such as that is simply *very distasteful* to us. I would hope that our communication will not end on this misunderstanding."

"I get your distaste of any praise, and I accept your apology, but maybe it's best we talk another time," offered Garran, still feeling the strong pain inside. To him the rebuke was not simply a resistance to ego, as it was explained to him, and he could not immediately recover. He was a

simple man; a man who liked things that grow. Such hammer-like people were not for him. Give him a tree to tend and gentle souls; give him a problem to solve, or a job to do, and he was happy.

The old Sandwalker now looked a little visibly shaken by Garran's final suggestion, as were those around them, but he replied easily, "As you wish; *again*, my apologies."

"You don't need to apologise any more than you have."

"Oh, *I do*. I have learnt something today. I am offended by my own being, that *its* deep discomfort was cast upon *you*."

It was then that Lassd's eyes began to water, again to the astonishment of all around them. A Sandwalker never cried; *ever*.

It should have been awkward for Garran, but it wasn't. There was a clear surety in him that things had to be this way, even though his conscience was niggling at him a bit.

As for the old Walker, no one had ever shaken him; well, beyond The Interpreter maybe. He again looked at this *innocent*, still feeling the deeper creature within this alien, but he still could not see past a certain point. He then seemed to reflect right there and then on this situation; deep in review of all that had transpired in his exchange with the alien.

"I am thankful for your challenge today. I have learned much from it, and I will reflect further," he said, after coming out of his thoughts.

The people of the chasm knew that this clansman had been challenged greatly in life. He was known for his love for his Faith and the peoples of Temelj. They knew of his innate courage in serving this Faith and that his deep love of it had opened him up to great sacrifice. They wondered how he could find *anything* challenging, considering the stories of his work.

Garran simply nodded respectfully in reply, as silence was somehow required right now. Lassd nodded back to him with a face of shared respect and left the two scientists to their work.

It was then that Mother cried; experiencing, beyond all those there, what was truly, and spiritually, at play in all this. She saw something growing inside her father and she too had felt the shock of the darkness that had battered at his door. So, it was today, that rain, slowly but surely began to fall for the first time in the chasm.

If all that had gone on here today was not enough to create wonder in those who witnessed it, the rain most certainly did. Rain, here in the chasm, was not heard of; or even *imagined*. Beyond the times of The Passing, rain only fell on the mountains of this planet and snow fell only high up on them. The Passing was a terrible, destructive, yet awe inspiring event that happened each nineteen years on this world; when great destructive life taking winds smashed its inhabitants and lifegiving water poured down on its deserts.

Lassd looked up, outstretched his arms, and raised them up as he walked down the chasm, calling out, “*He* is The All!” Seeking all that was available in that moment.

Acktan just looked at Garran, trying to see who his friend really was, as if his nature could be gleaned from observation somehow. He had not witnessed the like of all that had happened here, just as the onlookers had not. There would be more said of this happening and more would come of it, as Garran was drawing too much attention.

But Garran was oblivious to all that right now. He was not aware of Acktan’s attention, or the attention of others there, as he looked up to the growing clouds. Somehow, strangely, he felt a sadness, as well as a celebration, in the drops that fell, and even though he did not bring the rain, he began to become The Doc that day; most *assuredly* so.

SAM STILL WALKED THE CHASM. Part of him had wanted to return to Etera and take his medicine, but he had to be out here right now. While he knew that he would go back in time, his gut was telling him to wander here a while. He was mostly inside himself as he drifted along, but he looked around gathering the nature of this place, somehow hoping that his purpose here would *come to him*.

He had wandered a long way down this deep, straight walled, valley; only now stopping to sit by the water. He sat there watching five souls who were under the instruction of someone who seemed to be a leader of some kind. He was not hungry or thirsty, but had still tried unsuccessfully to drink from the river that flowed through this place. The water did not even displace when he had put his hand in to gather some water to his mouth. It was just another strange thing to him now.

He had seen quite a few people on his meandering path, all going about some work or another. Children ran around alone or in small groups with no fear of harm. He knew from this that he could learn a good deal from this place for when he returned to work in his neighbourhood, as the chance of him being an Agent was unlikely if he could not get himself in check. Most seemed happy here, going about their days with purpose, but *these* five souls he now watched did not seem happy *at all*.

The leader doing the instruction, as Sam mistakenly considered her, was an assistant of one of the Caretakers. He had not been told about the Caretakers, but had gathered talk of them, and of a vote that was soon to take place, on his walk. He had eavesdropped on a few conversations along the pathway down the chasm, and there was a real buzz about the place on these subjects;

both joyful and serious. The changeover of stewardship had apparently taken long enough, and while the community and the Caretakers had held this Faith together, The Great Council *had* to be formed. It was plain from the talk, that it was crucial to the integrity and healthy evolution of this Cause.

The small group he was watching were planting a row of trees which seemed to be only ornamental. Sam did not know it, but any tree on this planet was extremely rare and treasured if it grew beyond the great Icer mountain ranges. Temelj was very dry, and the deserts took up easily eighty percent of its surface; Icer mountains, and the flat green fields of the Clans around them, made up the rest. Able though, *had known* another kind of tree which even bore fruits in the desert. These one-to-two-metre trees sprang up out of fertile soil-sands to drink from the wind-rivers. They drank from these moisture laden air currents and drew back into the sand at any threat, but Able believed only Sandwalkers knew of them.

Sam, gladly invisible, sat and watched this person at their work. As far as he had gathered these Caretakers had quite a heavy reputation for ability and spiritual maturity, but the person he saw here now was obviously passive-aggressive. He had wrongly assumed that she was one these *bigshots* from the way she talked with strong authority, with certain memorized writings, and from her learning from the work in other parts of The Chasm. She talked of high spiritual things, obviously thinking these five *required* her *helpful* instruction; instruction they didn't seem to need at all, even to Sam.

These poor souls struggled to break away and get on with the work because of their respect for her being an assistant to one of the Caretakers. It was obviously not the first time she had made them feel powerless; from their reactions at least. She talked to them with an eloquent tongue that

she knew spoke of her education; and was very sure of her knowledge, but she could not see her effect on these others; at least it did not seem apparent to Sam. One of the most well-respected Caretakers, Cista Dusa, despised intellectual arrogance openly, and even though she was of Icer heritage, she loved the simple virtue of the Clan folk.

It was not long before Sam had had a gutful of watching her. It was *really* frustrating. He now understood what hippies termed ‘bad energy’ and it was too much for him to bear. This lady *was* an unfailing servant of this Cause and saw the importance of getting things right, even sacrificially so. But she was oblivious, or simply uncaring of her effect on others. They only seemed like tools to her, as there were endless words of love, but no *actual* love; just instruction, and push. It is always sad to see such a willing servant lost in their own importance, or in knowledge that they believed they needed to constantly endow others with; especially one who had done so much. But there are many sad places that aware beings can get lost in and this was simply one of them.

Sam now picked up a rock unthinkingly and threw it into the small weir that sat between him and the goings on. All of the workers immediately turned to see what had caused the noise, so young Deveroux froze. The water had just passed through his hands when he tried to drink before, but he had now been able to throw a rock, so he thought that he was no longer invisible. They looked towards the sound that came from the water, then around to see who threw the rock, looking through him and past him. He *was* still invisible, so apparently solid matter *knew him*, but water and air did not. It was an odd feeling; as well as him not being hungry or thirsty.

His thoughts then went to Able, figuring that they could compare notes on these things, and he decided to go and report what he had now found to the *purple kid* and Etera. He had learned

a good deal from his wanderings through the chasm and was relieved to be leaving the company of these poor souls. He wondered about this lady though. How could she be a Caretaker, who were by all accounts, very spiritually aware? Or was it that there were things in her that he could not see? He would ask Etera about her, as this small anomaly was niggling at him. When something did not seem as it should be he would always get curious. Again, this all grew from his childhood and youth. He had needed it for survival among all the dominance games and high stakes of life; both in his childhood home and in the streets beyond it.

Sam started wandering back up the Chasm to Etera's place, just as the assistant walked off further down; much to the relief of those who worked this field.

As he walked, the young man found himself more intent on reflecting on *his own* lack of humility, and how it may have affected those he had worked with at home. That lady was a *leader*, and he saw himself as one, so he now began to reconsider what that word really meant, as sometimes, the obvious flaws in others may show us what we need to see in ourselves. This place had not been the *outer* challenge he had firstly assumed it would be; it was all inside so far. He then thought of how he had treated Etera and Able. He had definitely been shown his lack in that, and had seen some more on his walk, so he was not feeling good about himself at all.

SOME OF THE CARETAKERS HAD WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE INTERPRETER to help her do her duty of guiding the work. The development of the chasm and the development of the structures of this new Faith were no small task; especially, as the number of those in this New Faith, within the chasm, and to a lesser degree beyond it, had grown greatly. This assistance in service to her had been very providential, given her leaving them when she did. The structures in

place for communication and order, and the abilities grown in the Caretakers, had made the vote possible.

It would be done by secret ballot, as all elections of this Beautiful Way were. All adults guided by the Message of Nov-Cikel would vote, and they were, one and all, eligible to be voted for. There were no candidates in this system; no one put themselves forward or talked of their aspirations to be voted for on any elected institutions, as a lack of humility was repulsive to this new community. Being a member of an institution was about being of service, so any posturing, obvious or stealthy, was quite abhorrent. Ballots from the outlying communities on other parts of the planet would be difficult to deliver, and getting them here by the day of the vote would be even more difficult, but the instructions of The Messenger were clear.

Nov-Cikel had stipulated the term of each Great Council, so this new guiding body would be voted each six and a third rotations of this planet around its sun. This was a natural time period to those of those of Temelj; as many things were already demarcated in parts of, or multiples of, nineteen years. Many historical events were even seen as pre, post, or within one particular nineteen-year period. It was due to The Passing being every nineteen years, as the orbit of another planet called Stremeti came close to that of Temelj. Such world encompassing events as these were a sure marker in time.

The hardest community of Nov-Cikel that they would have to gather votes from existed in the Icer world. It was in the Northern Kingdom. Those there kept their Faith very gently, as the generality of Icers despised the Sandwalkers and their religion. Sandwalkers were known followers of this new Messenger and they were hunted down just like the aliens were. The Icers in general saw these telepath zealots as very dangerous. They had led whole clans away from the green fields

and out into the desert, the Icers believing that they all perished there; lost forever in its seemingly endless expanse or lying buried under the great shifting sands.

The Icers thought that the Great Chasm was an imaginary place, as no non-believer had ever cast their eyes upon it. But hunting Sandwalkers was more about losing the labour force from large areas at a time; losing whole clans that grew much of their food for them. Icers had little real care for those of The Clans otherwise, so this was what had really prompted the strong political action. With a vote that passed easily, with some dissension of course, the Icer's Majority Order had allowed the hunting of Sandwalkers, as well as aliens.

In any case, many ballots for the vote for the formation of The Great Council would be difficult to gather and deliver on time. This was not forward in the mind of Ne-Vec Kot though. She could hardly contain herself as she thought of the nearing vote. She was a young Caretaker, and a good friend of Etera, even though Enoss Lenik had his concerns about this friendship. Many thought Etera to be too forthright and maybe a little too outspoken to be a good friend of a Caretaker. These souls did not have days off; they *were* always themselves, but they were also *always* Caretakers. They had to be constantly sensitive to the integrity of their role; most especially in these times.

"It is only weeks away now!" she said, excitedly, while very natural and at ease with her good friend Etera.

"Yes, but I am concerned. I am still having unsettling dreams," responded Etera, as they now walked the chasm.

Ne-Vec looked down and gathered her thoughts; strange for a young soul, but not for her. In time she said, "Some of the Caretakers are feeling a little wary too, but it mainly rises from their

understanding of the crucial nature of this vote and the dangers that come around times of succession. The Interpreter had struggles, even though her right of succession was as apparent as the noon day sun. So, there is always going to be some concern.”

“I don’t know. I believe something is *not right*.”

“There are *always* tests, and if there is crisis, victory will surely come, as any good Sandwalker will tell you,” offered Ne-Vec.

Etera smiled at her friend. She was young and animated, but she was steady like an older soul too. The seeming dichotomy in this one always buoyed Etera, as well as intrigued her. It was the young lady’s very gentle, yet deep, faith which made her seem older than she was. She had read widely and studied their holy writings quite thoroughly, and the Word had gone deeply into her being. Even in her early youth she had put her shoulder to the wheel as The Chasm tentatively, yet surely, developed. Her ways were also born of her time with a very old Sandwalker; one who had travelled *out* to many Clan lands in the years after reaching his goal as a young man; one who had known the presence of Nov-Cikel, Edossd Himself.

This Walker, after finding The Great Chasm, had *gone out* immediately, like Lassd. He travelled widely, sharing the new Message; on foot, and mostly alone again, walking the sands of the deserts of Temelj. The constant danger from the airships of the Hunter Lords was also over him as he went about his work. Then, as an older man, he had returned to the chasm, and at the request of The Interpreter had finally taken up work here.

He had given this young Icer soul the benefit of his experience and deep belief, as she had sought him out often, even as a child. At first, she had been an annoyance to him, as she was prone to adventurous, and much *not so good*, behaviour. She had a spirit and way about her that brought

her to mischief a little too often for this older soul. But her constant need to be around him was one of the mysteries of his life, as one so reckless did not usually seek the company of the much-disciplined Sandwalkers.

Maybe it was that she saw something in him that was the same as was in her, or something *so* different that she knew intuitively that she needed it. “Who knows the individual soul but The All,” he would often say about her. But he knew it was her adventurousness and her uncontained spirit that gave her access to his company. Many other children and youth would not have dared seek his constant company, but nothing would stop her, even when he was laboured by her.

She was a young woman now, her spirit alive, and her deep faith lifted and inspired those who she walked with in the work of The Great Chasm. Like her mentor though, who had now passed beyond this existence, she had always wanted to *go out*. But it was to be that her work was here, at least for now, and are we all not tested by what we want?

“I wish I had your faith, Ne-Vec.”

“But you do, or I would not spend so much time with you.”

They smiled at each other, two strong willed souls who knew their duty to The All with a deep certainty. A strong-willed independent nature within both of them too, bound them together as friends.

The two now walked gently through one of the villages in the middle of the chasm as they talked. These smaller communities were dotted up and down, and all across, the chasm; some of them bigger than others, but all slowly growing. The water from the great springs flowed through all of these local villages and its waters were well used. The river here was different to those of

Earth. It was spring fed, and *it* created its natural outflows, not tributaries creating the river. There were many earthworks in development in the fields between the villages; ones to divert the water, and build other outflows, so they could develop more cultivations and renew the natural water table in the chasm floor. People said hello to the friends as they walked the chasm, while going about their work; Ne-Vec asking questions here and there to learn about what people were doing.

Today the children were in schools that had been built in each village. Teachers, of Icer and Clan, and the occasional guest from the different alien worlds, shared their knowledge there. Information and knowledge flowed freely here. It did not just flow down as it did in the old societal orders on this world. It flowed up and around, as well as down; it circulated like in all healthy plants and animals. Communication and shared purpose animated this new culture, and all felt like they had something to give. There were only few among them who did not listen respectfully to others, even though at some point they all struggled a little. But there was a genuine respect for each soul and what they may add to the whole, even if there were still some judgement and a little arrogance here and there.

Etera wanted to talk more to her friend about her concerns, also about the new invisible companions she had prayed for, but she let it go for now, to take second place to Ne-Vec's work, as well as to quell her nervousness at sharing such an odd occurrence. The Caretakers always worked, and they now sat down with a small group who were consulting on the possibility of manufacturing pumps to be driven by the water wheels. One was even suggesting harvesting power supply from the wheels; that they could be used to augment the alien sun cells that lit up some homes at night; maybe even create some supply to the majority who didn't yet have such things.

This group seemed to lack the skills of anything beyond the basic application of their ideas yet, so asked Ne-Vec to inform them of any others working on the same ideas in other parts of the Chasm. She shared some knowledge and her experience of another village much further up the great valley that was already trialling something similar and assured them that she would share anything else she found. They knew someone must have the skills needed, but most things were rudimentary here, despite the knowledge of the alien inhabitants, as the infrastructure was only slowly evolving with ideas and efforts such as these. The Great Chasm was yet quite young.

Ne-Vec did not suggest that they go up and gather ideas from the pumps that were being built further up, as she knew the value in letting this place be another creative point in the development of pumps for the chasm. In time what was most efficient would be used throughout the fields. This allowance of the spark of initiative, within a collective learning model, was used in all systems as the infrastructure developed here. To step on a new plant that may augment another design, or even be a greater design, was not what was done here. There was more inventiveness and initiative required at this point in time, even though the goals were collective, and more collective efforts were being made.

The Great Council, once formed, would bring to bear longer term vision for the development of The Great Chasm as a whole, and keep the Law. There would be more collective effort as time went on, but still, the spark of initiative would *always* be required. But this was all only a small part of this world's pathway, as the mysterious plan of The All for the unification of the planet, and the maturation of its peoples, went about its processes within all things and place on this desert world.

A HOODED FIGURE WALKED THROUGH THE CAVES. These caves were at the far low end of the valley; at least, far beyond where the villages and fields yet reached.

They were in the chasm wall, across the valley from where a large lake had been built with the help of a great natural depression in the valley floor. The lake was situated halfway across the width of the chasm. The small river had naturally snaked its way across the chasm and back as its initial waters had flowed down the rift valley. The fields, homes, and small villages had grown along its deepening course, then outward from it. This lake was to be a larger water store for the villages and fields that would be built below it as more souls found their way to this place. In time, many would come, so this place was always in a process of growth so it could maintain larger and larger inflows of souls.

This hooded lone figure had found these caves just beyond the great lake, beyond the hum of people and development as yet. Many times, this person had wandered here. It was a mysterious place, and it had an allure unlike any other for him. He would come here because he had, in his vain imaginings, likened it to the cave of The Power. He dared not enter that special place, so he deluded himself that this cave network was special too somehow. He had always *known* that *he* was special, and simply awaiting greater things.

Suddenly he heard a sound. A sound like the heavy grunt of air out of the nostrils of a beast. He turned, a little frightened, but then let go his fear rather quickly. There were many noises and echoes down here that only seemed to be something. It was indeed a strange place, but he felt *so alive* here, and there was a good deal of hope in him. He knew that in time he would find something special here; something that would elevate him to the position he now somehow believed was to be his.

Then there was another sound. It was like a word, but so faint that he could not be sure. It enticed him further; deeper into the labyrinth of passageways. He continued on as he pictured the validation of his imagined position, also how the faces of those who made him feel small at times would look like on that day. A shadow came over his eyes with the hate he felt for them. Then another whisper reached his ear; and another.

“Keep us safe, then, through Thine unfailing protection, O Thou the Beloved of the entire creation and the Desire of the whole universe, from them whom Thou hast made to be the manifestations of the Evil Whisperer, who whisper in men's breasts.”⁴

Travellers

"O son of man! If thine eyes be turned towards mercy, forsake the things that profit thee, and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou choosest for thyself.

*Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation."*⁵

Able had wandered far out into the desert. His heart had called him to just keep walking, so he had hiked for five days now. There was no chance of him losing his way back as he was so adept at knowing where he walked. He, just like Samuel, had no thirst and no hunger, also now realising that he could affect solid matter. More so than Sam though, as he knew that solid matter could affect him. He had stepped into a driller hole and twisted his ankle just a bit. Usually he would have seen it, but he had let go out here, simply allowing a *seemingly physical* pull on his heart out into the desert.

Right now, though, he was perched up on a high dune that he had sat down on to just look about. The sun was low in the sky, and he decided that he would watch the stars for while tonight before going off to sleep. Suddenly, in the sky, on the periphery of his vision, there was some movement. It took his breath, as Icer Airships had good skill at hiding beyond large dunes and amongst the red rocky ridges that dotted the deserts of Temelj. They would rise up from behind them and mercilessly obliterate their quarry.

He moved quickly and deftly below the lip of the dune, and was behind another, in the blink of an eye. As the movement was a good distance away, he now looked over the lip of the dune that he had instinctively moved to. His mouth then went wide as he saw it was an irregular white ribbon in the sky, then another; one in the east and the other in the west.

“No way!” he said out loud, as he watched their trajectory.

It then became apparent to him that they were converging and on a collision course; like the two streams were drawn to each other as they ran along the sky. Able had come to Temelj on a ribbon of light, as Dossd had recounted the story of his arrival many times during their wanderings in the desert. It was usually told as a reminder to Able of how helpless he once was; mostly after he had learnt a Great Story well, or he had shown good growth in his ability to walk the desert.

He now ran down the dune and along a shallow hard sand valley to be more quickly at the place they would meet. He was concerned that the people that those ribbons bore to this place may be hurt in the crash. He raced up a small dune, reaching the top just as the ribbons struck each other on the ground beyond it. A great pulse of white light hit Able, and in the waning glow of a now shrinking sphere of light, there were two upright figures in an embrace.

Able wondered down the dune, with a smile and wide eyes, as the ball of light gently dissipated presenting more clearly the two *human* creatures in the embrace. They slowly woke; the woman, suddenly wide eyed, pulled herself from the embrace. It was strange to her, because at first, it had felt very right and very natural. It was wonderful because it was so comfortable, but also unsettling as she did not know the man who held her.

“*Who are you?*” she asked; well, more so, demanded.

“Jennifer!” expressed the man, surprised to see the face of a woman he had just recently met on Earth; one he had been very drawn to.

“You *know* me?”

“*Sure*, I do. You don’t know me?”

“No.”

Able then said, “He’s Jack.”

“Yep, that’s my name. Who are you?”

“I’m Able. I never knew you this young, but you’re definitely my grandfather.”

“Okay, whatever you reckon, kid,” said Jack, but only then realising that *his real* may not be *real at all*, as he was in a desert with Jennifer, who did not know him, and with some purple skinned alien who knew his name and called him Grandpa. His confusion showed as he asked, “Where *the hell* are we?”

Able laughed out loud. “*Another planet*, Grandpa. I’m glad you came to visit. I heard you were a Traveller.”

“A Traveller?”

“I’m a Traveller,” offered Jennifer.

“Well, I was at home in bed last thing I knew,” started Jack, shrugging his shoulders, and looking around. “But now I’m *here*. There’s been a whole lot of strange happening to me lately, so *why not this*.”

“You’re my grandparents,” said Able, really happy to see both of them as young people for the first time.

Somehow that made real sense to Jennifer, while Jack was just amazed at how cool he was in this crazy situation...well, how cool he *thought* he looked. As he had said, strange things had been happening to him recently, since he had had a heart attack. After it, he had slowly become aware of an unremembered part of him; one which seemed to hold some knowledge of things, but no actual memories.

“*Maybe I am a Traveller*,” he now thought. This unknown part of him was at home here in this situation, but his straightforward, *call a spade a shovel*, nature took the lead, as he said, “But you don’t look like the progeny of *our* progeny, son, with that purple skin.”

“I’m human. You’ll be purple before long. It’s the sun here.”

“Purple eh. That’ll be different,” commented Jack, with a strange look on his face, and they all had a good chuckle, before he added, “You’re laughin’ now Grandma Jennifer, but take a look around,” making big eyes at the desolation of their destination.

With that, they all had a bit more of a laugh; strangely, *very* much at home in each other’s company.

MOST OF THE CARETAKERS HAD ARRIVED AT THE MEETING. One had travelled far to be here, and after welcoming each other there, the meeting started with prayer and a short time for meditation. Enoss Lenik chaired the meeting, as somebody had to, and it was seen as a service, not a position. Some respected elders and some of the Caretaker's assistants were there too, mostly to share news and any initial arrangements they had been tasked to complete, as well as two as minute takers.

The meetings were quite ordered, and while spiritual in nature, needed to be practical too. All meetings were spiritual endeavours here that produced organisational, social, and material outcomes. These meetings had been regular for most of these souls, with The Interpreter, and after her passing. They saw to the growth of this Faith and the nurture of its growing institutions, while the Councils saw to the order and nurturing of the local communities they served. Such was the nature of the Way for now in this Faith. It would evolve as it progressed towards the Beautiful Way envisaged by Nov-Cikel; as it slowly developed the capacity to see to the nurture of all the peoples of Temelj.

“Welcome my dear friends. The great onrushing winds of change have brought us all together here; far greater than even the winds of The Passing.”

A palpable feeling of joy and fate filled the room as a sense of honour filled each individual. It humbled them. Such humbling was associated with a grace knowingly received through a sense of great purpose in this crucial undertaking. It is a sublime state, but sadly a few in the room were not humbled. Still hidden as yet, they bided their time.

The Passing, which Enoss Lenik had mentioned, brought with it almost planet wide weather destabilisation. Rain only fell on the desert at this particular time and in its aftermath a great greenness would envelop the otherwise bare deserts of Temelj. This short-lived time of greening was a joyous outcome, but the cost was the many lives lost as these Passings raged. The winds and storms of The Passing were extremely fierce, and rightly feared. As when Stremeti's orbit sent it close to Temelj great bolts of lightning passed from one world to the other, as well as creating other gravitational forces destabilising the weather.

Thankfully, Stremeti was far smaller than Temelj, otherwise The Passing would have brought far more havoc. Temelj's rocky, heavily metallic, nature, and its molten liquid core, would have suffered enough gravitational stress to squeeze it and destabilise its plates if this other planet was larger or it passed nearer than it did. There *were* small tremors, and in some Passing's a few larger quakes, but thankfully nothing more. Stremeti was not so fortunate; thankfully there was no life on it, or maybe because of it. The Passing had been a little fiercer in last two hundred years, many believing that it was what had caused the portals to grow so high in number; the portals that *randomly* pulled aliens from other places in the universe. These suddenly appearing bubbles, these gateways, brought many to this planet.

The Hunter Lords were good at their work, usually awaiting the unfortunate souls that crashed in the desert after being cast out of these portals. These wormholes were unstable, and their tails could open anywhere in the universe, but their heads were all were tethered here. The Hunter Lords had developed ways to track these openings before they appeared here, so the extermination of the aliens was almost inevitable. There were only thirty or so aliens here in the whole chasm, as so few made an escape from the eradication squads over the years. Those here in the chasm who knew of the great reputation of the Hunters were amazed that there were even as

many as that here. The Hunters were merciless, methodical, and inspired with the great fervour of the '*necessity*' of their work.

There was a good deal of enthusiasm and anticipation as the final arrangements were consulted on for the vote. The integrity of this historic vote, along with all elections for the lesser Councils, were a crucial element of the bedrock that the institutions of this Faith were to be built upon. The process was very particular and followed to the letter. Smiles abounded as they consulted, with more than a little humour finding its way in on occasion, as there was a great sense of relief in most present that the Faith had held together and the vote was finally on them.

Sadly, a smile that beamed brightly on the face of one dark soul who took part in that meeting was, underneath, a surging fire of ego that flailed angrily at their lack of foresight. Did they not know that an Interpreter was always needed?! Were they so blind to his *obvious* vision and wisdom; his *clear* ability to take on that role? Didn't they know that he was *so close* a companion to The Interpreter, especially in the years previous to her death; *so close*?!

"We were constantly in each other's company. You all know that. You had to know The Interpreter favoured me to take up the role," he railed in thought, as he held an outward beaming smile.

This adherent had no claim; no one did. There was only ever to be one Interpreter; the writings of Nov-Cikel had made this *inviolably clear*. But this man still believed that in time he would *be seen*, or make his case, and ascend to what he saw as his natural position. So twisted was his mind that he now began to imagine that his having to wait *this long* was merely a test from His Lord. The years of no Interpreter had allowed the Whisperer deeper entry into this person's soul. From the day the Interpreter died the Whisperer had begun his work in earnest on this soul. Even

before that day, this man had sometimes toyed with the whispers of his ego, imagining that he would be a great hero of this Faith or one day even be appointed by The Interpreter as her successor.

The Caretakers stood firm and united on the actual date of the vote now, as his ability to slow it happening in their consultations was now spent. He knew that the vote would end his aspirations to claim the position of Interpreter, or slowly erode his chances to over time. He was so deepened in this Faith, but had somehow misunderstood it and its spirit, as another whisper came in his breast, *“You must act before the vote. You have prepared the soil.”* He was now straining to keep the joy on his face. He felt like it was cramping up and he needed to let out his rage. He had forced the first shadow from eyes with no one noticing, but he knew another was seeking powerful entry. He quickly excused himself, saying that he was overwhelmed by a deep spiritual feeling that he did not understand; that he needed to be alone in prayer.

This was his escape, his excuse, and was also to be another engineered *“proof”* in the story of his *obviously* high destiny, when the time came to begin openly confiding in others. He *had* been preparing the soil; whispering his story into the ears of all who would listen, to create intimations, but of course, no clear statements as yet. Always talking about the importance of the role of Interpreter and how it was unimaginable to him that it was gone, and saying far more openly, where he found positive response, the *necessity* of someone strong and true who could guide this faith. He even played on their love for her, as many missed her good guidance. Some he had even let into his evolving delusion, the ones who were also adamant that there needed to be an Interpreter, or other weak-minded souls who were easily moved by talk, but as yet they were very few. Mostly though, he sought to slowly manipulate any mind, to whatever level he could, to back his move when he stood forward. It was strange, as while he was cognisant of his machinations

and manipulations, he was still very sure of the necessity of *him* leading them. He still saw himself as superior and pure.

He *knew* in time that they would follow him; that he would be a knowledgeable guide and great heroic figure of this Faith. At least these were his sad imaginings.

ABLE, JACK, AND JENNIFER MADE THEIR WAY DOWN THE STAIRS. They had easily made their way to the chasm, well, not considering thirst and hunger, as these two had been delivered in corporeal form. The arrival too, or at least the manner of the arrival of these two Travellers, had also brought Able's physical reality into this place somehow. When they had materialised, the light pulse had affected him.

He was very happy at the result because he could now talk and work openly with people; not to mention drink the plentiful clear water. He could also eat the foods that he had seen others enjoying. The years of desert wandering had made these things so precious, and you could never undo a young man's appetite, even though he was much disciplined. He was still growing and knew that his body would drink in the fare grown in the fields of this abundant place.

The three travellers had talked together as had they walked here; about family and Travelling. Jennifer had explained that she had been to many places, had visited wonderful worlds, and yet had many other deeper experiences that had changed her; ones she had not retained any memory of. "I have been places where I was not even aware that I travelled. I was simply living my life there and had always been there, as I saw it. I have even had different jobs in those two places, and I knew how to do them, which is even more amazing to me," she had explained.

“Really, that’d be great,” Jack had commented.

“It *is* great, Jack, but very confusing, all these altered states; as well as remembering and not remembering in different ways. It’s been hard and difficult too. I’m tossed around a lot, but I surf the swell.”

All these were a consequence of her particular condition; a condition that had allowed her to travel in the first place. She had fallen into a coma on Earth and had begun travelling then. Thankfully though, she would regain the full use of her memory, even though not regaining the lost past memories of her travels and many beyond them, and would finally begin to Travel normally; if that could ever be said about Travelling. At leaving this place all those sent here via the deeper byways would have their memories of this place wiped, Jennifer too, but her full power of retaining memory would also be restored. Travelling was certainly mysterious, as such are the designs of The Creator.

Jack was just glad for the two long days of trekking to this place. While he was hungry and thirsty mostly, he *was* happy to just walk and let his mind catch up with him. He knew what Able shared with them was true, as he could feel a deep connection to Jennifer, and had so on the day he met her at his next-door neighbour’s place on Earth. It was even stranger now, and as she did not remember him at all here, it made them both a *little* cautious. They both tended to be courteous so far, rather than informal or too familiar, as they allowed the situation to be as it was and give each other space to digest it. No matter what they felt or what they believed they knew, these two were still strangers, and time must have its place.

“All I know is that you travelled, Grandpa, and that my Mum and Dad are travellers. Maybe the wild stories you told me as a kid were true, because I had no idea you all Travelled before I

got zapped here. I got here on a ribbon of light, just like you two did,” Able had then shared at the time.

“And you say we were married?” Jennifer had asked again, not wanting to burden Jack, but wanting to be sure of some things. Maybe she just needed to be safe around this man’s obvious feelings and this repeated question also helped create a stronger boundary.

“You *are* my grandparents. Well, you *were*, Jennifer. Jack is still alive, and *much* older than he is now. Well, *he will be*, as it seems I’m in the past now.”

“This is *all* nuts, mixed up and crazy, but it feels *so right*. What a *mind warp*,” expressed Jack.

“I don’t know how all these things are true,” Able had added. “I just accept it. Because I know what I know, and my sudden journey to this world taught me the power of acceptance. My being sent here, as well as my years in the desert, have taught me that acceptance of what is, is like solid ground.”

“I feel that deeply too, Able,” Jennifer had agreed, as her journeys had made very clear that *now is now*, and *here is here*, for her. She did not know how many cycles or journeys she had gone through, but there were definitely many forgotten places in amongst those that she remembered, because she was definitely *no longer* that lady who chose to Travel. She was *far more*, and the man now following her down the stairs to the chasm floor also meant *far more* to her than he should.

Jennifer's flightpath had been long and varied. Many times, she thought herself mad, as having no memories called deeply on her soul and her courage. But such is the Will of The Creator, and such is nature of Travelling, and after all, all spiritual journeys are challenging.

Before descending the stairs, they had stopped to take in the vista of the long rift valley; the river, the pathways; the fields, houses, and settlements. It was a far cry from the dunes, and it was always good to see green. Able had told them of the chasm, but seeing it, especially from above, had made the two new visitors want to linger a while before heading down the stairs.

"So, where to now?" asked Jennifer, as the three travellers reached the chasm floor.

"I will take you to Etera. She is definitely the contact point for us."

"Sounds good to me," said Jack, as the three Travellers headed off.

A head then popped out over the rim of the chasm wall above them, and quickly ducked back again. It seemed to him that these aliens and the short Walker, as this Icer saw Able, had not noticed him. He let out a sigh, got up, and headed off into the desert. This particular Icer had found himself here among a company of others from his downed airship. They had been lost in the desert for some time before coming upon the chasm. He was of a noble lineage, but his family held no title. He was now in his mid-thirties and had watched as his Icer companions, one by one, accept this New Message and decide to stay. He could have scarcely believed his eyes and his ears as stalwart Icer hearts had fallen to the Songs of Nov-Cikel, Edossd.

This man had always been intent on reaching home again and had signed no allegiance to this new Way. The other Icers he had been marooned with had kept good eye on him, as The Great Chasm thrived because the Hunter Lords thought it was a myth, and because any Icers who had

found their way here and seen it, had stayed here, or become of the new Faith. This man's company were sure that the Hunter Lords would smash this place and take many lives if they knew of it, so they had kept watch on him. But this deliberate man had been patient and bided his time before now making his escape.

"It will be at least well into tomorrow before they send Sandwalkers after me," he thought, as he now walked with purpose towards home. He would have to be lucky to evade them, *let alone* survive the desert, but he had some skills, and he knew the stars.

ETERA COULD HARDLY BELIEVE THE ASSORTMENT OF SOULS who now graced her home; one quite large space separated by some meagre furniture and the two large hanging blankets. It was also her kitchen and the two blankets far at the back of the room hid her washroom and bedroom. Light came through the edges of the flap of the canvas door and through the single oval window.

She was thinking that The All was challenging her greatly as she watched them at the table, with Mother and Sam sitting to the side on a padded rock bench, thankfully keeping to themselves. Only Etera knew of their presence there, as even Able, due to his change, could not now see or hear them. She was a little concerned at how they would all progress from here to their particular service, although Garran and Mother had hit the ground running. Mother had told her of Garran after she had been drawn back to check on Etera, to be of some support. Fortunately, Mother knew all present, and seeing Etera's confusion, came up beside her and touched her on the elbow, taking her aside.

Etera kept her back towards the group, as Mother now suggested, “Let them naturally flow to where they need to be. Garran and I have.” All while a lively, loud, and quite buoyant discussion took place between the three souls at the table.

“But I am responsible for all of you being here.”

“Oh...*are you?*”

“Oh, I see. I am just *part* of the plan. *Of course*, I am,” realised Etera.

“Yes. Just as you are growing and finding your way, these people are too. They will find their way. All grows and finds its potential in creation.”

“Does Garran know you are here?”

“No. I simply walk with him. I will enhance his work here. Our path is set.”

“What about that overgrown *child* over there?” asked Etera, referring to Sam.

“He is a mystery to himself yet. Be kind, even when he is hard, as like all others he will learn more that way. Work *with* him.”

Etera let out a sigh at that thought, just as she had expired air when she had first seen Able turn up with *two more* new strangers outside her doorway earlier this morning; two more of the short aliens. Unfortunately, too, they had picked up a small, but curious, crowd on their way to her house.

At the time, she had walked outside to Able, asking quietly, “Who are these people? Others can see them it seems.”

“They can see me now too, and these are my grandparents.”

They were not old enough to even be his parents, but she thought that maybe, they too, were out of time-sync like Able was. But that was just another mystery added to the others and she had been relieved that at least these three and Garran had corporeal form.

Able knew these two new arrivals as his grandparents, but there were actually three generations in between him and them. The pathways of these two souls, Jack and Jennifer, naturally, yet irregularly, intertwined; it just happened that way. Well, maybe it did not just happen, maybe it was written by The Creator for them, even though we all have our efforts and our choices. We are most certainly responsible for our lives, and we need push out, initiate, and create, even within the mystery of His Will for our individual journey.

“Your grandparents?” she had asked.

“Yes, this is Jennifer, and this is Jack. They are Travellers.”

“So...Travellers?”

“Yes. They travel by deeper byways, beyond time and space. Just like me and the others have,” finished Able, referring to himself, Mother, and Sam; now much clearer on the nature of Travellers from his conversations with Jennifer as they had walked to the chasm.

Jack had just shrugged his shoulders a little in reaction to Able’s explanation, as he knew nothing about all that; which was certainly true in his current state. Etera thought that was strange, but she could see that the lady, Jennifer, seemed to be aware of her travel.

“He doesn’t know he has travelled at all; it seems. I have *some* memories of mine,” offered Jennifer, to help inform Etera.

“Do you know why you are here?”

“We are family. We are drawn to each other,” said Jack, not thinking, but surprising the others, *and himself*.

Jennifer and Able smiled; Able with a little wonder, and Jennifer with understanding. She had assumed that Jack was like her; that Travellers were disallowed memory sometimes, and that understanding would pop out them from forgotten travels. But Jack had always travelled with full memory until he had finally and passionately called out for The Creator to end his seemingly endless journeys. With that request he had lost all memory of his travels and was currently living an ordinary life. But then, with Jack, *who really knew*.

Some knowledge bequeathed by his experience and efforts would emerge at times recently, like his comment about family, and in that Jennifer was right. His travelling here to Temelj seemed to be a gift of some nature; a mystery to his mind, but not to his heart. Each of us has different travels, challenges, and tests, and so do Travellers.

“All these confused people,” now said Etera out loud, as she turned back to the people at her table but accepting the requirement of flexibility. “So, what do you do, Jack?”

“I don’t do anything. At least I can’t remember doing anything particular. I just turned up here,” he answered, with a little smile for the memory of the lovely embrace with Jennifer on finding himself here.

“Not travelling, I mean, what is your skill?”

“Well, I sell pumps, and repair them. I work on designing irrigation systems for customers back home. I’ve seen a bit of what you’re doing here, and I have some ideas. I just naturally see problems and fixes with that stuff.”

“*Great.* Would you like to work with Jack, Able?” requested Etera, so glad that her prayer for someone good with water had been fulfilled, while also hoping that Able could find his feet here.

“I would *love* to!” said Able, really happy to be working with his grandpa.

Jack smiled at the lad’s enthusiasm. He seemed a good lad, strong and gentle, and it was clear that he *had to be* the boy’s grandfather from the look in the lad’s eyes.

“So, what about me then?” asked Jennifer.

Unseen, Mother had then whispered in Etera’s ear, “*I have an idea for you.*”

Mother had got up on her tippy toes, but still had to talk up to Etera, who was far taller than her. The tall purple skinned telepath nodded gently as she listened.

All five travellers now walked outside. Etera was thankful to The All that almost all of them had a purpose now, but also glad that they were out of her home. It was not that she did not enjoy their company or would not have very much enjoyed more conversation with these people, most especially so with the essence called Mother, but there were too many of them and still too much confusion in her about them.

The crowd had not gone away unfortunately. It had even grown a little, as had its buzz. So many off-worlders and a shorter, odd looking, Sandwalker visiting one home was very unusual, *especially* Etera’s. One person now looked on a little more seriously, and a little more importantly,

then rushed off to the local Council to inform them of the new arrivals. The fact that Etera had recently gone to the seat of this council with invisible friends had also gotten around, so there were a lot of questions growing in the minds of the people in this area. Were these beings the invisible ones? Who were all these new arrivals? Did they have anything to do with this special time? Was there something special about Etera after all? And there were many more.

“At least they can see this lot,” thought Etera, as Jack and Able said goodbye to Etera, and a little unhappily, to Jennifer, then headed off to explore a little.

Sam had been silent the whole time; watching these people and listening to the goings on. He had come to the conclusion that he still needed to sit back and watch, at least until he understood his purpose here. Mother’s company had settled him too, but when he had seen the person who left from the crowd to report the goings on, something made him want to follow; something in his gut.

Mother was gone, as Sam headed off up the chasm with no goodbyes, and Etera and Jennifer went back inside. She bade Jennifer to sit down and was looking forward to talking with her, as she unconsciously looked out the oval window after Sam. He turned, and smiled, like he knew she would be watching, even though he could not see through the outer reflection on the glass. She turned away quickly, but strangely and despite herself, she was blushing and smiling.

Plans and Purpose

The creature was louder in his mind now. He was deeper in the caves than he had *ever* been before. The building emotional anticipation of the vote had *driven* him deeper into the labyrinth. The voice now suddenly grew again. It was *surer* in its language, but still came in a whisper. The man stood in the deep dark with a small torch of glowing embers that only threw just enough light for him to walk the tunnels. He did not want anyone to see him from the surface as he walked these intertwining, almost chaotic, tunnels. They sloped down below the ground, as well as deep beyond the chasm wall.

He now stood and listened, as would a *hero* on the deck of a *great airship*. He had not been a hunter; he was not even a nobleman, but he had been a member of the higher Northern Icer

courts. Many a noble had asked for his opinion then, as he had been very engaged in the politics and economic discussions of great halls. He *was* somewhat changed by the Message of the New Religion, and he was certainly very much seen as a great man among its Icer adherents in his northern home, but the others here in the chasm did not know who he was *obviously destined* to be. They did not see the man who would *save* the Cause of Niov-Cikel, Edossd from *losing its way*.

The whisper was a little different in character now, and he questioned it like any *warrior lord* would. But it snapped back at him, telling him that this was not a game. That he had a special duty to The All. It made him cower in pain, even though it was just a whisper. Lost in this strange inner struggle he felt his weakness before the creature that he had coaxed out of the darkness, but it was now that he took this creature completely to his heart, fully accepting this deep malevolence in him, as well as his *high destiny*; now seeing the Whisperer as the *voice of inspiration*.

His mind then wandered, finally free from the constraints of his conscience; creating words which seemingly had great depth but were only the childish prattling of the mind; prattling that sought to imitate the language of Nov-Cikel, Himself. He was so *sure* of the high nature of his words in this deep dark place, not seeing the workings of his powerful imagination in the nature of the words he now sprouted. He then realised, yet truly *imagined*, with great emotional heights accompanying it, that he was *far* more than *he* even thought he was. He was, in his mind, beginning to see that he was not just The Interpreter; he was even reaching toward Revelation itself. He was so elated at his new "*knowledge*" that a deep heavy pride filled him, and mistaking his elation as high spiritual attainment, he went down on his knees to praise The All.

“I am your great servant. I will guide them, My Lord,” he said, in a humility that was not humility. He could see nothing at all now in the total darkness; within and without. All but the meaningless machinations of mind, driven by his ego, were apparent. All was now beyond sight in this place of darkness.

Invisible

***“I call on Thee O Manifest yet Hidden, O Unseen yet Renowned, O Onlooker sought by all!
Thou the Sufficing, Thou the Healing, Thou the Abiding, O Thou Abiding One!”⁶***

The Icer noble tried to remember the phrase. *“Be invisible. Don’t be there,”* he thought, as he walked purposefully along with his head just below the ridgeline of a dune. He was damned if he was going to get caught by vermin Sandwalkers, even though what he *had* gathered from one of them in the chasm was very impressive to a man who was schooled and blooded in the hunt. His father was a hunter, as was he, and to him the others he left back at the chasm were simply traitors. *“They will get theirs,”* he now huffed out loud to himself.

He walked the front of the dune, but as near to the top of it as he could. This was so that he could not be seen above its ridge line but also so that his tracks would disappear more quickly. Higher on its face they would be covered more quickly by the sand blown over its ridge. The tumbling sand would fill them and keep his path hidden. It was harder to walk in the soft sand on

the front of the dunes, rather than on the more compacted sand at the top of a dune or any hard sandy ground occasionally found between them, but the Sawndwalkers finding him was more of a danger than his energy. To do this, and to keep from walking in windless places, were some of the lessons a Walker in the chasm had shared with him.

The sand and the wind were his friends right now and he made all haste while still trying to remember the saying he was intent on regathering. “*Be uncatchable as the wind,*” he thought. This was definitely one saying the old Sandwalker had shared. Yet he knew it was not the phrase that he sought. “Don’t be where they are looking,” he said out loud, but that just sounded stupid, as the words were somehow insufficient.

There was something about words and their placement that gave out the one clear feel or strain of meaning that powered them. He was now thinking that he should have paid more attention, instead of concentrating on his hatred for the Walker who shared these words and skills with him. He *had* learned over time though that they had *some* nobility, and their sayings held a certain strain of honour like those of the sailors of Icer airships. These thoughts then added more meaning to his fight to return home, because they were such a capable and noble foe, it made his escape somehow feel greater. Strange is the mind of aware beings; that it can imagine what it wills or what it needs to imagine. The truth was that they did share the sense of nobility, and of sacrifice, but the Icers were ignorant, and their cause was certainly not meaningful. The rest inside him was just pride and the will to win over the great odds of his escape.

“Just as the wind that dies away, you must not be there,” he finally pronounced out loud.

Part of him was impressed by this saying as he gathered the breezes of its wisdom. He thought about how he could use its intimations and apply them in his escape. It was more powerful

than simply one tool. It would have many applications and implications, and it now allowed his creativity to bloom. It was also a cautionary note to him, as his pursuers were steeped in such sayings and they would already have many skills that arose from these words; skills, combined with long experience among the dunes.

He had heard, and seen, many times how Sandwalkers were able to evade capture, even when he and his hunters were right on top of them. Many stories of them vanishing were told around hunter tables. He berated himself a little again, as he would have loved to have learned more of their skill during his time in the chasm and he knew he would *have to be* on his game.

THE FIGURE AGAIN ENTERED THE CAVE. It was the cave that housed The Power and once more the circle of light on the single pedestal had disappeared from sight before it could be seen. This soul now had a small torch, paper, and pen, and went about very methodically scribbling down the symbols of the old language there.

This person's intent was to save the structure of the Faith that they loved. To them, The Interpreter was so essential to the structure and future of this Faith that they would do anything to support its continuance. This person had been influenced by the poisonous words and intimations of the one that walked the labyrinth of caves at the bottom of the chasm. There had been no open sharing though, so this soul had taken on their own narrative, seeing themselves as the hero of the Beautiful Way.

It was not a selfish intent, even though this person also sought this high position to save the Faith they loved. But it *was* a foolish thing, because the Instructions of Nov-Cikel, Edossd, Himself, barred any such thinking. It seemed that this person was so intent on their goal that they

disregarded, or were ignorant of, the very words of the Messenger Himself. It is strange how ignoble thoughts, or clear omissions, drive the minds of those who are easily manipulated by others or their own ego.

This soul continued about their work, when there was suddenly a sound heard from the cave's corridor. The intruder put out the light and sat in the shadows of a natural niche in the wall; sitting invisible to the other who entered there. The hooded figure that now entered had a gently lit flame and took time looking around the cavern; not at all intent on the carvings on the walls. The figure then moved towards the small pillar, the pedestal, and stood before it for a while. A hand came out of its sleeve as the figure placed its palm on the top of the carved sandstone. This soul then breathed deeply, as if breathing in the spirit of the Great Ones who had walked here.

The soul hidden in the dark niche watched the hand caress the sandstone and was surprised at seeing the ring on that hand. This mistaken soul had seen this ring before and was amazed at such a revelation. No one was given permission to enter here and the person hiding could not believe that such a personage would allow themselves to even consider it. It then suddenly all made sense to the invisible intruder, but only in this soul's convoluted mind, that *this person*, should surely be the new Interpreter.

The person in the hooded apparel then breathed deep again, looked around, and turned to leave. As the light of their torch dimmed in this internal cavern the intruder came out of the dark niche. So much was "*apparent*" to this soul now, not realising that the truth of things remains hidden in dark places. Why are souls so easily deluded in the darkness of ignorance, when the Light and a little observation make things truly apparent?

The intruder waited a short while and then left that place with great caution. She no longer sought the position and would certainly use all her gathered knowledge of this place to aid the accession of the hooded person to the position of Interpreter. This soul would not collude with the one who she now knew would take the position, but she would certainly add weight to their claim at the right time. Pride swelled in her heart as she thought of her high service and indeed the high level of humility in this act of allowing one more worthy to take the position. Yes, these were this person's thoughts. Strange and fickle is the mind when ruled by some ignorance and the lower nature.

Inside the cave stayed dark after the intruder left. Strangely, the Circle of Light did not reappear as it always did when the cave was empty. A truly invisible figure then came out of the darkness. It was Sam. He was not sure what he had seen, but he would sure keep an eye on the one who had hidden. The other person in the hood was also a tall local, so he had made a mental note of their gait as they walked out of the chamber. He had *also* seen the ring, so the investigation was on in earnest. He was now definitely beginning to feel like an Agent.

Sam didn't know that this place was off limits to everyone, but he knew that the intruder was not supposed to be there. The low light torch and this person hiding away when the other soul had entered made that very clear, but he did not have a bad feeling about the other hooded figure. It was in the way that soul walked about the cavern. The reverence they seemed to show; the quality of that soul's movements seemed to be that of a custodian, rather than a slinking intruder. But he also knew how some body language can be deceiving when we don't know the wider picture. He smiled at his new *Agent* self as he wandered out after the intruder.

Sam had definitely found his purpose here and why he had been recruited by The Agency. He was right in his element in all this, and when we are in our element and being of service, the two merge and become one. It is the greatest of joys. We find ourselves, our purpose is clear, we have endless energy, and we can't help but drive forward.

JACK AND ABLE HAD BEGUN WORKING TOGETHER, and Etera had gone off with Jennifer to the local children's class group. Mother had suggested this service for Jennifer, as she had remembered how some adults in her community on Earth had talked at times about being in Jennifer's children's class. They had said that she had a certain spirit, which made them feel they could explore their inner abilities and what gave them joy. It had been a great foundation for their souls and their lives. That seemed forever ago, but she definitely remembered the power of the enthusiasm in these people's voices as they spoke about her.

They had loved Jennifer's ways of getting them engaged. One clearly recalled her helping a youth take over the class after a number of years. Another had told of how she had missed Jennifer when she had moved on to start another children's group, but remembered the joy, and obvious passion, that this older woman had for children and teaching. Mother was sure that the Jennifer, who was now here, was not *yet* that teacher on Earth of the Outer Realities, but she knew for sure, that inside this young lady was a penchant for the spiritual development of children.

Jack and Able had been looking at the water wheels, amongst other things; working on a rudimentary movement on them, to pump water, with what resources they could find in the local community. They decided that they would work on the movement that seemed to best suit and test

it until they perfected it. They knew that it would not be a strong pump, but it could be used eventually to push water in small amounts to higher parts of the fields nearby.

There were particular, and quite crucial vine plants growing here too that needed a little more than the available downflow was providing. The Clan folk had grown and used these ground running plants on the fields below the Icer mountains. There were only a few immature ones in this part of the chasm as yet, but they grew long and thick, and when cut off the rest of the vine, and kept from water, they hollowed out on the inside and hardened on the outside. When completely dried out, the clans had used them to move water in the fields, as they had to maximise the water they were allowed, and lower evaporation. So, in time, with the skill of the Clan folk here, these vine pipes would make any pumps developed more useful.

There was also a suggestion from a local Icer on maybe milling seed with the water wheels. Jack's mind went back to a book he once read on water wheels. It was about the great water wheels of early Britain, which stemmed from the time of the Romans. Milling stones were not an invention of the Romans though. They went back well over two thousand years and were thought to have first been used in Asia Minor.

In any case, the Clan folk here knew a good deal about milling grain, but their mills had been powered by walking, not water. Their stones were far smaller and thinner than ones on Earth, but the rock was as strong as the high quartz millstones of France. The type of rock they manufactured theirs from, had natural joints, so could be easily split. It also had natural shallow crevices on its surface which made perfect stones for milling. The 'walking' millstones used here were not round; they were rectangular or square, and somewhat irregular. Ropes were tied to holes

in the corners; holes that took months and many hands to cut with implements made of the same rock and what the clan folk called cutting sand.

The Clan folk used rope and harnesses made from unused plant fibres, pulling outward and moving in energy efficient circles for many hours back in their home villages. The Icers guarded their wood, so the Clan folk utilised stone and rope for their work; stone from the desert and platted rope from fibrous stems of the food crops that they grew. They also used dried-out stems of higher growing crops as digging implements and some for spears. Here in the chasm, many of these small mills had been set up; up and down, and across, it. They were very excited with the prospect of these small water wheels supplying the power for grinding, so a very willing team was forming around these two visitors.

As they went about this work, an audacious plan grew slowly in Jack's mind. It was to create a bigger wheel on the small river. He knew that a bigger wheel was capable of doing so much more than mill grain. Such a big wheel with the right gearing would power higher flow pumps and maybe even generate good amounts of electricity; not to mention more efficient milling.

The small water wheels, like a lot of things here, were set up to be used, completed, or enhanced, in the future. *So much* here was done that way. The people of this place just built things, and trusted that nothing would be wasted, using their initiative, as well as under instruction from Nov-Cikel and The Interpreter. Jack eventually learned that they had let these water wheels fall into disuse when they realised the greater necessity for wood to be grown first; for further development of the wheels, and for other infrastructure. Their attention and human resources had moved on to this priority, leaving the development of the wheels for a later time. They also

believed that someone with skills would come and complete things, trusting the guidance of the Interpreter and doing what was in front of them.

The big thing, the priority up and down The Great Chasm, was still more about the growing of wood. Much infrastructure here would need its wide application and dependability. Thankfully too, a long way up the chasm, a rich deposit fire-stone had been found, so now even more metals were being extracted, forged, beaten and shaped. This would be especially useful when it came to building longer lasting mechanisms to utilise the wheels, and definitely *required* on a large wheel if Jack's idea came to fruition.

Crops and fruit trees had developed quite well all across this rift valley. Trees grown for wood had been, naturally, somewhat secondary at first. But they were now at least planted and growing all around the chasm; small plantations at different levels of growth. Jack, Able, and the rest of the working group, knew that they had to cast their net wider to do the bigger water wheel, as the wood trees hereabouts were still just small saplings.

Jack would share all his knowledge with Able, and as the future would have it, it would eventually fall to him to complete what they had started. But right at the moment, Able smiled at Jack as they began to dig some new earth works to enhance the natural flow of water in the fields. The Clan folk who laboured with them learned new ways, but Jack learned more from them; after all they were farmers of a desert world.

This group found themselves mainly intent on getting the irrigation to the wood tree saplings here to enhance their growth; as the water wheels, milling, pumping, irrigation, and wood production, were all intertwined; all necessary and organically linked. No single activity would create growth, so they worked on various tasks through the day, and on different days. They had

also heard that there was another alien, who was working not too far away in the chasm, who knew a lot about plants and growth. Tomorrow they would go and ask his advice.

Jack felt more driven than he ever had before, at least in his available memory. This was not just a job; it was challenging, and his skills were more valuable and necessary for life here. Able loved seeing his grandfather so energetic and capable, as Jack had been very old in his time with the boy on Earth. He had not had the chance to see him, and work with him, like this. Jack smiled when he had looked up, realising the nature of the boy's joy, and his heart warmed as he went back to work. Building a new world from scratch was exciting to Able, as well working with Jack. To aid the development of a new civilisation on the ground was certainly no small thing.

There *had* been meetings and conversations before Jack and Able had gone about their business here. It was good manners after all, and not wise to simply begin on his ideas without asking about the needs and current thrust of the local group's efforts. The people here had been very excited about Jack's knowledge and the initial meeting was light, helpful, and encouraging; not heavy or restrictive as some can be. Some meetings do require heavy lifting though, as applications, implications, creative resolutions, and the true nature of a situation, need to be sought out properly. But so often too, too much talk or control weigh heavily on people's hearts, depleting inspiration, and enthusiasm; even sometimes suffocating the will to act.

Even though the work was very physical here, spiritual advancement had been the foundation of this new culture. It was the driving force and purpose, and oil on the cogs, even in the work of building material infrastructure and developing intellectual advancement in The Great Chasm. When spiritual principles underpin development, the spirit enhances and inspires action, and unity and participation rise more easily. The monsters of self-interest, or apathy; the

controlling nature of superiority and ego; the closed-minded dogma of ideologues and zealots; get in the way of so much that can grow in any society; on any world.

The balance of an open mind, a glasslike unbiased observation, the light of experience, and use of The Creative Word, formed a healthy balance, or tension, between reason and Faith here. Seeking the truth had become their way; a shared exploration, using experience and some reflection, more so than wanderings of the mind on mind, or thought on thought. They gathered spiritual insights and learned together of new tools of thought and action, which all enhanced the process of growth in this place. Here in the chasm, people used all these things, even though they were still working on learning how to get better at using them and still needing time to experience the full power inherent in them.

There is no freewill world in the universe that does not have to drive out of its low ebb at the New Tide, and relearn and discover; none, that can succeed without the regular renewal of spiritual energies through the fresh impulses of The Creative Word.

HE SAT THIRSTY AND DEJECTED. It had been almost two weeks now and he was out of water. All he wanted to see as he looked up to the sky was an airship in full sail. More so, he wanted to be on one, sailing above all his current weakness and pain. These airships were streamlined balloons with wooden gondolas hanging below them, bound by *good Icer rope*. These craft were now mostly propelled by electric motors salvaged from alien ships and with the use of rudimentary propellers made from *good Icer wood*.

Many airships still used sails, but all Hunters were equipped with motors. Even so, the hunter airships still had sails in their holds, as well as retaining hatches in their hulls to let them

out below. There would always be times when even the hunters could push out the great beams from other hatches on the sides of their hulls and drop the sails tied to them, as well as out of the belly hatches. The romance of the sail and the wind had not left this people, but their technology had grown from the death hunts of aliens. Like vultures they would pick over the corpses of spaceships that crashed here, after exterminating all crew and passengers.

This Icer had been as *invisible* as he could, but his food and water had run out. At first, he had railed in anger at life's course, but eventually, due to his powerlessness, he finally came to a begrudging and unhappy acceptance of his fate. He now allowed himself some relief in the thought that he had *battled hard* to reach home, while the others had stayed in comfort. He was *no* traitor, so felt a sense of meaning even in his failure. But in the end, failure was failure, as even though he *could* find his way back, he also now knew that he would not make it.

He looked about, realising that he had been childish in this attempt. There was much maturity to be gathered in this place of humility, now that he sat squarely before the nature of his limited being and his own mortality. So many times, we see our lack of consideration too late, but the damage is done. We can only reflect, reset, and go again. Sometimes we are quite disappointed in ourselves, but thankfully we *have* been given understanding of our flaws. Hopefully, with a clear vision, we may see the things within us that must change or grow. Such is the wisdom of corporeal life and the power of our physical journey. Such is the power of the physical life construct to instruct our souls, and in this moment, he began to reflect in surrender itself; no longer merely seeking power over life through his mind and ability but seeking greater understanding within it.

He sat there, very weak physically, and he breathed gently as he acquiesced to the fate of his sure departure from this life. He thought of home and his family. He loved his family and the Icer ways. He *loved* his culture and had done his best to become a worthy and a useful member of it. He loved the people of his town that sat below the Fear Cliffs and now laughed at the antics of him and his friends when they were young, remembering how they had grown into men and women of substance. He had always seen it as his duty to protect and lead, but he had failed to keep the company and crew of his airship away from the danger of Sandwalkers and their new religion.

There were many Icer people living in The Great Chasm, and he wondered at that now. He had seen them working together with Clan folk and *even aliens*; only now realising that they were mostly quite ragged, but happy. He saw a gentle honour in all of the people there, as there were no nobles in this new culture. Well, other than the woman, Etera. She had tried to help him see its promise, at least talking to him like an Icer. She had made very clear to him the nature of The Power and its effect on the history of the planet; how even the Icer culture had grown from Its previous infusions in the ages before. He had *listened*, but he had not seen.

As he now considered it, he thought how rare it was to see any Icer in humility before The All these days. They had found new science when the portals opened and a new purpose to defend their world. They had relied on their own power once they had stopped fighting each other, and after they had, as they put it, domesticated the Clans. He felt a little uneasy at that thought now. The Clan folk, especially the Walkers, were people to him now, even though he saw them as the enemy. He saw though, how most of his life he was used to them being at a distance, and as dehumanised null beings. But still, he felt they were a threat. The Clans' old religion had certainly made them dangerous for a long time, as most of them fell so easily to the shallow words of the bloodthirsty zealots among them.

It was then that he clearly saw the bloodthirsty nature of his own people, as they had taken many more Clan lives in subjugating them; even though as he saw it, in defence of The Icer peoples. He now saw how this new Way in the chasm had made them all, Icer and Clan, more noble and trusting, *and* they were working together. He had not even thought of this possibility before finding himself there. It was not something Icer's, most especially Hunters, even thought about. His mind reeled as he fought these new thoughts, because his love for his people and his culture was strong. But after some time sitting there, he came to understand that it did not matter now anyway, as he was almost done.

He now remembered his grandmother and how she had told him stories of an ancient Icer religion; how he had grown older and considered them useless myths and fantasies suitable only for children. His conciseness was now wandering with the lack of water, but those old stories came back clearly. It was in *these* stories that he saw The Great Chasm and the claim of Nov-Cikel clearly. He shook his head, as he tried to shake off the thoughts of acceptance. But he could not shake them. He began to laugh out loud, almost in delirium; now realising that he may have damned himself to die in the desert *for nothing*. The Spirit in the old Icer stories and the Spirit in the chasm were the same. The same essence ran through them. It was unmistakeable. A single invisible power and wisdom sat clearly there.

Two Sandwalkers sat invisible too, beyond a few lines of dunes. They had tracked this hunter and were to see to his safety. No one was dragged back to The Great Chasm, and only voluntarily could one enter or stay there. This man had not been the first to leave that place. Many of the Clan's had come to it early on and walked home to their Clan lands, after seeing the people struggling to survive, or not reaching the heights of spirit they expected, in the early stages of its

development. They did not see the Word; they saw the people and their condition, so they were mistaken about its beauty and power.

This Hunter was the first Icer to leave there, and while it was a great danger to The Chasm to have this man reach any of the Hunter Lords and lead them back, the laws of Nov-Cikel, Edossd were clear. No one would be held against their will within the walls of The Great Chasm and to take a life was also *strictly* forbidden. It had been decided by the Caretakers that he should be followed and for those who escorted him to let the wisdom of the situation unfold.

It had weighed heavily on these two Sandwalkers as they followed him, and they had once even led this hunter to food and water sources without his knowledge. They had seen his tracks and his course become very erratic again today, knowing that he must have depleted his resources again. But they stayed away to allow the perfection of the designs of The All play its part in this man's fate; to allow humility some time with him. They sat in the dunes beyond his sight, reflecting on their own actions too, knowing they aided a fool, a dangerous one; but still they trusted.

This trust in the wisdom of The All and in the power of crisis and victory, allowed them this. Many of this new Faith had been slaughtered, gaoled, or cast out into the desert to die, by those of the Clans in this new Belief's early days. Many suffered and died, before some of the Clans became followers, and the time of the Sandwalkers began.

Nov-Cikel had disappeared into the desert with some of his followers before this change in the Clans, so Sandwalkers were sent out to find the Great Chasm that he had spoken of. They went out into the desert find His promised paradise and put off the yolk of the Icers. It was thought that the good actions of each individual in a clan allowed their Sandwalker to find The Great Chasm and so free them. The followers of Nov-Cikel were still harassed and gaoled in some clans

that had refused the new Messenger, but many other clans had now joined this new way. New religions of every age fell afoul of the older religious and the cultural order where they arose. There were many reasons, but mostly it was simply *change*. Change takes time and can sometimes be hard won.

The two Walkers knew that their friend was not going anywhere and so had settled in to pray and eat. They had prayed for this soul and for their own acceptance of the Will of The All in this matter, as they knew He could see far more and knew the fate of all creatures. Strangely the Hunter now prayed too. He talked with the God of his grandmother and asked for His aid, and immediately he saw a light; one that seemed like a circle, far off due north. He was amazed at the immediacy of the answer, but also feeling his pride rise again with the hope of escape that it gave. It was strange, as he definitely noticed his ego rise and did not like this feeling of pride. He saw its lower form darken his heart and he felt its heavy weight after the freedom afforded by his surrender. Pride was praised and sought after by Icers, especially among the Hunters, but it now felt heavy to him, as he had only just come to know the freedom of humility in the spirit.

He then stood up, in a new humility, looking up to the night sky that had now fully darkened. *It* even seemed different somehow, like he had *new eyes*. He had not taken his eyes from the tiny circle of light and now gathered its bearing from the stars. As he did, it faded from sight. He knew he would wander a little in his current state, but he would adjust, as he was well schooled in bearings. He knew that his bearings deep within had changed though, and his soul breathed deep, crying openly at the release and beauty of this moment. He then set off to walk in the night; now somehow realising more energy bequeathed by hope and the seed of faith that had just sprung from the soil of his heart.

SOMETHING MAGICAL HAD HAPPENED IN THE NIGHT. Garran and Acktan could hardly believe their eyes. This seed had germinated and thankfully had begun to sprout; not die like all the others. They had tried many differing soils and adjusted the PH many times, but these fruit vine seeds brought by the clan group that had settled in this part of the chasm had still failed to take to the soils here. This new tender herb from one of the seeds had been dying too, but had seemed to regroup overnight, and there was granular sand now apparent, mixed in with the soil.

The two men had even considered putting seeds under different light, or even stressing them with concoctions to change their DNA in an attempt to create new mutagenic strains that might take to the soils here. Garran *had* been prompted to change the soil mix at times with sand but had not thought that such highly granular sand would allow the roots to feed well. They had been over-watering and maybe over-feeding the sprouts it now seemed. The small sandstone nursery pot had also been moved out into the morning sun. The people working with Garran and Acktan all gave the '*Not me...It's a mystery*' looks to each other.

Mother smiled at the wonder in her father's eyes. She loved him beyond life and had worked with him intimately after they had both moved on from their physical life; each working deep within the essence of creation. She was very thankful to see him in his younger form, in his first life before her birth; to share these days with him even though he could not see or hear her. She had resisted the urge to leave a message in the soil for Garran. It had been quite a change for this man already and she did not want to make things harder for him. She was also not yet sure what were wise boundaries to keep in this case.

Such an essence may use their discernment, but all beyond the physical life were totally subject to the Great Will and when she would be taken from this place was unknown. She had worked on countless worlds from deep within the nature of things. She was a soul given to great responsibility in the worlds beyond her first life, and so too was her father; The Doc, as he was called to those Deeper and Deepest. These two grew many things together; endless souls, and endless worlds, benefitted from their work.

It was then that Jack and Able turned up with a lady from their adopted community, to ask questions about enhancing the growth of the wood saplings. When they came up, Garran turned around and Able's eyes went wide.

"Mr Gardiner," he said, in great surprise.

Garran looked at the young man, also quite surprised that he knew his last name. "Who are you?" he asked.

"Another relative?" asked Jack.

"I don't think so, but I do know him from home. He's younger though."

"I don't remember you," said Garran, to Able.

"I know you in your future, Mr Gardiner."

They all stood there smiling, and then laughing.

"Sure gettin' crazy eh, mate," said Jack, to Garran. "I'm Jack."

"I'm Garran. And I am right with you on *that*, Jack."

It was then that Mother tapped Able on the shoulder. He felt it was her, and he asked, “Is he family? Once, for yes.” One tap came again on his shoulder.

“*He’s* family,” announced Able. “I don’t know where he fits in, but *he’s* family.”

Garran was just happy for the company of people from Earth and really glad that the lad and Jack also shared the same culture as him; that was family enough. It is a great joy and adventure experiencing other cultures, but we are very at home in our own. Meaning can be shared more easily in our native tongue and with the local lingo. There is something more than language, it is the shared sensibilities of our culture that we feel at home in. It is why people from another place who come to a new country tend to gather together. Some believe that this is because they wish to be separate, and maybe some do, even if it is not apparent to them. But mostly, it is just to be more comfortable and really about feeling at home and some ease of communication. Yet an effort to integrate with others is worthy and necessary, as separation, even due to individual’s temperament or personality, is not useful, and can breed an *otherness* that is destructive anywhere.

One day, all the people of this planet, and all the people of Earth of the Outer Realities for that matter, would come to share sensibilities and one language, as they became one planet and one people. Yet the wonderfully varied languages would also remain as second languages. Who knew, maybe in time, many languages would not serve a planetary society, or yet again, maybe they would enrich it with an eloquent tapestry, just as the different ways of different places did.

The goings on with the seedling and the other aliens visiting here had again drawn a crowd. Enoss Lenik would be informed, as his assistant had again noticed a small problematic crowd. She now felt guided from her recent experiences, and now seeing this going on, she knew that Enoss would not be happy. Any strange occurrences this close to the vote would not be helpful, and

things, especially to this soul, were getting very complicated. It was *surely* providence that she had come this particular way down the chasm today. There was a main pathway here, but also many others wandering the breadth of the chasm and the length of what had been farmed and developed so far.

She now headed off further down the chasm, as she had seen Enoss heading that way yesterday. He had not returned, to her notice, so it was the best chance of finding him. He was always about the work here and very interested in the work in every place in the chasm.

The assistant was quite sure of the gravity of the situation and was feeling more and more a part of this *momentous* time, also her *needful* part in the history of her Faith. Her name was Senna Kytell. Senna was very sure of her Faith and found others a little lacking, tending to set them straight with loving kindness...well...as he saw it. She was so happy for her ability to quote the writings for the sake of better understanding in others, as *her* words were *obviously* not enough. Strange intentions and strange mixtures of darkness and light can arise in a soul, and strangely too, the *delivery* and *spirit* of even sharing Holy Words can sometimes even make the words of a Messenger a morbid load on the heart and soul of others.

“A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.”⁷

Senna was sure that she understood the virtue of kindness, and she thought she used it, but alas as we sometimes do, she could not see how she *actually* affected others; maybe *all* of us do

to some degree or measure. There are also many who can be too overly affected by others. This too is a quirk of life and something to seek to defeat; even though it may be a natural part of a particular soul's makeup. But a kindly tongue is a kindly tongue. It rises from the intention of love and humility, and people feel it, no matter our words. True kindness always hits its mark and is certainly not merely a change of tone while the beast inside hides its apathy, or pours out its pride, need to control, anger or frustration; even in a seemingly respectful way. Better to be angry and be seen, than hide the beast behind "*kind*" words.

In any case, Senna, like all souls, had the ability to learn and we are The All's to judge and grow. She now headed off down the main pathway, as Garran talked with Able and Jack away from the others there. His success with the seed germination was a major breakthrough for this small settlement, and it would mean a good deal to all the people of the chasm. The Clan folk, no matter where they hailed from, knew the value of the fruit of this vine, so those present were very animated. News of this breakthrough, after so many years of trying, would spread fast.

"So, we're family?" asked Garran, still trying to gather the threads.

"In another time, I believe; a time you and I haven't lived yet. I *am* in your community, and I know your wife. She is very kind to me and my grandfather, and a lot of fun," explained Able.

"My wife? So, I will marry?"

"I suppose you will."

"Who is my wife?"

Able just looked at him, realising he had gone too far, and showing it.

“*Of course.* I don’t want to know anyway. Who’s your grandfather?”

“Jack, here,” said Able, pointing to Jack.

Garran’s eyes questioned the reality of that due to the small age difference of these two souls, then looked to Jack.

“Sorry, I got nothing, mate. I seem to be in the dark about *my own* life, and unless some knowledge just pops out to say giddyay...well, that’s it.”

Garran looked more confused, and Jack said, “I don’t understand either, Garran. I think we should just get down to the work at hand. Something inside me is telling me that how it all fits together isn’t as important as the work in front of us right now.”

“Sure,” agreed Garran, while still very curious, and thinking that given time he would like to chat more about all this.

With that Jack, Able, and Garran started consulting on enhancing the growth of the wood trees, while Mother, and all present, felt the strong warm feeling of family in their hearts.

As they went on with the business at hand Garran called Acktan over with a hand signal. But Acktan didn’t understand the signal at all. It was so foreign to a hard back amphibian humanoid like him that it could not provide the intended meaning to him. While the hand gestures were quite different among the aliens, he was also certainly one exception to the general sameness of body language of the cultures and kinds here; *including* the dancing aliens, but they were *all* body language, along with some cool sounds. Even so, Jack and Garran could not understand how such a natural signal was not easily evident.

ETERA AND SAM WALKED AROUND THE NEARBY FIELDS. He had come back this way following his quarry when the company of someone who he could *actually talk with* had called to him. When he saw Etera's abode he followed this need to her door. The fact that he really liked this young lady's spirit also drew him. She took no prisoners, even when she did not know what the hell was going on. He liked that.

He had not wanted to tell Etera what he had been up to over the last week. He had just wanted to talk, and spend some time with her, as connection is a deep need in all of us. He *did* need some intel' from her too, but he believed he would hopefully gather that gently if she did not read his mind again. He didn't mind her doing that, but he figured if something *was* afoot, the less people knew about it the better; as words can leak, travel too far, and get very jumbled sometimes. They can also reach back to those being investigated, and he couldn't have talk circumventing an outcome. He was now beginning to understand the nature of what his favourite phrase in his future work would be, '*Need to know.*'

"You must have been up to something all this time?" she now queried, as they walked.

"I've just been looking around. You know, seeing how things work here."

"Oh, *please!*"

Sam allowed himself a chuckle, as he looked ahead at the path they walked, and said, "Need to know, Ma'am. *Need to know.*"

"I could just take it."

"You *wouldn't*. You're all noble and everything," he said, more as a friendly challenge.

"I have flaws just like you. I just have some morals and a sense of purpose as well."

“Yeah, well that’s great for *you*,” retorted Sam, wondering how she did not see *these things* in him.

“It’s *great* for anyone, and you *know* it.”

He shook his head as they continued along the path side by side. She did not get what he had meant. But then she did, saying, “Sorry, Sam. I know you have had purpose and have morals too. But you make it *so* hard to see them.”

“Can’t help it, I suppose.”

They smiled at that, and each other. Sam quickly looked down, then back ahead again; Etera too, looking away as they walked on. There *was* something between them, a connection, but she sensed that Sam would not be here for long. She also knew the nature of infatuation, physical attraction, and the lies they may whisper to a soul; all these, but also now knowing from Able that another waited for her in the future. So, it was not a simple thing for her, but she did like Sam. Sometimes in life the right person comes along but the circumstances are not propitious.

“You will leave here soon, Sam, and we both have work to do. I don’t know what you are up to, but I hope you will be cautious.”

“I’m not afraid of anything, or *anyone*, darlin’.”

Etera shook her head and sighed, which hit Sam in the heart so hard that it actually hurt. Her comment about him leaving here soon had hurt a little too, but a little realisation that she was feeling the same way had snuck in with it. He had never cared for anyone’s opinion of him for most of his life, but he cared about her response to his words that were now screaming at him through her body language.

“It’s not about *you*, Sam. I was asking you to be careful that you don’t destabilise things. This is a crucial time, and all of you turning up is already making things wobble a bit. You are all here to be *of service*. Remember that.”

“Maybe we’re here because your All knows what’s best,” ventured young Deveroux, again slowly beginning to become the Agent he would be, while also getting the message.

A respectful acceptance reached Etera’s face, and he felt great, as she said, “Yes, Sam. I suppose so.”

“So, what’s the deal with this place?” asked Sam as they walked on. “Other than you, people are so nice,” he said in humour, yet not happy with it in a way too. He didn’t want any distance between them now, so he quickly said, “Sorry, I’m just so used to being this way.”

She stopped and looked at him in a kindly way, now realising *her own* lack of compassion and understanding with him, and his heart melted, as she said gently, “You have had a life devoid of love, and one with little justice.” Her eyes watered a little at that, feeling deeply what this young soul had suffered. She had gathered much when he had opened up his mind to her early on but had let her frustration with him at the time ignore a good deal of what she found. Maybe it was his story that had made him attractive to her, she now thought, and she went on to say, “All we are building here is about opening wide the flows of love, which your life story and so many others are too devoid of. It is love in our personal intent and actions; in all we build physically here; even intellectually, that will change this place. Love is the reason and the attitude for the future of all the peoples of our planet. It is the spirit of justice...if it is *pure* love. Justice is true love in action. It is enshrined in our attitudes toward each other, even in our laws and the nature of their application.”

“Love aids justice, and justice aids love. I like it,” mused Sam, nodding his head in thanks.

She had not seen him this way and he was very aware by the tone of her words that he was feeling the pure love she talked about. Both then continued walking.

“I’ve felt this feeling before. In the words of a small book I found, and originally when I helped someone in my neighbourhood. Also, when people started to feel safe; when their hope rose. They’re really getting together now. I can see the truth of your words about love and justice clearly in *all* my life experience; in working to make my community safe *and* in the hard life I had before it. I’ve seen love and justice flow and I’ve also suffered the straining absence of them both as well. Your words *couldn’t* be *more clear* to me.”

This shared moment gave her more respect for Sam. It endeared her more to him because she could see he had more inner depth than she gave him credit for. It seemed to change her mind about possibilities with him, and he could feel it. She kept on walking, and Sam walked respectfully a little behind to her side. They walked for a long time in silence in the pure love of our deeper beings, but also in that silence, both of them felt the beauty of new love’s seed beginning to germinate in their hearts. There was an acceptance of its most likely short fate, but there was hope too.

After all, doesn’t love bring hope in *all* things.

Justice

“O SON OF SPIRIT!

*The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice;
turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee.
By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others,
and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour.
Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the
sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.”⁸*

Enoss Lenik sat with Garran, Jack, and Able, in a small block dwelling. It had a wide water pool in its centre, and one smaller one, at the back of the single room dwelling. It was Acktan's home and a cot had been set up there for Garran. Enoss had called them to a meeting after he was informed by his assistant of the recent events. He had consulted with other Caretakers and reflected on what was best to do in this situation, and those involved now sat around Acktan's table. It was three lumps of rock basically, as wood was so precious at this time here.

“You have *all* created quite a stir, but you have also done good work in such a short time. I was concerned about your impact here, but we have decided together that it is *us* who need have more faith in the strength of the Beautiful Way and in the wisdom within the designs of The Fashioner. We are very appreciative of your work and indeed fortunate to have you here, but we would ask that you please not share the nature your appearances here and try to be a little less noticed. The folk here are used to aliens, even accepting of some who were quite mad from the slaughter they lived through or from their ordeal in the desert before reaching here.”

“Do you see us as psychologically unhinged?” asked Garran.

“The Caretakers have consulted on your place among us, and we have talked with Ennon. He says you are quite sane, Garran, but we cannot accept your stories.”

“Well, *thanks*, ” said Garran, with a small sigh.

“You are quite right. We may be disrespecting you, but we have our work to do. The three of you seem very stable, and more so, valuable, but you must understand that your stories are beyond the construct of the material reality we live in.”

“It’s *way beyond* the construct of *my* reality,” offered Jack, which surprised Enoss Lenik into a small smile of genuine amusement.

“We *do* understand, and Jack and I are keeping our story to ourselves,” explained Able. “You know, it’s just the way it is, Garran,” he added. “We have to respect these people and the sensibilities of this place, no matter how we feel.”

“Sure. I understand, and I have kept my promise to you, Enoss,” said Garran, sincerely, but not understanding exactly why he had so much trouble with being accepting of the Caretaker. He

knew what they were asking was reasonable and the right thing to do. “*Maybe I just don’t feel respected enough,*” he thought trying to self-reflect a little now. He just could not understand why he felt this way.

Mother looked on with some concern for her father, but also with some curiosity of the nature of this particular design. She saw clearly the true inner nature of all these varied souls and their current state from her deeper reality, wondering at what The Creator was doing all with these players. She knew His designs were perfect, so let her concerns rest.

The Caretaker nodded, and said, “Then we are agreed.”

To which all three visitors nodded.

“I also have a request. My dear friend Lassd, who is *never* impressed, is *most certainly* so with you, Garran. He sends his humble regards, and also a request that he would like to converse with you again.”

Garran smiled, and said, “Of course. Tell him it would be a pleasure.”

It was said in kindness and in very genuine interest, as Acktan had told Garran some stories of Lassd. Garran was now very interested to learn more about this soul because of the stories of real courage his friend had shared about him; hopefully they could interact more easily now.

He *had* wondered why Lassd had fallen to something so small though, when the old Sandwalker had obviously endured and overcome so many larger challenges in life. Also intriguing to him, was that his simple struggle with Lassd had seemed to awaken something new inside him. He wanted to interact with him again for that reason mostly, so that whatever it was may be prodded again. His curiosity about the low-level adulation in The Appearing City had

definitely grown since his first meeting with Lassd. Curiosity was Garran's trade, so he could not help but explore all this.

Enoss now got up and left the small dwelling, a little eased and relieved. But Lassd was unfortunately waiting outside and nodded to the Caretaker as he left. Enoss's short-felt relief fell away before the crowd that had now formed there. He was not happy at his own lack of foresight. Only a few had watched him enter, but many had watched him leave, and now Lassd, a greatly esteemed soul, was waiting expectant outside the door of this new alien. Lassd's presence had greatly added to the crowd, and Enoss wondered at the old Sandwalker's lack of wisdom too, and patience in this. He thought that he had averted a problem with this meeting but had now only increased interest in Garran; interest he most definitely wanted to end.

He was growing a little weary of holding order since the passing of the Interpreter. But he was called to do this duty. He would talk with Lassd tomorrow, to keep him away from the new alien until the vote, as it was now *especially* crucial to Enoss that the alien scientist did not get any more attention. He was holding a good deal of internal strain. All the Caretakers, and certainly all the souls here held this strain, even while they were sure of a good outcome. A few, like Lassd though, were strangely unconcerned. It seemed to Enoss that Walkers had deeper faith. Sandwalkers, especially those who had walked the deserts for years looking for the chasm, breathed faith, drank faith, and were sustained almost completely by its great power.

"I found myself impatient," said Lassd, now inside and smiling at Garran. "I am like a child. It is disconcerting. My soul knows something that I do not. It is excited and wishes to know more of you."

“I had a lot of that on my way here. People treated me like a celebrity, and I don’t know why. My interaction with you brought something inside me, just a sliver of it, to light.”

Able and Jack smiled with curiosity at Garran’s words, and Lassd asked, “May I?”

“Please do,” answered Garran, excited, and now pushing away an unsureness in him; an unsureness of whether it was wise to explore what had not yet evolved within him, especially by a being who had so heavily rebuked him.

The older Walker sat looking into this Earth man’s being and after a time his eyes went wide.

“Well?” asked Garran.

“Well. I have not known such a creature as you. You are hidden very deep, beyond this time, and this place; beyond this existence. I feel a very good feeling about your nature, but apparently it is not for now. I believe I would only stunt your growth or misguide you with the very little I can see and feel.”

“Really?” asked Garran, quite disappointed.

“Your growth must be as it is designed to be. *Growth* was the *only* clear message, and I would venture that each stage of your development needs be in its particular place. Just as a seed cannot be the fruiting tree or the infant suddenly an elder. Each *stage* needs be reached and fulfilled.”

“That’s all?” sprouted Jack, his curiosity also let down.

“Yes,” said Lassd, seemingly a little offended by Jack’s lack of couth. He turned his attention back to Garran, and said, “Just be patient.”

Garran found great ease in Lassd’s words, even though he knew that an inner door had been closed tight within him. It simply was as it was, and would be, as it would be.

“Talk about an anti-climax!” complained Jack.

Able grabbed his shoulder and shook him a bit, smiling and shaking his head. His grandpa smiled back, and Garran allowed himself one, but Lassd did not. He simply rose, bid them good day, and left the dwelling; truth be known, somewhat disappointed himself.

NE-VEC KOT EMBRACED HER GOOD FRIEND ETERA. It had been a while now since they last wandered the pathways of The Great Chasm together. They were intent on all the aspects of its growth, and they talked about the nature of the work and of their love for their Faith. The bar was set very high by The Messenger; so, the people here, and those in the communities beyond this place, strove daily to transform their inner selves and their behaviour.

One by one, people took on this new Faith; each one seeing Nov-Cikel, Edosd as the Messenger of The All and personally agreeing to The Remedy. It made them one, all sharing the same vision as they circled around this Mighty Fulcrum of Guidance. While each had their own mind and individual right to see what they did in The Creative Word of this world, they also had shared belief in its essential elements, and strove always to understand it better. Nov-Cikel likened His Message to a great feasting table; one which all people on Temelj could gather around and find sustenance from. The Great Chasm, and the now growing Beautiful Way He had set forth into

this world, were proof of His Message to most; that, and the growing necessity of its remedy becoming more apparent in the slow breakdown of the cultures of Temelj.

His Message was all about justice, as peace is only available in real justice. The Message of Nov-Cikel, Edossd, The Great Council, and all the lesser Councils were to maintain justice and serve the essence of justice. The Beautiful Way was built from His guidance to create justice, as within it, the peace and nurture of all souls could be realised. A new foundation was being built for all of Temelj as the people slowly came here.

“Some communities struggle with even the basics though yet,” offered Etera, in frankness.

“Yes, but that struggle will change them individually and mature them as a community. They will evolve as they learn more of the nature of unity and love through their experience. Others will bolster their numbers too, in time,” explained Ne-Vec, gently and confidently.

“There can be so many boots tramping on the tender shoot of the new communities, even in their wish to get it going, though.”

“Yes, we are all flawed, and our knowledge limited, but each new shoot has the resilience of The All and *will* grow to become what they are destined to be. We are limited. But with our eyes and hearts on Nov-Cikel’s writings, and some effort and growing humility, we will evolve.”

“It is very difficult to be all *I* should be. I fail deeply, and often.”

“That is good. Our failures remind us, teach us, and humble us. They are not bad; they are powerful, especially if they lead to renewed effort, or to further change,” offered Ne-Vec, very glad of her friends reset of focus toward herself. She knew the future of the whole lay in the transformation of each soul.

“You have a lovely mind, Ne-Vec.”

“Please don’t praise me. I know it is genuine, but such talk scares me, as I know without humility I will fall. I am as anyone of us is, and all The Caretakers struggle and strive too. It is not their title that makes them great, it is their struggle and their selfless service. Even Lassd, that humble Walker, recently shared a deep failure with me. He confided that he was so glad that his lack was shown to him, as he was drifting.”

“Drifting?”

“We can stop seeing ourselves and become blind to the constant push of our lower nature, our expectations of life, or our emotional attachments and issues slowly pushing us away from The All. We begin to see ourselves as always right and pure, ceasing to grow as we drift in the fog of unconcern. Our whole world drifts in the fog of this lack of honest reflection.”

“Yes, we can drift if we are not circumspect and attentive. The Icer kingdoms are deeper in *that* fog. The Northern Kingdom and The Western Hunter Lords are drifting more and more into their own particular hell, because they don’t care to see themselves or strive to be better people anymore. The *old religion* is even almost dead there. There is little call to their higher nature.”

“None of us see ourselves enough and we *have to care*. We all have to fight the whisperer in us. Our greatest striving is to reclaim the nobility inherent in us, and our happiness lies in the struggle, as well as the successes.”

“In the Northern Icer Kingdoms *such meaning* is all but dead. An empty search for happiness in goods, position, or in how others see them personally, seems to have become a replacement for meaning there. People do not know themselves and simply roll along with the

societal tide, becoming whatever *it* creates, and seeking meaning in childish causes. Many souls even immerse themselves in their own emotional pain, seeking meaning *there* for some strange reason. There are so many things that people trap themselves in. They feel the void, and they seek only shallow happiness, everywhere, but in The All.”

“They see only their own knowledge, and the mind and emotion as king. The mind is a worthy tool but not so as the lord of our vision. Such a shame,” agreed Ne-Vec, but starting to feel a little uncomfortable with the conversation.

“They turn even more to self; when it’s actually their enemy, insatiable, and the denier of happiness. It is their *lives* that need to be fixed, not the emotional pain existent in the loveless pursuit of pride and chattels. It can only be *fixed* with meaningful connections, shared purpose, and reaching for more integrity and higher beauty in who they are and what they do. They just know they are empty and anxious, and *so* lost in that fog you talk about, that they have lost memory of the very power resident inside them.”

“No, they may never be happy really, as our true happiness is in our nobility. But even *we* must be watchful and make efforts in ourselves. The fog *most definitely* shrouds us when we focus on the lack of others,” she explained, a little tired of the negativity and underlying judgement in their conversation. “I believe a strong awareness of our *own* weaknesses, and a clarity of the stealthy power of our own egos, to be good guards; some self-honesty in us also, and constant reflection. We are *all* flawed and can only choose and *strive* each day. Even then we may fall far and fast. Such is our frailty.”

“Such is our frailty,” agreed Etera, now looking down and embarrassed about what she was now thinking about during such a conversation.

“*Etera?*” questioned Ne-Vec, in surprise at the look on Etera’s face.

“Oh, it’s nothing,” she replied, but then a particular smile came on her face.

“You are in love.”

“How can you tell?”

“Because it is the look of new love, and it is not a look I have *ever* seen on your face. Tell me about this man.”

“I wish I could, my dear friend. It is complicated.”

“Complicated...as in, destructive to your soul?” asked the Caretaker, with concern, as complication, to her, was usually a sign of a soul’s spiritual struggle.

“I cannot help but feel the way I do. I know it will pass like a storm in the mountains, but I still want to go out in that storm. The problem is that I care deeply, and it feels like it is written.”

“Ahh, the storm. We are all drawn by the excitement of the storm. Our lower self calls us there.”

“I believe my love is more *than that*. I see a great spirit in him.”

Ne-Vec, smiled, and seemed so much older to Etera as she did so. “That may be so, but the storm only calls from our lower nature. It has its place, but you know the spiritual laws and understanding to do with these things. We have a wide circle of wisdom and nurture to live our lives within. It is not constricted. Maybe in time you can marry.”

“No. That is not possible, and even then, I have seen another in my future. A man I have not actually met but know of. I feel *so certain* of this *new* connection though, and I *hope* for it, but know my future to be in the Western Mountains somehow.”

The Caretaker bade Etera to sit down with her on a stone wall beside the path. She took counsel with herself, as she did not know who to be right now; a confidant, a sister, or a Caretaker. “*Maybe all are required,*” she then thought, as both of them sat there in their own thoughts and patient in each other’s process.

“*How* is it not possible with this man here?” Ne-Vec asked, now more concerned about talk of another she only thought could be in her future. She was concerned that her friend was drifting into places of the imagination.

“If I told you, you would not believe me.”

“How do you know there is another in your future? You are telepathic, not psychic, and even Nov-Cikel tells us not to seek too much the powers of the second life.”

“It’s not psychic,” she said, even though experiencing more each day certain inklings and feelings of small things, as well as her dreams still warning of danger. “I gathered it from the mind of the young alien who looks like a Sandwalker. But I have also had terrible premonitions of something evil growing here. These *come* to me, and I am just who *I am*. I do not *seek* them.”

“Of course, I believe people have many varied deeper experiences in this existence. They are not blameworthy; it is maybe, to me, that The Messenger warns us about them, so we may not get lost in imagination, or let a focus on chasing these powers take us from the available growth of our souls by living in life here. He tells us to let them develop naturally.”

“They *are* developing naturally. Each of us has to see the writings in the light of our own unique reality and lives. With all due respect, my lovely friend, this is *my* path to The All. It cannot be yours.”

“I am so sorry, Etera,” she apologised, now clear that she should be a friend right now.

Being a good friend, she knew well of Etera’s struggle with her telepathic abilities, as Icer’s were not at home with them at all, even here; especially in a woman, which was considered particularly worrying. Even though Nov-Cikel had made clear the truth of the equality of the two genders there were still many old remnant attitudes. But, like all transitions to a more evolved society, this would take time.

Her mixed lineage had also been an enormous struggle for her early in her life in the Western Mountains, as when she had found her powers, she had asked some discrete questions within her family. But only with them, as with the nature of that culture, such secrets *needed* to be kept. She *had* felt a little freer when she had lived in the more liberal culture of the Northern Kingdom for a few years, but still felt quite alone until she came to the chasm. She was able to be more open about her lineage, and her gifts, and find real friends here; and even though some here struggled with her difference, it was only a discomfort. It was actually this mixed blood, or her belief that Ne-Vec was also of mixed blood, that had helped create the bond of friendship between these two souls in the first place. Shared struggles can often create friendships; no doubt.

When some silence had moved them on, she asked, “So, what of the storm?”

“I will have to let it pass, won’t I?”

“I would suppose so, but it may still test you again. The lower nature is insistent. Are you *sure* this cannot be? And are you *sure* the future *is set*?”

“I am sure that it cannot be,” she admitted to Ne-Vec, and finally to herself. “He is only here for a certain time.”

“He is *going out*! You could *go out* with him. You have been waiting for the right time. Maybe it is now.”

“He will be going home. He lives on another world.”

“No alien has returned through the portals, and journeying in the stars is a long way off for us, even though their sciences have made us hopeful.”

“He is among some other aliens. There are six of them in all. They all turned up over a week or so. Two remain invisible; one of these walks with the tree scientist.”

“Garran?”

“Yes. I have not met him, but the essence who now walks with him is ancient.”

“I don’t *believe* we are having this conversation,” said Ne-Vec, almost suddenly, returning to her place as a Caretaker, yet now just beginning to see more of the pieces of this strange puzzle the Caretakers had recently consulted on. “*The rain?!*” she then suddenly sprouted.

“It did not fall before she came here. This essence is only one of them. The rest of them are from a single planet and seem to be mostly of one family. I have prayed so hard for help over my years here and it seems that The All has answered them in these souls.”

“I *have* heard that the tree scientist says that he simply appeared here too. We have consulted on Garran, and the other three.”

“They are just visitors. I feel that, and they believe so too. The one I love is one of them.”

“Which one?”

“He is invisible, like the essence, and he is not family like the others. He is prideful and strong, and it seems he is a lawman of some kind. He says he is new to it, and I believe he has found something. He has asked a good deal about the cave of The Power,” she explained, referring to the cave with the stone pillar and the circle of light.

“This gets more and more complex,” mused Ne-Vec, very concerned that the cave of Power was mentioned, and now also feeling some fear for her friend’s mind.

“Because I have seen what I seen, and know what I know, I can tell you that the hand of The All is in this. The tree scientist, the man who has skills with water, the essence who can bring rain and a lawman who is invisible; all turning up at this great juncture. I see *only* the Hand of The All in this.”

“Hmm, this is too much, Etera,” said Ne-Vec, beginning to get quite alarmed, and even now thinking that her friend may even be caught in some shared delusion with the four souls who were *really* here. Part of her had almost believed it all, but she could not be party to talk of what could not be real. No matter the strange goings on, there had to be a reasonable answer to all this; an explanation that did not include people appearing, let alone ancient invisible essences. Ne-Vec was now thinking about talking with Lassd, because he seemed quite taken by Garran. She thought that just maybe the old man had a view she should seek before consulting on this conversation

with the other Caretakers on this matter. Her heart wanted to believe her friend, but her duty came first.

Etera knew the look of concern and concentration on her friend's face would not be good for her. Maybe she would simply *go out* and save the complication that she now realised she had put on her friend. "I trust you, so I shared this. If you want me to keep this to myself and not speak of it again, then I will."

The young Caretaker did not know what to say. She now saw her good friend as most probably a little lost in her mind, *even with* the mystery of the four Travellers known to her. The doubts of Enoss Lenik, and others, about her association with Etera were now even beginning to make some sense.

"I simply can't believe you about all this," admitted Ne-Vec, and the look on her face tore Etera's heart like it was a physical rending. The Caretakers had treated this as it presented to them and dealt with it in a wise fashion. She knew of miracles of the Way, but people just appearing, and now two invisible others, was simply not within the realms of reality.

Etera got up, realising, and accepting this injustice, knowing that her friend was now drifting away from her. But also, that she did not want her to; neither of them wanted this.

Ne-Vec's duty as a Caretaker was a far greater duty, and as Etera now walked away she realised that her dear friend could *never* have seen her words to be true. She had asked too much of her, but it was done. She wanted Sam right now. She needed Sam right now, and there he was walking up the chasm. She smiled at him, and she waited for him on the path, now not caring what even Ne-Vec would think or not think. Now she *most definitely* did not care what any in the chasm thought of her, but an almost unbearably heavy sadness of lost friendship was on her.

Such is part of the nature of the tests of The Creator; each time these tests seek to separate us more from all but Him. But when He treads heavily on our lives, He also provides comfort in another dear heart or in supporting other aspects in our lives. While He tests us, He also supports us through our challenges of growth.

Ne-Vec looked up in deep pain for her friend, also feeling the pain of the now gaping wound in their friendship. Etera took Sam's hand, and said to her friend, "You will hear no more of me, or my stories, and I forgive you. I think it is time for me to *go out* and fulfil my life."

"You need to stay here, Etera. I see that *especially* now," pleaded Ne-Vec, concerned for her friend's wellbeing.

"You *cannot* see me," she replied, and she turned and walked up the chasm with Sam.

Ne-Vec wept a little with the pain of her separation, and due to her mistaken perception of Etera's last words. What she had heard in Etera's words was that her friend now believed that *she too* was invisible. Such are the misunderstandings of the true meaning and intent of words when love and trust between souls has fallen to its death. Even good intentions fail when we are unable to truly see another soul; this was the true meaning of Etera's words.

Ne-Vec, Kot was a good soul and could only have done as she did. Even in ordinary things some may see us, and others may not; some *see us at times* and are blind to us at others. That is life. Even very old and dear friends may have been blind to us; we, sometimes blind to them. One may indeed ask how real some broken friendships were, or at least, how deep? Some last for life, some change and evolve, some come and go, and some die. Our varied individual pathways and our own required learning make them so, as well as all the seeing and not seeing maybe. Some

blindness may be blameworthy, and some not, yet we all walk through life *somewhat* alone and not all can be shared.

To not *be seen* is actually more than probable, yet at other times people may easily discern our abilities, intentions, or flaws; one's we often cannot even see ourselves. It may also sometimes even be helpful to be aware of the flaws in others, but to judge is not wise, and problematic, unless it be a crime. We don't know another's life and only we may each change ourselves, so it would seem not to be our place. Beyond this, it is more just to see with eyes of mercy and understanding; to be kind, as aren't we, all of us, flawed.

“Man must seek to gain the acceptance of God and not that of the different classes of men. If one is praised and chosen by God, the accusation of all the creatures will cause no loss to him; and if the man is not accepted in the threshold of God, the praise and admiration of all men will be of no use to him.”⁹

There is so much lost energy and wasted potential in judgement. Only pride stands between many souls and peoples. This lack of love has caused endless injustice, large and small; simple arguments, to racial hatred, to wars. The wastes of judgement are void of life, and fields of bones and blood have been built there. Many still weep sore on this battlefield, when simply seeing the good in another or our own failings may free us from the battle and its burden; or where, *at the very least*, being honest and setting kind boundaries would be preferable.

“I LOST A GOOD FRIEND TODAY,” said Etera, realising the gap was now far too wide to reach each other.

“*Hell*, I don’t even *know* you and I would have *backed* you,” pronounced Sam.

These two had been walking and talking for short time now about Etera and Ne-Vec’s conversation.

“She has her work, and her duty, Sam. Its reality is far wider than our friendship. Her work affects more souls. I should never have shared this with her. I burdened her with what she could not see. I do not need to judge her. There is no justice in that. I just wish I hadn’t been so cruel as to say that she could not see me.”

“Wasn’t that honest...the truth?”

“Yes, but not *kind*. I could have said it in a far more kindly way.”

“Sometimes things just need to be said. You had to show her how sure you were and make it clear what the reality was. Sometimes with friends or family, or when it really counts, you just have to put it out there. Not everything has to be kind. Sometimes it can’t be kind. She needs to feel your passion and if she ignores it, then maybe she’s not a true friend.”

“Oh, *of course she is*. She is *still now* thinking of my well-being. I *know* that. But we are now separated by our perception of life. She is lost to me, but she is *still* my friend.”

“Sure. Okay. Do you think she’s going to get you locked up for your *own good* though?”

“Oh. I didn’t think about that,” replied Etera, sadly. “I think she is just concerned about me *going out* in the state she sees me as being in.” But Etera now knew that this kind of caring hand

would not be beyond the realms of possibility, and a decision that was still a little tentative just the moment before, now became solid in her.

“I am *going out*. I have a Sandwalker friend who will see me to the Western Mountains. At least with him there can be no hiding and truth can be openly shared. Help me pack,” she finished, as she headed home to prepare. She then turned back to a shocked Sam, and said in tones of love, “Come *with* me, Sam.”

Sam’s heart exploded inside him, and tears came to his eyes, and she suddenly realised that he was not going anywhere. The confusion showed clearly on his face.

“I’ve *found something*, and I need to ask you *a lot of* questions.”

“Oh, Sam, *why* did you find something? I almost wish you had *not* found your feet,” she said, with her eyes watering.

“Yeah...same...*for sure!* I’m *totally* taken by you, and I *am* tempted to leave with you, but I can’t ignore my clear duty to this place and we kinda’ both know that my time here is not in my hands. I have to see this work through, because it’s very clear that the future of this Faith lies in the balance right now. If this person *is* playing *real games* I need to be in the mix, and if there are other dangers, I can uncover them.”

“How will you communicate? No one can see you, or more especially hear you, but me.”

“Able knows that I’m here and there’s plenty of sand and soil to write in to send him messages. The old girl can see me and hear me too, if I get lonely.”

“Oh, Sam, give Mother a little more respect than that.”

“I *do* respect her. Hell, she’s *good people*,” he said innocently, which all made her smile and shake her head. He then added, with love, “Do you *have to go*?”

“Yes. It seems that it is time. I trust His designs for me, but I will miss you terribly,” she finished, as they embraced each other and did not let go...well...until Sam thought that he had to see her safely away as soon as possible.

Etera knew that no one is safe, and no one truly free, except within The All, but her surety that now was the time for her to *go out*, as well as not burdening her friend or bringing more rumblings to the chasm, made her path clear.

They were at her home quickly, and she wrote a small note and asked Sam to take it to the fifth village further up the chasm. He would find a Sandwalker there called Mossd and was to give the note to him. She could have communicated telepathically with him, but other Sandwalkers might gather their conversation. Telepathy was not vibrations in the air that they could pick up, they were of a deeper reality, and were possible due to connections of the soul in that deeper place. It was not usual that they could be gathered by another, but it had been known to happen. Sam had commented that he would just freak the guy out, being invisible and all, to which Etera replied that she had already fully confided in this man about all the visitors.

“Why not open your mind to a Sandwalker Caretaker?” asked Sam, with some hope rising.

“Even if they could see my thoughts, they still needed to trust the balance of my mind. If it were at any other time, I would, and you need to remain hidden, knowledge of you hidden, to do your work. I believe that we will only add to the rumblings in this crucial time if we open this all up *and* make you less able to investigate the darkness that I have seen in my dreams. The ripples from the other travellers appearing here have been enough and the Caretakers have almost placated

them. To add you to the mix now would not be wise, and my '*seeing things*' also, so I have to go now."

"Why not take a little time to consider it a bit?" asked Sam, knowing that his request was only for himself really.

"I love The Great Chasm and the people here, so it is best for me to go. I always intended to. I feel it deeply. So just like you, I have to do what is best."

It was strange that these two would be separated by a higher Cause; but better by this than some selfishness or emotional battle that undid their nobility. This was the right thing to do, and even though it was not a particularly just outcome for these two, it was eminently good.

SAM SAT WITH MOSSD as the Walker read the note. He had sensed him when he came through the open doorway and the note floating in the air was not a *small* sign; especially for one experienced in walking the deserts of Temelj.

The Walker smiled. He was strange for his kind, as there was endless humour in him. The Clan folk loved to spend time with him as they adored Walkers and they shared his simple humour. This one had not forgotten his humble beginnings and maybe the others had not too, but he could be nothing but completely genuine. The Icers here had little time for him, seeing him as a bit of a fool, but aliens often tended to sit at his table. He was certainly kept aside by the other Walkers. The story that suited them was that he had gone mad out in the desert alone and that it must have been the *mercy* of The All had finally led him to the chasm. Truth be told, humour had kept him sane as he had walked for many years alone in the desert seeking The Great Chasm.

Though a jovial man he was not happy with his fellow Sandwalkers. He saw them as too proud and that their way would have to change in time. The Interpreter had loved Mossd's love for the Faith, and they had eaten at the same table often as well. The Interpreter had a great sense of humour too and they would talk often about Mossd's *going out*. But a promise to an older Walker who had passed in regard to support of The Interpreter, and later, one to a very young Etera, had kept him here. Mossd had accepted to stay in the chasm due to the honour of his word, but he always dreamt of the time he would walk the deserts again and share the life-giving waters of his new Faith.

But he would now *go out*, recalling his conversations with The Interpreter about it. She too, *so* wanted to *go out*, but had been tasked to build the foundations of the Beautiful Way and the chasm; her work was written. For Mossd now though, the mercy and abundance of The All had been once more cast his way. He was ecstatic.

"Are you good at your craft?" questioned Sam, through his thoughts.

"I am sufficient," answered Mossd, out loud, while he gathered a quill and ink for the Agent to communicate on; after making it clear with a hand gesture that telepathic communication was not a good idea.

"Sufficient, is not good enough," was then added to the note.

"I am Mossd. No one has ever seen me, not even for an instant, since leaving my village until I entered this place. No one saw me until I entered the presence of the Interpreter herself and laid down all I carried, and myself, for her to use as she saw fit. It was another seven days before anyone else knew I was even near that dwelling. Is this sufficient?"

“*Maybe,*” was then penned.

“I will look after her. I will see her to the home of The Western Hunter Lords, and then her life is The All’s. None of us are afraid to struggle or die. She is not. This work is not for the ones who seek safety and ease. This F,aith is not about any *one* of us. It is only about the gift that we may give to the future.”

There were no more words written on that small piece of paper and Mossd could now sense that the Agent had gone. “*Such strange happenings,*” he thought, as he then danced and laughed, readying himself to go out; *at last!*

CISTA DUSA WAS HERE. Senna Kytell was again very concerned at that. She was here where the Jennifer woman was. Enoss Lenik had asked his assistant to keep an eye on this lady who had turned up with the others of Earth, when he had gone off to meet with the other visitors recently. It was Senna who had reported her concerns about Jennifer and the two men who had appeared here at the same time. She was also the one who Sam had been following, and the one who had seemed so controlling of the small working group he had come across.

She now watched the interactions between the Caretaker and Jennifer, as this mature adherent sought gently her own understanding of the visitor. Cista Dusa was an Icer by birth, and had been the closest companion to the Interpreter, who was of the Clans. They both only saw other souls in each other, and the work they were given to do; not their culture, just as all would hopefully see each other in time. This deep friendship had fortified the clear message of inclusion within the Writings to the followers of Nov-Cikel here. Senna though, still had a way to go to reach this place

of...soul first and group identity second. While she believed in the Message, she still saw the Icer people as superior, just as many Clans folk considered it quite the opposite.

What is it in people that held them from the truth that a soul was a soul, and each an individual before The All? While varied cultures brought with them great flavours and achievements, they were nothing in the light of the inherent oneness of all. While people put the love and respect of their own culture, social standing, educational prowess, gender or even age, first, then nothing could advance truly, no matter any outward seeming. Senna did not like these short Earthers or their injection into the evolution of Temelj. They were a threat to their future, as were all aliens.

Jennifer, Cista, and others there, shared ideas; as the body that was consulting here was now in a process of formalising a developing a more universal curriculum for the spiritual education of children. Jennifer had been invited into the process by a local teacher when she had shown some different skills in, and interesting perspectives on, teaching children. They came from her experience in this on Earth and knowledge retained from this particular visitor's travels; but few memories unfortunately. The consultation and process were like a flower bud blooming, and all there felt the power of this unfoldment. Sadly, Senna was the exception, as she was so intent on her duty to be protector of this new Faith.

After a good while and some refreshments, Cista asked Jennifer to walk with her a while. Senna sought to join them, but the forthright nature of this particular Caretaker, unafraid of social norms, cut her off. Senna was devastated, as she could not do her work for Enoss Lenik by this small, but apparent, slight. It seemed that Senna's duty was not to the Faith, but to her idea of it, and to Enoss Lenik. He was a strong Icer man, after all.

“Thank you so much for your perspectives and obvious candour,” expressed Cista, as they now walked.

This area of the chasm had larger buildings; ones of healing and higher learning, that at this point of time, were the only ones in the chasm. They were situated about five kilometres across the chasm from the rampart that Jack and Jennifer had entered down, and a good twenty kilometres above where Jack and Able were working. The high mountain range at the head of the chasm towered over the earthen buildings here, and there was something awe-inspiring about it, as it reached up so much higher than the chasm walls and spread out somewhat beyond them. This was the place first settled here, and the small river began its life near here too. The springs were about a kilometre past this main centre, towards the other far great rampart of the chasm, where the copious flow from the coalescing springs under the great barren mountain range now poured out.

There was one particular building that the others here radiated out from. It was for silent reflection, prayer, group devotions, song, and reading of the writings of this Faith; also writings from the older Faiths at times. The building’s architecture, being open on all sides, represented the spirit of this Faith; that all were welcome in it. It was open to everyone here, even to the souls who resided here who did not take on, or had not taken on, the new Way of The All. There were many here who built fields and communities who were not of this Faith, but they wanted to be part of this place, a renewed collective spirit, and a new Temelj.

“I worked in education before I began Travelling, but there is more in me now, so it is likely I have done more of it on my Travels.”

“Travelling?”

“It’s probably best we do not get into it, as I have only have memory of some places. I only confuse myself and others with explanations.”

“Oh, I believe we can have a *very* clarifying conversation, and I *actually* wish to. You and your companions ‘*just turning up*’, as it has been reported to me, has made clarification a requirement of my duty.”

“With deep, and all due respect to you,” began Jennifer, as she had seen the deep respect that all in the room had given this lady, “it may be a mess, and not serve either of us, or your work. We are here for a time to do what we have been given to do; it seems to us. Well, also maybe a as a kindness and a grace in our reunion here as well. But that is all we know, and so we’re making the best of things. For me, I’m just here, and catching up and learning.”

“We were catching up with *you* in the meeting. Madok is a very experienced teacher, and *he* was impressed enough to bring you to the meeting.”

“You are *too kind*.”

“And you, it seems are a humble soul. You will learn much and you obviously have already.”

“This is just another struggle for me.”

“But you hold good knowledge?”

“But I have no memory of gaining a lot of that knowledge. It is very disconcerting.”

“Maybe you don’t need to concern yourself about that. Maybe *a lack of concern* about where and how you gained your knowledge simply needs to be added *to* your knowledge. There

is a freedom in not placing knowledge within a construct of memory. To simply allow it to be part of your being makes you able to share more easily, just as you did with us today. Maybe the focus of service freed your soul to simply feel and share, rather than with your limited mind and its biases.”

Jennifer looked down, then deeper older eyes looked up at Cista, as she said, “A memory is a wondrous and *powerful* thing. It is *priceless* to my reckoning. Without it, is like walking with one leg. It is a *great* endowment, and I believe *required* for us to grow and to be safe from the mistakes of the past. I would almost give up my sight for the return of my memory. But I love the way your words feel, and I *will* reflect on them.”

Cista watched the deeper eyes fade with Jennifer’s last sentence, and she offered, now smiling, “I would add *acceptance* of your journey as *it is*, and...allowing things to rise naturally, *very quickly*, if I were in your shoes.”

“I can see why the others hold you in such esteem,” commented Jennifer.

“Oh, they are just respectful due to the fact that I was a regular companion of the Interpreter. I simply feel honoured to do the work. I am not interested in accolades; I am intent on the work. The Interpreter was a beautiful soul; kind, sensitive, courageous, and so intent on fulfilling her role. Nov-Cikel knew she would struggle and be tested, as she was *so* gentle.”

“I think the respect people show you here is about more than your close friendship with her.”

“Well, it does not matter. So, back to you, my girl. I need to understand your...”

“Travel.”

“Yes. I need to understand. Would you grant me all you can about the nature of this phenomenon?”

“Well, okay.”

“Thank you.”

“Well...I come from Earth. I travel, as in; I am simply taken to new places. I remember being some places, and I know from my growing knowledge and from how much I have changed, that I have been to others. I feel that I have been to many places now. I chose to travel originally, as I am physically in a coma in a hospital on my world.”

“A coma?”

“Mentally unresponsive, but alive, would be the best way I could explain it. I was told by an essence of life that my consciousness and my memory would be fractured, and as it seems, a bit tidal. I was even given the chance to be released from my coma, but I chose to travel.”

“My goodness. Such courage!”

“Thank you. I don’t feel so courageous right now,” said Jennifer, starting to cry. “Right now, I want out. While knowledge is there, unknown emotional memory is too, and I feel deep emotional pain. I have had quite enough of the confusion and the loneliness,” she added.

“My goodness, child,” said Cista Dusa, now seeing the galling pain in this courageous, and somewhat stoic, lady’s eyes. “Come home with me, and I will see to it you are cared for a little. Maybe you need to rest yourself, to recoup your powers and ease your emotions.”

“Thank you. I would like that.”

“If we do not care for each other what is the point of all this,” expressed Cista, sweeping her hand around to indicate the development of The Great Chasm. “But if you will indulge me to explain one last thing?”

“Sure. I’m happy to. It has been good to have a little of another perspective.”

“Yes, it is good. So, are you sure that you did not come through one of the portals? And how are you connected with the others?”

“Well, I could have come through your portals, but the young man Able told me how I came to ground here. I have also been told before that I arrived at places on, in, that same white ribbon. All of us came this way I think.”

“All of you?”

“Well...Able, Jack and I, I think. Apparently, we’re family and somewhere on my flightpath I am married to Jack. The boy says he is our grandson. I feel it is true and I do have strong feelings for Jack.”

“My goodness. So, you are beyond time and place, you travel, and you have all come here?”

“Does it matter that we are here and that I do not know? We all feel we are here to simply help, so does it matter how we came here? There is no ill-intent in us.”

“These things are definitely becoming clearer to me from our discussion, as well as from my consultation with others. Come; let’s get you some warm home cooked food, *and* some rest.”

That night Jennifer Thompson slept deeply for the first time in a very long time, and she slept for twenty-four hours without waking. Cista Dusa had shown the very core of justice in this one small act; for isn't justice simply that we care for one another.

THE ESCAPING ICER HAD COME UPON A TINY ROCK OUTCROP; a small hill of red rock that sat partly uncovered within the rolling dunes. It was where that he had seen the circle of light. He knew it was the place, as had smelt water as he came close, and even more so, as he had dug down on one side of the rocky outcrop. Such was water's rarity in the desert, and such was his thirst that it was unmistakable. He had found food growing in a cave below the sand, as well as pooling water. His desperate digging down through the sand blocking its mouth, had found it, and he had slid in on his belly.

He was overjoyed and thanked the Deity of his grandmother, and after almost two days of eating, drinking, and sleeping, he had now decided to head on. He filled his two water skins and refilled his backpack with food. He washed and refreshed himself as he had done after eating the night before, and another time, after a short but angry altercation with a Driller. Drillers were small resilient creatures whose numbers were larger than any other animal in these deserts. They were busy and very determined creatures, and this one had not been happy to find an intruder in one of its feeding places.

He came out of the cave a new man. He was now rested, fed, and provisioned; knowing also that he was much closer to his goal. He believed that he was only a few days of walking away from the Southern Icer Kingdoms now. As he headed off, he remembered back to his young adulthood; memories of learning to walk the deserts with his mentors. Although the Icers sailed in

airships, hunters were all taught the sky and bearings on the ground first. In his first outing he and the other boys had to find their way back after being dropped deep in the desert with no instruction.

On this exercise they had found that they had walked in a great circle when coming upon their own tracks. They had adjusted for this bias, and set off once more, but again found themselves coming upon their own tracks again. They had adjusted so much that they had circled the other way. By the time they made it home they had learnt a good deal about direction and bias, and even more about thirst and the harsh desert they travelled over. They learned the value of learning bearings and more especially how important it would be to know the stars. It made them keen to learn the stars; just as such exercises had made endless other generations of youth before them. It also taught them the value of their airships; to tend to them, and maintain them well, as they had also learned of the harsh reality on the ground.

“A good airship or the desert,” he said out loud, and laughed at his memories of that time. It was then that he saw the two Sandwalkers. They were on higher dunes, one to his right, and one to his left. They were off about five hundred meters each, and they regarded him. They simply stood there as he looked to one and then the other, and back again, until one nodded and turned to go back to The Great Chasm. The other did the same, and they were gone. One had been the Walker who had instructed him a little and he had nodded a little longer than the other before disappearing over a dune.

The Icer hunter could not believe that they had been watching him this whole time. He had gathered no sign of them, and he had been *very* circumspect and looking hard. He realised that they had been there to accompany him, and now knowing he would be okay, it was time for them to return. The enemy had been his friend and that hit him deep and hard. He wondered why they

would help him reach home, especially as they knew the deep and dire consequences that would surely follow from his safe return. He sat down on the sand; a little shaken now. They could have taken him and dragged him back. They could have killed him and left his body unseen and unremembered in the desert.

It was then that he realised something. It was strangely not a sense of thanks or unity with these creatures, even though he *had* been proud when the old Walker had given him small acknowledgement of his feat, and he *did* feel a deep connection right at that moment with this creature. It was not even knowing again a strong connection between the Sandwalker's Faith and his own newly awakened beliefs. It was that he saw in those of this new Way, and within this act of mercy, the enormous depth of self-sacrifice they held, and with that realisation, came one clear implication of great danger to all he loved and cherished.

On his trek he had been feeling deeply the love for his culture, his people, and his family. And despite his clear realisation of the connection between the old Religion of his people and this new Way when he had contemplated his own death, only days ago, he still held a deep duty to the Icer community; one he had taken very seriously all his thirty-five years. Today could be no different; as no matter the kindness of these two creatures and the peaceful community of the chasm, they were all dangerous; *far more* than even the danger posed by the portals. He had realised that this New Way, its kindness, its sense of sacrifice, and its inherent fearlessness in the face of any opposition, could well dissolve his culture and The Majority Order like they had never existed. This Way was even more of a threat than the Northern Icers in this respect.

He now spat on the ground at the Northerner's new, so-called higher-minded ways; ways which only threatened chaos if the culture of The Majority Order fell. He saw clearly his two great

enemies today, and justice, as he saw it, *had* to be done. His path was not only clear physically now, but the path of his life purpose had also now attained a singular clarity.

Rumblings

“Only if you perceive honour and nobility in every human being—this independent of wealth or poverty—will you be able to champion the cause of justice.”¹⁰

“Are you sure you have to go?” asked Sam.

“It is as clear to me as the chasm wall. *It is time*, Sam,” replied Etera. “So now, open your mind to me. Show me what you have seen and what you have been up to. This way I can give you as much as I can before I leave.”

“You may not leave if you know about all of what I’ve seen, but I *do* want to know more of the context; the lay of the land. Maybe I’ll win *both ways*.”

“Which way will the chasm and the Faith *win*, Sam?”

Sam put his head down. He felt so weak, and way too many times like a child, since leaving home. But don’t we all have to feel a little silly, or naïve, at times, so that we may learn particular things? Isn’t learning often about feeling weak and unsure?

“Okay girl. I am open for business. Go for your life in there, but my feelings are all over the place...so careful,” he added with a smile.

Etera smiled. But as she ventured in Sam’s thoughts, she began to be shocked at what she saw. She had also not wanted to see the cave of The Power. She tried to not remember the symbols she saw, as her faith was deep, and no one was allowed there.

“I can’t believe she would do that. She has certainly been a thorn in my side personally, but this is *insane*. It does not fit what I know of her.”

“Well, it *was* her. What about the hooded figure with the ring? *There were two of them.*”

“No, I know that ring. She was so close to The Interpreter that she would have given her the duty of taking care of the Holy Place. Her being there would be about the Holy Place, not so much The Power, or any wish for power.”

“The Power?”

“The cave is the place of The Power. The Power *is* The Everlasting Covenant. It is essentially powered by the Holy Spirit.”

“The cave houses a pedestal. That’s all,” stated Sam.

“It houses *much more*. I have had intimations of it in my dreams after times talking with The Interpreter. I only consulted with her twice, but it was quite special. One meeting was on my arrival here, the other when some envious and quite fearful Icers reported that I was reading their minds.”

“Okay, so we have one *live one*. But why do we have a live one? What’s her motive?”

“She loves Enoss Lenik.”

“Been listening where you shouldn’t have?” accused Sam, shaking his head for humour’s sake.

“No, it is as obvious as it can be. She just swoons in his presence, and does all she can to be in it, and in his favour. She shows off like a child for all the Caretakers, but especially for Enoss.”

“So, *he’s* in it.”

“No, I can’t see that either. I believe that she may believe he is something like a missing Interpreter. There are so many ideas and rumblings out there. The writings are very clear, yet theories and divergent ideas still abound.”

“People bein’ people, eh. No harm, if there is no *actual* harm done by it. People imagine all sorts of things. Doesn’t mean they’ll act on it.”

“There may be *great* harm. My disturbing dreams have not abated, but I did not feel her *at all* in those dreams. There is a darker force at play.”

“I’ll have to keep looking then. Any tips as to where to look.”

“A labyrinth...dark tunnels...fill my dreams. That’s all I am sure of; that, and a dark horrid force; a very malevolent one. Maybe as you learned more, I could have given you more.”

“Then stay. Let’s find out more and put this to the Caretakers.”

“I’ve told you why I have to go, and I do not have their respect either. Enoss is certainly not well disposed towards me, Ne-Vec thinks I am lost in my mind, and if Senna *is* part of all this she will have more sway with Enoss and the Caretakers.”

“*Politics?* This place isn’t a place of politics and favour, *surely.*”

“It *definitely is not.*”

Etera was looking out the window as she thought deeply about it all. “I have to aid the stability of the chasm by leaving and you have to keep digging unnoticed. When you are sure of your findings take them to Ne-Vec, Kot. I trust her implicitly. *You* will be strong proof, and my leaving now may even prompt her to be more open. When you do, make sure you have other solid proof. Take her to see whatever you can. *Make sure, Sam; make sure.*”

“We could go to her now.”

“You need more time, Sam. You need more evidence. We aren’t close to the *real* threat. If we open up to her now, we still have nothing. In any case, if other people get involved, there will be even *more* rumblings. Not only that; your investigation will be more out in the open, and our quarry may go to ground and even cause more harm in the long-term.”

“Need to know, eh,” responded Sam, now seeing more of the nature of this saying. Him saying it right now was another reason why this saying would always make him feel good, as even though his memory was wiped after his time here, these words would bring back emotional memories; in this case memories of his first true love.

Etera agreed, and Sam nodded seriously, then opened his heart like he had never done, and would only do once more in his life, “I never loved anyone, Etera. I liked ‘em, and I was even drawn to some *so strong*, but I *never* loved anyone like *I love you*.”

“Sam, we’re children, and you saying that may be true, but it usually means you are still wet behind the ears.”

“*Oh, great*. Take my heart and tear to shreds,” he replied, with a big smile on his face and adding, “*Maybe*. Maybe I am wet behind the ears, but maybe I just *do* love you.”

Etera’s face fell a little and her eyes watered just a bit, as she admitted, “I feel just like you do. You *know* that. It is *far* more than what I just made out it was, but we have to be bigger than this now. I *do not* want to go, Sam, but I also *do*. My heart is with you, but it is also telling me to *go out*.”

“Sure. We both knew that before. Just *had to* say it out loud. Would’ve regretted not sayin’ it,” he finished. Then coming back to business, he said, “So, Mossd is on his way. Let’s get you up to the rim. He said he would meet us up there.”

Etera nodded, and both felt a freedom and high nobility as they released themselves from what had seemed impossible to only seconds before. Sudden, how detachment, how duty, can change the nature of things; how these can free us from attachment, and even thoughts which may imprison us in the torturous self; how they can return us to nobility, and bring us peace. Their gifts are manifold.

IT WAS HIS LAST NIGHT OUT IN THE SAND. He was more than done with it. He wanted to see the rock walls of the high mountains and the colours of the trees that grew in the high places; he wanted to see the snows that coloured the higher peaks, as well as the green fields far below his hometown from the edge of the range that it sat on. He was impatient and had thought to walk through the night, but he decided to stay out tonight and pray more to The Power; the religion of his Grandmother. He asked for confirmation of all he was now purposed to do and thought about what an Icer God would be like.

Religion had come to almost nothing in his culture. Remnants of its structures and its spirit still remained, but most people's belief in it had faded long before he was a child. He remembered his grandmother's eyes when she talked of the old world she came from. "In the past, the violence between Icer kingdoms had come from them forgetting their God, even though *all of them* had called on Him to help them be victorious. They had ignored the *beauty* and *wisdom* of the Old Religion to get what they wanted, but when the Icer Kingdoms finally came to terms, The Majority Order and law were set firmly upon the Old Religion's precepts. It provided a good foundation, but over time, this new Icer Majority Order somehow slowly *became* the structure *and the meaning* of Icer culture. Very few follow the Old Religion anymore, even though it still underpins our culture and law. Our forgetfulness will be the end of us," she had warned.

He knew that he would do all he could to find the old tomes and do all he could to raise the nobility of his kind. He could see that this new call to nobility within him was how the New Religion would take the hearts of even Icer's, so they definitely needed to renew the Icer Faith to combat its influence. Hopefully a renewal of the Old Icer Faith would also help abate the erosion of the "*moderation*" in the North, that was anything but; this so-called *freedom* that only took away their honour and made them weak. He did not know how to pray, so he simply talked with

his God and reflected on these things and his journey. It was soothing, and in time he came to great ease. It was not long after that he slept soundly and dreamt...

He was halfway up the great rise behind the Fear Cliffs, and he saw an old wooden tower that sat perched on top of them. These were his home mountains, and far below these impossibly high cliffs was his hometown. As a young teen, he and his friends would often climb the old wooden structure, and out onto a wooden walkway that projected out far beyond the rock face to test their courage. Airships in times past would tie up here, for refitting, but it had long since been put out of service. It was high above their hometown. It was solid, but its sheer height always sent fear through his veins. The young Icer boys knew one day that they would fly airships high above the sands as guardians of their planet, so they would test themselves here often.

Even though his hometown was below where he was, he now found himself trying to get home by running up the mountain on the pathway to the top of the Fear Cliffs above him. He had the feeling that he was running out of energy towards the top, so began to pace himself, and only just made it to the structure. He started to climb it, again, to get home. It was strange, and his hometown was even further below the structure in the dream than it actually was. But his home was also somehow at the end of the extended platform. How could it be so far below, and why did he seek it at the end of the platform?

A deep dreadful fear of falling or the structure failing, yet also a driving need to reach home and safety, pulled him in opposing inner directions. It made each and every step up the old structure and out along the jutting walkway excruciating. He fought this debilitating fear as he knew somehow that the wooden structure was strong, even though very old. He finally came to the edge; seeing his home now far below, and the deep green fields spreading out into the desert

further below that. There was only air in front of him now, but he seemed sure that the next step would deliver him safely home. It was a surety he had never known, and he felt strong in it. He stepped out, and as he did, a transparent green glass floor formed, or appeared, under his feet. It stretched as far as he could see across the sky. It was a great single pane that went over the horizon, and he could still clearly see his home down through it.

He had reached somewhere new. He was not at all fearful of falling now, or falling through, as it was far stronger than the old wooden structure that he had reached it by. He had reached a new level and he felt sure that he would not fall into fear again. He was so sure of the glass that his attention now went up. There above him, not far away, was the stratosphere; he could see the stars beyond the orange sky, as he was so close. He wandered out on the glass surface a good way as he looked down through it. He went further out over the green fields below his hometown, watching the Clan folk about their work; so tiny that he could hardly make them out from this great height. He trusted the glass, he felt at a great peace, and then he realised that he had never been at peace before now.

It was then that three great airships rose toward the glass pane, from well out in the desert. They began firing on the glass, seeking to bring it down, and him with it. The cannon, and energy weapons of other nature, poured out on the lower surface of the glass. His fear returned at the ferocity of this onslaught; he, being so impossibly high on the glass, did not want to fall. As the attack went on his fear of falling grew and grew. He screamed out for them to stop; that he was Icer. But they could not hear him through the glass. His fear then rose and rose impossibly; so strong as to eventually overwhelm him, and he fell upon the glass, unconscious.

ETERA TURNED TO HEAD OUT INTO THE DESERT. Apparently Mossd had arrived. Sam turned to see only to see the wooden archway that stood above the stairway to the chasm floor, as well as some low dunes to his left. The game was on, so he raced over to the dunes, not to be bested. But Sam could not see him. Mossd couldn't see him either, or where his eyes were cast, yet was still able to get past him unseen, and Sam now looked back to Etera.

Etera turned back, laughing from a high dune at the goings on, "I will always remember you like this, *Agent Deveroux*."

"*Damn,*" said Sam, as she disappeared too.

She was gone, *so fast*, and he had been playing *silly games*. He then just flopped down, sitting in resignation on the top of those low dunes, defeated in many ways. But he was glad that this Walker was as good at his craft as he had said he was.

Sam now looked out stoically at the empty dune Etera had disappeared over, yet with watering eyes and some grief for all he had lost today. He was, most certainly, not the only one.

JACK AND ABLE WERE NOW INTENT ON SOME EARTHWORKS near a reasonably large holding dam in the midst of the chasm. They had been encouraged by some assistants to the Caretakers to use their initiative and unique skills here for a while, and then they would take them further up the chasm where they had begun the final testing a new pump prototype.

It had been strange to Jack that they weren't as keen to share ideas at the beginning of such an important aspect of their endeavour, but he had learned by now to have faith that they *would* learn; bad decision, or good one. The Caretakers also had an eye on the bigger picture here, so he

trusted that too, as his local friends had made both these things clear to him. There was less pride here and more learning. They were not afraid of mistakes, as these too, only helped power them forward.

It had been four weeks now amongst these tall creatures. The Clan folk, all with their deep purple skin, blonde streaked hair, and green eyes, were a picture to Jack, and their height and graceful movement was gratifying somehow. The brown haired and blue eyed Icers were interesting too but did not seem to have the magic of the Clan folk. They dressed very differently, but Clan and Icer were all definitely tall, and definitely one race. Jack was over six foot tall, and although the younger men of his country were certainly getting taller, he was not used to looking up, or having to look up *so high, all the time*.

As they now walked the bank of the water store, going about their work, Able fell into the water again. He fell into the water at odd times, and on other occasions he just toppled over, even on firm ground. Jack could not work it out as the boy had the same graceful movement as the Clan folk and never seemed off balance. Able would always come up from under the water, or pick himself up off the ground, look around and smile. This time, Ne-Vec saw it happen too, as she walked up to the willing work crew.

She was staring at Able, and when he noticed her, he just stared back a little starry eyed; quite lost in a sudden moment of attraction. Then of course, as young men are wont to do when their friend's attention is taken by a woman, Able suddenly found himself underwater again. Sam was about, and knowing that a young woman was watching, had dunked his young friend, and walked out of the water.

The water did not know him, so it did not displace as he moved. Ne-Vec's deep attention sought any invisible movement in a wider view of the water, but there was none. She was not to be so easily tricked though. She walked intently across the dam's wall to the other side, then along its opposite bank. Sam watched her, thinking that maybe she had some Sandwalker in her. They moved a certain way, and while she had brown hair and fairer purple skin, she also had green eyes.

She saw his Sam's tracks, or at least tracks in the soft mud, still with fresh pools of water in them. She looked around, as she now hoped dearly that she was not seeing things. It had been over two weeks since Etera's disappearance, and feeling a little guilty, she had been keeping a watchful eye out. Today was the first time she had found any hope at all in the story of her dear friend. She *had* asked Lassd about Garran since then, finding something deeper the old Walker's experience with the Earth man; something a little mysterious, which had prompted her not to give up on her good friend's story. It was sad for her that she only tried to believe Etera after she had left so suddenly. But such is part of the nature of life and the designs of The All; for all of us.

"If you are here, lawman, show yourself," she requested.

But Sam knew it was not time to open the door to Etera's friend. He had hit a wall in his investigations. He would continue to search for the tunnels she talked about, among other leads, but he had also needed some time with friends and Able was always a lot of fun. He was such a good sport. There was such a humility and joy in him that Sam was drawn to. There was no way *he* would take what he had been dishing out to the *purple kid*. But those who are so different from us often draw us, so we can learn more about what we do not have and maybe grow it a little of it in ourselves. We learn so much from each other, and in far more ways than this.

“He won’t come out of hiding. He is a *secret* agent,” offered Able, as he walked up behind her.

“The lawman is real?”

A strong feeling again raced through Able as she turned, just as he was suddenly, once more, cast into the water. There was something in the push that said to him that it was not for fun...well...not *all* for fun.

When he came up, she was knee deep in the water with her hand out, and the feeling shot through him for a third time as he looked into her eyes. Sam was not hopeful that Able was seeing anything clearly right now, but he could not risk another push to shut him up again. When Able and Ne-Vec got to the bank, Sam quickly put his finger to Able’s lips. It was Earth language for *shhh*, and it was unmistakable.

“The lawman?” asked Ne-Vec, very intently.

“The lawman?” Able responded, not being an accomplished liar.

“*The lawman?*”

“*The lawman?*” repeated Able, like she did.

“*Are you a fool?* Please tell me of your *Agent?*”

“*Agent?*” replied Able, doing his very best.

“Yes. The one who is hiding.”

“I was just kidding you.”

“But the footprints,” she said, as she referred him to the fresh prints in the wet soil.

“They’re mine from just before. I was just fooling around,” he lied, knowing that all this lying was more than likely going to wreck any friendship, or the spark of more, before it could even begin with this young lady. He didn’t know it, but it was a one-sided infatuation. We can be so lost in that place that we can often imagine it is mutual, and we can still imagine much even it is mutual. Such are the questions in these things; lovely, confusing, exciting, but a little crazy. But lovely as it is, some detachment, patience, and honesty are the only true way forward to seeing the reality in any bond that may grow.

“The way you fell, was not natural,” she stated clearly.

“Ask the others. I often just fall in the water,” he lied some more, seeing that Ne-Vec was not sold on his last lie. “I have spent some years walking your deserts and I know the importance of water, the joy of water, and before I’m sent back out there, I want to enjoy it all I can,” explained Able, using all the truth he could muster to tell a “*good*” lie.

Ne-Vec, stood back. The words of her friend now played back in her head. “*They are just visitors. I feel that, and they believe so too.*”

“So, you are *going out*?” asked Ne-Vec, not as much in the loop as a few other Caretakers were about these visitors.

Though she *had* asked Lassd about his experience with Garran, their conversation had not been a wider on these aliens. Ne-Vek did not want to share Etera’s story with any person who was not a Caretaker; even Lassd. In any case, it was certainly not useful for her as a Caretaker to talk

of such things to any soul, also, without any real surety, to another Caretaker. It was for now the *friend in her* seeking to believe in her *dear* friend.

“Something like that.”

Sam could not believe how pathetic Able was at lying, and also seeing how the Caretaker was deftly drawing more information out of him, so he just pushed Able back into the water again.

“*Hello there,*” said Ne-Vec, looking at where Sam clearly stood.

The words, ‘*Need to know*’ were then written in the mud, and Sam walked off, as Able got out of the water and erased the words.

“*Trust him.* I am sure The All’s designs are wise,” offered Able, for the first time more seeming like a Walker to Ne-Vec.

“But the other Caretakers must know. I have a duty to the community, to the integrity and protection of my faith.”

“Maybe you have a duty *not* to speak, *or act*, right now. Maybe it is best they don’t know until Sam completes his work. He has told me that there’s *something* going on, something hidden, but then hit *me too* with his ‘*need to know*’ line. Maybe it’s your duty to use *your own* judgement in this.”

Ne-Vec went into some reflection, after now realising that *all* Etera had told her may have been true. The true intent in Etera’s words about Ne-Vec *not seeing her* now became clear, and she sighed. “Is he a threat in any way to the vote?”

“Do you think Etera would have let him loose if she didn’t trust him? She does not strike me as a fool,” finished Able, now realising just how much Dossd had rubbed off on him.

Ne-Vec now looked at Able seriously. He was a boy, but there was the deep light of a strong man growing there. She heard the clear strains of a Sandwalker in him too. He even looked a little more like one right now.

“You have *walked our deserts?*”

“With Dossd. He saved my life as a young boy, and he teaches me the desert.”

“A Sandwalker?”

“He searches for this place,” Able said; not in explanation, but because it needed to be said.

“He is not here? How so?”

“We walk the desert in your future. I was spirited here. We will find it when I am returned. He *will* find this place.”

“Yes. If he is worthy, he will find it.”

“*He is worthy,*” stated Able plainly, more so than any Walker, then walked away.

Ne-Vec was beginning to see that her place as a Caretaker was indeed not as simple as she imagined it was. It seemed that just like Lassd she had not been tested like this before. She could feel that she was now being challenged to stretch her soul further, by *good* hearted souls, *of all things*. She was strained, so she headed home to pray for guidance, reflect on the facts of the situation, and seek answers about all this under the pure light of the Creative Word of Nov-Cikel. The words ‘need to know’ were also forward in her mind.

HE SO LOVED THIS PLACE. Anticipation filled his being as he once again entered the labyrinth. He wandered there a while when he came again upon the Whisperer. It told him more of the secrets of his high rank and even new and amazing truths about the spiritual realm. It was giving him more every time he came here.

It was like he was *in* a Great Story; one he always *knew* would be told one day. With each visit, and each word, he had fallen more to the spell of the whispers. They made him surer and surer; even confident of the claim that he would now surely make. He now had to intensify the words he had delicately, but purposefully, placed in the ears of each of the Caretakers, and the talk he had poured into the thoughts of others. He so loved the ones who adored him among the people. He was *obviously* a magnetic and superior creature.

The whispers then intimated that this was surely true and that he *must have* some very special lineage. He now imagined that he was of the lineage of prophets; linked back in deeply ancient times to the line of Nov-Cikel Himself. Then so much became “*clear*” to him. He definitely *was* being called to much more than being a mere Interpreter; now joyously seeing the whispers of his imagination, driven by his ego, as the voice of angels.

EDRON CLOVEK WAS KNOWN TO HIM, but this was the first time he had sought a social introduction. The man was a legend in the Western Mountains and had a steel in his eyes that brought all eyes low when they met them. This Hunter Lord did not seek to bring eyes low; it was just that his rocklike character made it so. He was some years older than the young hunter who was now ushered into a small library in Edron’s Hall.

The Halls of nobles were often outlandish; or at least had grown so in the last few generations. With the Icer wars, and the scars and material struggle they brought, now in the deep past, things were changing. He was glad to see the more humble surrounds in *this* Hunter Lord's Hall, now believing that his decision to go to Edron was a good one.

"Well, boy, what brings you to my hall today?" Edron asked, as he swept into the library and sat on chair behind a strong chunky wooden desk; the younger guest almost thinking that he had swung over the desk on good Icer rope and into that chair, instead of walking there.

"Well, boy, what is it?"

He called every man, boy, and every lady, girl; such was his way. Again, it was not out of pride or arrogance. It was the way he connected with others, and it really only set prideful people to task. Most loved this particular way of his, as it felt like it was about family. To them, these were terms of endearment and equality.

"I am here to talk with you about my escape from the desert, but more so, from a place hidden within it which disturbs me greatly."

"Mmm, serious words. Please, take a seat," he said, as he rang a bell for service.

There were refreshments served as the stories and conversation began. Much was shared as the time wore on; with the younger man quite taken by the wisdom of the man he had sought. Edron was Icer, he was a Hunter Lord, and he was steel, but he was much more than that. He impressed his guest constantly with his insight and even gave him clarity on some things. He could have been seen as a wise man, but sadly the Icer way did not open minds generally.

As the stories and the discussion drew towards their end, Edron commented, “I am surprised that young Klek, and especially so, Bowd, have accepted this, Faith. They are nobles, proud Icers, and Bowd a great hunter. This is *not* a small thing.”

“I had a lot of time to reflect out there, especially after I saw the Sandwalkers. It was not just their mercy; it was that they *accompanied me home* so that I would be *safe*. It was *that* which made me see clearly how *great* a threat they are.”

“Yes, for those of this *Chasm* to fear nothing, especially our might, is not good; not good at all.” He shook his head as he realised more fully what young Hedden’s words had indicated; their wider implications for the order of his world. He was now seeing more of the depth in the warning of this younger man. “Fancy them not fearing us. But that can soon, and fairly easily, be rectified,” he finished strongly.

“Yes. That is why I came here. The Lords needed to know.”

“So, they have *no designs* on the Icer Kingdoms?”

“No. But they *go out*, as they say. There will be some even here in the Western Kingdom and probably many reaching out to more of the Clans.”

“There *has* been. Any we found here are now languishing in a prison, discredited, or gone. Some who are of the Old Religion are about too, but they are not aligned with this new sect. To have these adherents among more of the Clans is more worrying, for all our futures.”

“I am keen to seek out the Old Religion, as I see it as a defence too.”

“Maybe so,” commented Edron, nodding. “My father told me of the danger of this new Faith. He said it had swayed proud Icer people and even some nobles. The Northerners are a little too at ease about them. I am told these vermin proliferate there.”

“So, what is to be done?” asked the visitor.

“I have ships, and the portals are quieting, but I am not sure that a slaughter is a good thing. Martyrs only increase the flame of zealots. I believe we need to reflect for a time on the best course of action.”

“Yes, of course.”

“Keep these things to yourself, for now,” he finished, as he thought about those who had joined these zealots in The Chasm. He could not for the life of him understand how some of this man’s companions could fall to such ideas. He knew two of them well. They were Icer’s to the bone and they were not fools.

THE CARETAKERS WALKED OUTSIDE. The bright sunlight eased their hearts; also, the relief that the arrangements required for the vote were now fully set. It was to be a week from now. Many, especially the Sandwalkers among these souls, had also felt something hidden and malignant growing in the chasm. But they really did not consciously know what this discomfort in them was; they just felt that it was the rumblings and uncertainty of such a time. They were certainly now more at ease, now that the vote was so near.

Senna Kytell now sidled up to Cista Dusa and said that it was good that the vote was finally arranged, then commenting, that if there was an Interpreter that now would be the time for them

to stand forth. Senna could not have imagined the wrath that then poured down on her. She had imagined many things, but not the reality of the consequence of those words to one such as Cista. She rebuked her strongly, asking her if she was mad speaking of such things. Knowing that the Faith and its future lay in the balance, she did not hold back. Cista made it very clear that such words had no place in the chasm or even in the minds of the followers of Nov-Cikel; *most especially* now. She then, *more than suggested* that Senna look up the writings of their Faith and review its history. She was surprised that such an esteemed worker of the New Faith was not steeped in it. The Caretakers had gone to great lengths to make the reality of the vote clear; the nature of the instructions on it, as well as clear text on the position of Interpreter.

This was *not at all* what this middle-aged woman was expecting. She had believed it was to be Cista who would take up the mantle of Interpreter when she saw her in the cave of The Power. She was expecting a knowing glance from a proud Icer woman who she thought was destined to the high position. Senna was even seeking to be her confidant, but had cowered before the onslaught, and as Cista walked away, she sobbed a little. She had been *so* wrong she now thought. How could she have been so wrong about Cista and this great Icer woman's place in the story of her faith? Senna knew that she would *surely* lose her position and even be in disgrace now; *especially* sure, as Cista now talked with Enoss Lenik.

Senna could have shrunk away and died right now, as she sat down on a rock bench near the entry of the outer meeting chamber. The cave of The Power was down a natural rock tunnel beyond this larger meeting room; the meeting room, a naturally formed and enclosed amphitheatre. The space had lent itself to meetings, and at the behest of Nov-Cikel, three levels of bench seats had been carved out properly in a circle there. This particular meeting had been held here because of its significance, even though they had built other larger meeting places since that time.

Enoss Lenik had seen the exchange and now listened intently to Cista Dusa. He looked towards Senna and back again a few times. Senna was gone. Not literally, but mentally and emotionally. She was totally reeling as all her work, her life, became undone. The man she secretly loved would now not even spend time with her; she was most sure of that. She was in full emotional overload and her mind was coming apart. Only a kind and merciful look on the face of Enoss Lenik, as he now came over to her, saved her. It was like a clear ray of light had shot through the wild storm. It saved her heart, and she regathered her mind.

He then sat down beside her, and said, "It's okay, Senna. I know how much the work means to you. Nobody will take that from you."

Senna was even more in awe of this man now. He clearly embodied the nature of the non-judgement enshrined in The Way, she thought. She looked up to him beside her, now crying with relief.

THE HUNTER WAS NOT AT EASE. He could not sleep tonight. It was now three days after he had visited Edron Clovek, and a sense of dread had built up in his gut and his mind. He could not shake it. It was the question of the Walkers and the many others in the Chasm who he now saw more as people. The Sandwalkers most especially, as they had allowed him to get here; even escorted him home. It was guilt he now felt. His soul held a great burden, as he knew clearly that their deaths would all be on him.

He was the one who had damned them to the almost sure possibility of oblivion, and they had not fought back; so *sure* of their Way and The All. They accepted the Will of The All and did His bidding no matter the personal cost.

He had been so alive when he left Edron's hall, but earlier today he had found an old woman who was a strong adherent of the Old Religion. He had told her his story, but she had not looked kindly on him at all, chiding him for his lack of nobility. "Surely, you knew what would come of this?"

"I did. But I somehow thought it was right."

"It is *never* right to destroy peaceable people, especially those *who believe so much*; so much so that they care not for their *own lives*."

"But zealots *destroy* lives. The uprising of The Jnast Clan clearly showed us that," he had responded, defending himself.

"*They* killed many innocents before they were stopped...these creatures *do not*."

That had hit him like the wooden hull of a low flying airship. This perspective smashed him into reality, just enough, but still his mind argued. "But they are strong. They will bring down any other belief because of that. Do you want the Old Religion to fall? Do you want The Majority Order to fall? The order of *everything* could fall."

"Only if The Creator wills it, but rest assured that life is sacred to all of us, and no *true* belief believes in slaughter of the innocent. The Hunter Lords, if any, and The Majority Order, seem to accept it, but that does *not* make it right."

"But, alien disease, and this New Faith are a threat."

"They are only a threat because we are fearful and spiritually weak."

"Why have *you* not spoken up?"

“I have, and we have, but we are few voices. The Icer world is only physically strong and has lost its humility. It learns little and serves its own power. It disregards virtue, *and* The Power. I will not take the life of another who does not threaten me or attack my grandchildren.”

“I saw a circle of light that led me to food and water. I thought I was meant to make it home to help put down this rebellion.”

“You *may* have seen a light, but the rest would surely be your imagination. If you wish to follow *The Power* you *cannot* join this hunt, and you need to pray for those poor souls. Their deaths will be on your soul *even then*; just as much as it will be on the perpetrators.”

He had put his head down at those words, quite lost and confused. He needed more time to think on all this, but he had already lit the fuse. Decisions made in the midst of struggle, and even some promises that we make in *happiness*, may not be wise. Time, consideration, and other heads, especially for important decisions, are always quite necessary. He had not even looked for Guidance in the writings of The Old Religion that had saved him from the desert. This man was now learning the nature of such things; the hardest way one with a conscience could.

THE WHISPERER WAS NOW IN HIM. It was now only one voice, *his* inner voice. It was no longer separate. Now deep in meditation in his last visit here, he believed that he was reaching what his imagination saw as a higher dimension.

The mind can create many “realities” and symbols of its own perception in meditation, just as it does in dreams. Insight can be found in these, but people can see anything if their imagination is great enough. There are so many who even believe in past corporeal lives; ones that seem so

real that they have to be real, yet are just stories unfolding within the mind, as fiction does. Some do not seek the truth truly, placing imagination on top of other imagination, because the lower nature bays for something or the ego tricks the mind. Such is the ability of the imagination, the mind, to delude itself.

The mind is a great tool, and a great fool. Once there is a single proof that *seems* solid, or even two, but which are not, then the ego can twist all of import to fit its dreams; especially if the “proof” is of imaginary higher realities. Stories of all kinds play out in our heads, but these things are only seen in the confines of the mind, and much is not inner sight. We must take care what we see as proof, and we need test it. Self-aware beings, as learning creatures, are frail, but if the rational faculty is used well, we become more aware and stronger.

Today this man had totally lost the fight for rational thinking and his lower nature had rejoiced as it ate up the glory of all this imagined truth. Its folly could easily have been seen if *any* light had been cast on it. The imagination *is* a great tool and a wonderful creative reality; the soul *does* have inner vision and the creative process can indeed be magical; but like all things it is how, when, and in what measure, they are used. Inner vision is indeed real, but the imagination, leagued with mistaken knowledge, may seem so too.

He would leave this place now, as he no longer had to stay in the dark. He had groomed many with his machinations and talk, diligently preparing the way. Now it was time to bring his intent out into the light. He was sure that the depth of his relationship with The Interpreter, his eminent selfless work in the development of The Great Chasm, the great hole in the hearts of many at the loss of The Interpreter, and, indeed, their yearning again for the surety of clear instruction,

would draw the support he needed. To him, the need for *him* to lead the Beautiful Way was “*clear*” and any lesser leadership was not to be suffered.

EDRON WAS SICK OF HIS OWN THOUGHTS. He saw only a disease that had infected his culture, and one that may bring on its death. He had known of some of the Clan’s belief in this New Messenger, also that many of them sent Sandwalkers out looking for this Chasm. Fortunately, though, a good number of them did not yet hold to this new belief. He also knew of the rumblings in the courts of many of the smaller and larger Icer kingdoms, and had been doing all he could, with others, to stamp it out. As he surveyed the field, he now realised that he had to cut off the head of this new religion for good and have done with it once and for all.

He did not know that some Clan communities were already linked to the Chasm and that the many others beyond his current knowledge had sent out Walkers. Why some had found the Chasm, and others had not, was a mystery even to those of the Chasm, but like a plant that grew, it needed to start small and grow organically. It was believed that The All measured the flows and stages of the evolution of the entire planet; not just The Chasm. Like a Great Gardener, He saw to the development and the changes of *all* peoples of Temelj with a deeper wisdom.

“The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Daystar of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.”¹¹

Edron sat back. He was more at ease now, as he had made his decision and formulated his plan. It was now to action. Three of his ships would leave dock separately and head in different directions, but rendezvous deep in the desert at the Ice Rocks. He did not want prying eyes to know of his intent, as he would have to take the lives of Icer people too. There could be no mouths left to tell stories of martyrs and he would only tell his men of his plan when they were all but upon the Chasm itself. Many of his men would struggle with the slaughter of their own kind, so he would handpick each man, and especially the two other airship captains. None must ever know what they would do, even in the Icer world. He would pick men who would take this knowledge to their graves.

It was abhorrent for him to take Icer lives, but for the sake of endless others and the very structure they relied on, this new ideology had to be rooted out. He would not seek the sanctioning of his actions through The Majority Order, as it would surely be stopped or watered down, or these vermin allowed to retain their foothold. They were as big a threat as the young Icer hunter Hedden Spron had realised in his escape through the desert. Edron was proud of this younger Hunter, wondering why he had not come to his attention before now. He was a future leader of The Western Icer's, *no doubt*.

JACK AND ABLE HAD FINISHED FOR THE DAY. Jack loved the honest toil of the work here and Able loved getting to know his grandfather, now that he was older. They walked into Etera's home, which had become theirs after her disappearance.

They hadn't seen Sam either; well, since the situation with Ne-Vec. Able wondered what Sam was up to, and now wished, just a bit, that he had stayed invisible too. He wished that he was out there investigating with him, but was glad of his work and time with his grandfather. He had been in the desert for a number of years, an indescribable distance from home, so he relished this time with family. He had missed his parents in no small way, and now looking over to Jack, he saw some pain and sadness on his grandfather's face.

"What's the matter, Jack?" he asked, using Jack's name, as the man had been uneasy with the 'Grandpa' tag.

"Oh, nothing. *All good.* Just tired."

"It's more *than that.*"

"Yeah, it is," he admitted, then breathing out strongly. "I'm feeling bone weary deep inside, and not seeing Jennifer is rumbling continually just under the surface for some reason."

"You seem to have good energy and you enjoy the work. I watch you."

"*I know, you watch me,*" commented Jack, with wide eyes to emphasise it more, and allowing himself a good laugh; all which had the youth smiling.

"Sorry, but this is a *real* opportunity for me. I just want to soak it in. I haven't seen you and Mum and Dad in a long time. I got torn away. I couldn't get back, so it's a *huge thing.*"

"I get it, Able. It's a big deal for you. *Just playin', eh.*"

"Yep," agreed Able, about how he felt, but his attention was still on his grandfather's heart. "So maybe you should go and see her. They say she is a guest of one of the Caretakers."

“*Boy*, you and *that girl* always land on your feet,” said Jack, but was surprised at his own words, as he didn’t really know either of them; especially their past. But Jennifer was struggling and had been through great tribulations before she ever met Jack. Landing on her feet only came later on in her travels.

“That *deeper Jack* is what’s rumbling in you,” offered Able, knowing that his journey had not been landing on his feet at all so far, but he had learned by his challenges not to be self-concerned.

“Yep, and *he* seems *really* tired. I hadn’t realised that before now. He’s more than lonely too.”

“Go and see her. The break from the work would do you good, and...”

Jennifer then walked in the door. It seemed as if she had been crying. “I am tired of not knowing and having all these feelings. I am *so tired*,” she said, as Jack stood up and she just walked into his arms.

They both shed tears, feeling great joy and sustenance in this simple reunion. A hug is *so many* things and neither wanted to let go. They hung on there a good while before Jack finally said, “Let’s go for a walk.”

“That would be nice,” agreed Jennifer.

They said their goodbyes to Able and pushed through the flap of the doorway. They walked hand in hand down along the pathways of the chasm. Nothing was said for quite a while, as both were happy just to be together. They seemed to get sustenance from simply being with each other and their bond was now even more apparent to them.

“Tired of not knowing? Me too. *What* a ride, *eh?*” ventured Jack.

“It’s good to be with you, Jack; just *be with you.*”

“Are you *shuttin’ me up,*” he joked.

“*No,*” she giggled.

They laughed together and it felt good. There was no awkwardness at all; they were deeply at home.

“Cista told me to come and see you. She looked after me like I was family while we worked with the children. She is a very loving lady.”

“Honesty is love to me. It’s respectful. It makes things real. But I’ve been learning to be more measured back at home lately. It seems I can be just a bit *too honest.*”

“As long as it’s kind. You can be passionate and kind,” added Jennifer, with a smile.

Jack smiled and looked at her. They still had each other’s hand, and she saw him look deeply at her, so she quickly looked forward again in a little shyness.

“Tell me more about you, Jen.”

“Oh, nothing to tell really. We are all just people.”

“Are you kidding me? We are on another planet, have just met, and are walking down a pathway hand in hand like we have known each other our whole lives.”

“We are just people though.”

“*I suppose we are.* No matter *where* we are,” then mused Jack.

“That’s been *my* experience,” stated Jennifer, now looking at Jack with a bright smile.

That smile seemed to perk him up, and he said, “I just want to get to know the woman I feel all this for.”

“Why? Doesn’t it just matter that we feel it, and that it takes some of our burden away.”

“Well, I don’t know about you, but if we are going to have grandchildren, I need to know who you *bloody-well are?*”

They both had a good laugh as they kept on down the path; still hand in hand.

Consummation

Etera lay sleeping on the sand. Her nightmares had abated out here thankfully, but concern for the vote, and her loss of Sam, had still made her sleep somewhat interrupted since they had headed out into the desert. Tonight, though, she fell deep, falling to a tiredness from all she had been through recently. It was here, she heard a voice saying...

*Within the deepest realities of things, beyond where mere thoughts are found,
in a place of deep knowing, a single Command is now heard.*

*It rises from deeper than Deepest Itself; streaming out from the Unknown Place, affecting
Deepest and Deeper, and beyond them, outward to this Foundation planet.*

Such a Command is more than any other Command, and the essence of love chases it.

*Such Commands are binding, as even free will in the Outer Realities
is of no consequence to the outcome of such as It.*

...

*The Plough is still having its affect upon this Foundation Place; your desert world,
yet the new Command has finally gone out.*

*The Plough had ploughed deeply long ago; the Seed been then planted. This Command from the
Unknown Place was always to come.*

*It will now call forth the New Shoot from its bed, even though the rending noise, the Plough's
impact will be heard and felt for yet many years.*

*The Seed, roots grown deep into the soil, now springs forth from the ground of your Foundation
world, as the Command has come for it to sprout.*

...

*This globe has risen from soil and water to that of plant and animal, then rose to the kingdom of
beings who speak.*

*The Seed's, Gentle Shoot of new life has been created for the peoples of your world;
for their peace and wellbeing.*

*The Plough itself, and this New Shoot, are indeed the consummation of all that came before
them.*

*The toil of all, served the Seed since freewill beings became aware, carrying on the spiritual
evolution of this place over many eons.*

...

*A Flower will form from the New Shoot, and the single creature of the people of Temelj will be
brought to fruit; to be reborn of the spirit inherent within.*

*The age of maturity is now upon your people, just as maturity comes to all single beings;
inevitably so.*

Casting off the yoke of a searching and confused youth. Breaking free of childish ways, endless waste, war, and fanciful wandering.

...

The Command has come. It will be so.

All evolves in all creation, bringing things ever closer to The All.

Etera woke from the dream and its heartening words. She did not understand it all but gathered some of its meaning. She settled easily back to sleep, knowing deeply, that all was as it was to be, and another dream came to her...

There were endless airships over The Great Chasm, all firing their guns into a great haze that obscured sight of it. They did not venture into the cloud, they simply kept firing.

On the deck of the lead ship was Enoss Lenik, but it was not him. It was another strong Icer man, who was no doubt a leader, but darkness surrounded him. He cast his glance at her, and his eyes were deep, black, empty, and remorseless.

Etera woke again in extreme alarm, now not at peace *at all*.

This new dream was *so* vivid, and as it happened, so was Edron Clovek's. What he had dreamt of at that same moment was of an entirely different nature; him only feeling at ease, as well as in some wonder. It was a good omen to him; a good omen for what lay ahead.

He had been deep in the desert on his airship, flying with free sail out below in the heat of the day. He had seen an Icer woman sail past him in the opposite direction, on the deck of a pure white airship. The balloon and gondola were even translucent, but his gaze was taken from it as

he stared at the sheer beauty of the Icer woman; her eyes holding so much more than any he had known.

The Vote

“Reality or truth is one ... If they seek reality itself, they will agree and be united; for reality is indivisible and not multiple. It is evident, therefore, that there is nothing of greater importance to mankind than the investigation of truth.”¹²

Hedden Spron was very lost right now. He had been called for by Edron Clovek and was waiting in the outer room of his study, or library. A tall youth walked past him and nodded to him in respect. It was Enom Clovek, the son of Edron, and Hedden nodded back to him with the due weight; given the boy's position and his age. He was a strong lad and very sure of himself, just like his father was. He appreciated the respect given him by the lad but was not at all happy with himself.

He would not be proud of his actions today, as it would surely be the beginning of movement against The Great Chasm. He had gone over it and over it, and he knew what their intent would be, as it was simply not the Icer way to leave things undone, and the aliens alone made the attack worthy in the estimation of any Hunter. He looked up as Edron came to the door

and beckoned him in. He got up, knowing that he would cave in to the strong will of this man and go with them to attack the chasm. It was already too late when he had told Lord Clovek his story, and as he walked into the room, he now knew he would most *definitely* not even argue against it, as there, in that room, were *four other* Hunter Lords of not small repute.

“Welcome, Hedden. You know all these men.”

“Yes, Lord Clovek,” he answered, as he almost bowed in respect to the others.

“We will have none of that. You are an equal today.”

“An equal?”

“You are a now one of *us*. A Noble, a Hunter Lord, and unless you become a traitor to your people, it cannot be undone. Sit with us as we vote.”

“Vote?”

“I have a well-considered plan of action, and you, among this company, will vote for its application, or against it. We will not go to the politicians.”

“But can this be done?”

Edron looked to the others, and they nodded back to indicate that he should share what he was proposing with this new Lord, so he began...

“When Nov-Cikel wandered out into the desert, we thought his religion dead. But the story of his not being afraid of the desert, *as well as* the stories of the many Clan folk who died as martyrs, or went out into the desert in search of him, re-birthing his religion among the Clans. *All* those dirty fools praise is *story*, and so it grew. We have now found, that its new adherents have

even managed to bring this new *Way* to many of the Clans. According to my sources, over half of them now believe in this *abomination*, this *stupidity*. I believe it was the deaths of so many *martyrs* that helped feed this new fire, so, the *wisdom* of the plan that I will lay out before you is, for that reason alone, a great risk. This, and other concerns, mean that it will need to be voted on by all here.”

Edron then paused, looked around at each man seriously, then began an explanation of his plan. “You and I will take three ships, Hedden; none other in this room will go with us. As if this action comes against us, strong Icer Lords will need to disavow knowledge of it, so the Lords may continue to drive the Western Kingdom, and not be weakened politically in The Majority Order. I will handpick the men for this action; Icer men, with still tongues, and have mostly, already done so. We will lay waste to this Chasm and all within its walls, as it can be no less than that; Icer folk too.

There is much to this plan that can bring a greater fire against us, against the Icer way and the Western Kingdom alone. We may even help create a far greater scourge by adding more martyrs to the pile. But also, this scourge may come to us by our *failure* to act.

If it is found out that we have taken Icer lives, then I will fall, and my House will fall; your House too Hedden, *if* it is found out. The Western Lords may disavow any knowledge, but even then, many will not believe them. Even without evidence, we *may* lose favour with all other Icer kingdoms, and we cannot know the weight of power we may lose within The Majority Order, or what the Order may become if we are no longer a strong enough influence to protect it.

There is *much* danger to us, *hence* the vote. This problem may destroy the Icer way, whether we act or whether we do not. I believe though, from your obvious insight into the situation

Hedden, from my own reflection, and our discussions Gentlemen, that the option of inaction *surely* leaves us weakened, whereas the possibility that we may fall because of this plan, only *may* happen. I put forward my plan of action because it is not the Icer way to sit on the ground while this disease spreads into the vitals of the Icer kingdoms.”

“So, we vote,” called one, tired of the talk.

“Yes, we vote now,” agreed another.

“Raise your arm, those who agree to act,” stated Edron.

Four hands rose, Edron’s included. He then regarded the two there who had not raised their hands. Hedden flinched a little inside, but a smile came across Edron’s face, as he did not believe for an instant that this younger man would vote against this action.

“Then it is passed,” stated one, with a deeply furrowed brow.

“It is passed,” said another. “We will leave you to your preparations. *Good winds* and *strong rope* to you both,” he added, as he and one other strode out.

The other Lord who had voted in the affirmative then embraced Edron, and nodded to him, before he too turned to leave. As he left, he looked with respect to Hedden and nodded, as even though this new Lord had not agreed with him, it was good to know he had the strength to vote his mind. It was a *sure* sign of good character and that he could trust this younger man to his word. Someone who had enough courage and honour to vote against Edron *was a man indeed*. He was *certainly* Noble material, just as Edron had said.

The last to leave was the only other soul who voted against the plan. He was much older than the others. He shook Edron’s hand, and Hedden’s too, as he left.

“We must talk sometime, young Hedden, no matter what comes of this expedition.”

“Yes. That would be good, sir.”

“*No matter* what comes of it,” he repeated, and he looked deep into the eyes of the younger man to solidify it even more in his mind.

“Yes, Lord.”

“You are a Lord now, boy. No more of that,” said Edron smiling, as the other Lord turned and left the room.

JENNIFER SAT TO THE RIGHT OF CISTA DUSA. Cista was at the head of the table and Jack sat beside Jennifer. Across the table from them sat young Able. He almost laughed as Sam now suddenly kicked his chair. He had been wondering if Sam might be here, as he could feel a presence beyond those who sat at the table talking. He then received a tap to his elbow, which made his rested hand shoot some food across the table.

“Are you at ease, Able?” asked Cista, thinking the boy was nervous.

“Yes, thank you, Cista,” he replied, as another stronger shove on the other elbow threw his plate and the remaining food in front of him across the table too.

Able immediately got up and excused himself, saying, “I have these things...spasms...”, as Jack brushed some of the food off his shirt and lap with a smile.

But before Able could make a meal of trying to lie convincingly again, Sam tripped him.

“He seems so strong, and not at all unwell. Yet Ne-Vec tells me he is quite prone to falling in the water.”

Sam then grabbed Able, physically turning him around and escorting him back to sit down. He now knew that Ne-Vec had definitely talked to her, and he sure liked this older lady’s style. The way she had intimated contact with him spoke clearly of a clever soul; a woman ‘*who had been around the block a few times*’, as he would put it.

She looked down and smiled, pretending not to notice, as it was a little more than obvious what was going on. Clear signals had now been sent, by providence, and of course, by young Sam’s inability to stop playing with his new friend.

Cista now looked up and around, as if trying to see any movement, after Able had been unceremoniously sat down. When her gaze eventually returned to Able, his hair had been all messed up. She burst out laughing, while Jack and Jennifer looked on with a little confusion, mixed with mirth. Jack and Jennifer had not even heard of Sam, as Etera had asked Able, on their arrival, to keep Sam and Mother to himself; that she, and these two other new visitors, did not need any more complications.

Sam knew who the lady of the house was from the talk had listened to in the chasm, but he could now see *who* she was for sure. It was also by her gait and movement in the cave of The Power, and now her general demeanour. As far as Sam was concerned, Etera trusted Ne-Vec, and *she* obviously trusted Cista Dusa enough to share their little secret. He hoped to hell that Ne-Vec at least had the wisdom to only share his presence with this *streetwise* lady.

He now *knew* that he had all the good contacts he needed if he found something, and he headed off again to find the labyrinth. He had thankfully heard of some caves; ones that fitted

Etera's dreams, from a conversation he had listened in on that afternoon here. The caves were a day's walk from here, so it was great not needing food or water, or even sleep, deciding that he would walk through the night.

Cista somehow now knew he was gone. Well, as there were no more shenanigans it was quite obvious. Able looked nervous for a while, still trying to seem at ease. Cista smiled at the beauty of that innocent soul, and asked, "So, you walk with a *Sandwalker*, in our deserts?"

"At some time in the future, at least. He has taught me a great deal and I have been learning some of the Great Stories."

"*Ah*, that is heartening. You have all created a great deal of consternation. Many of the Caretakers were very alarmed. Fortunately, Enoss and Lassd calmed them. Lassd, it seems, was even quite taken with Garran. He said there is an intimation of something greater in him."

"He's just like us," offered Able.

"It has rained, no less than five times since his arrival, and always near where he is. There is more to him," commented Cista, plainly.

"That is something else...well...someone else...actually not sure on that even," offered Able. "But please don't ask me, because it will only create *more* consternation."

"I am sure that whatever is at play is a design beyond *my* reckoning. I feel it is well, and I trust The All completely. But we Caretakers have a constant duty of due diligence, especially as the vote is soon now. I do not hope to understand you all, but I do not feel any malevolence in you. I see innocents and helpers of the Cause. So, Able, would you like another plate of food?"

“Yes please,” said Able. “I just can’t seem to stop eating here. I ate very little in the desert. Maybe my body wants to catch up.”

“You are in a strong growing time,” offered Cista.

“I suppose so. But I have crossed the threshold to maturity.”

“You will *never* reach it, young man. *Believe me.*”

“There is *always* more,” then stated Jack, like an old man, and just as sure as Dossd would have been.

“There is, and we *alone* are responsible for our effort. No one else holds our soul’s potentials and responsibilities, *but us,*” stated Cista, as another plate of food was brought in for Able.

LATER THAT NIGHT, Jack and Jennifer went out for another walk together, as Cista and Able continued their discussion on his friend Dossd, and their journey together in search of The Great Chasm.

The couple from Earth chatted easily as they wandered around this more developed northern area of the chasm. Nov-Cikel and his followers had come here well over a hundred years before and it was far more developed than the areas where Jack had worked so far. It was not that this was a greater place than any other; but yet it was most surely. There was greatness in this place, and yet, an even greater humility in the people here; one that somehow made this seeming dichotomy, not a dichotomy at all.

The two moons were out tonight, and they wandered together across the night sky, lighting the pathway for these two souls. The beauty of them wandering together in the same orbit around Temelj was not lost on this couple. The moons both felt alone, but together.

Jennifer's gaze came down from them, and said, "It's been good being with you more, Jack."

"It's the same for me. It's a still a little but weird, feeling so close."

"Yes, it is."

"I suppose we will get up to, or we've already got up to, all kinds of adventures together," offered Jack, smiling.

"I don't know, Jack. Maybe," responded Jennifer, taking his hand as they walked.

He was glad she did, as it was still confusing to him as to whether he should at times. It was nice that she had taken the lead tonight.

"I wonder how long we have here together," he mused.

"As long as *it is*, I suppose. So, let's enjoy it."

"There's a part of me that's very melancholy right now. Like it knows you are here, but it still can't reach you, and it has missed you deeply. It's more than tired too, and even yearns for nonexistence rather than such a fractured one. I think I have travelled a *very* long time," expressed Jack.

“What’s the use of such thoughts and feelings? We are better to be *thankful*, no matter our struggles. I know that *I am* right now,” finished Jennifer, swinging Jack’s arm a bit higher forward and back.

“Hmmm, thanks, Jen. I needed that reset, but I think that even hard things can be quite special, even when the pain runs deep.”

“You have to detach from your pain; from *me even*. There are things in life that we don’t get to vote on, so let it go.”

“Yep, that’s wisdom for sure, and I will, but before I do I have to say...*I love you.*”

“I love you too, Jack.”

Acceptance and detachment now sat easily within them as they were both suddenly gone. As they hurtled away in different directions within the streams of light, they realised that this short time had been a small grace, yet a great gift; a mercy from The Creator. They both savoured this short time together as they travelled and appreciated the balm of heart that it had provided.

SAM FOUND THE CAVES. He wandered around in this maze, retracing his steps at times, mapping it in his mind, and keeping his bearings with the use of arrows that he sketched in the sand as he went. Strangely, but thankfully, he could see in this dark place, just as he had been able to in the cave of The Power. He did all this for a while, but found no items or clues, or any particular place in the tunnels which showed that someone might be visiting here. It sure was a labyrinth, but there was no sign of humanoid habitation, or activity. Even the cave’s mouth was void of

footprints. He also sought any sign up the chasm from it; even across to, and up past, the water store, but he could find nothing.

“If this is the labyrinth Etera talked about, and there is some kind of intrigue afoot, then it could only be a Sandwalker,” he now thought. *“Only they could cover their tracks this well. If anyone’s been here.”* He knew that this theory was based on the hearsay of Etera’s dreams, and really, on an *absence* of evidence here. Without some actual *solid* evidence there was no way to track who was up to what. Maybe there wasn’t even *anything* going on. *“Maybe Etera’s nightmares were just her fears; just a representation of her own anxieties about the vote,”* he now mused in thought.

He sat down in the cave mouth in the late afternoon. It had taken him from the time he reached here in the night, until now, to go about this work, and his mind was tired of the endless maybes and no real evidence.

“What are you missin’, Sammy?” he asked, out loud. *“Training,”* he answered himself, allowing himself a smile.

It was becoming was *very* clear to him that he needed skills for this kind of work. The help of more experienced Agents seemed to be required right now, or at the least, useful. He sure would get a lot out of training when the time came, as his struggle in doing this work unskilled made him more aware that he needed it. He learnt things by simply doing them usually, and he *had* learnt on the run here, but even this positive reflection was no real use to him now, as his mind wandered again to his Sandwalker theory.

It *was* plausible, but that did *not* make it true. He had watched and listened to many of those particular *hombres*, and they all seemed too strong for any games. It was then he saw the

stick mark; one small dent in the dirt at the very edge of the cave mouth. The afternoon sun had found it *for him*, and it was clearly a stick mark. Someone *had* been here, and it was definitely a Walker's stick mark. He *had* been learning sign as he had been wandering all through the chasm; learning about different foot sizes, different soles; weight and gait, as he watched those who made them. He had wondered what the small dents were until he saw a Walker walk past him one day. He had given himself a little slap that day, as all Sandwalkers had sticks.

These short sticks were hard earned, as wood was extremely rare, and like gold, to those of the fields. Walkers were very honoured to be given them when they left their Clan to find The Great Chasm, so no one else here ever used one. They were never without them, even in the chasm.

"What kind of Sandwalker would play with the vote, first up? And what would they gain? Maybe they were out in the desert too long and it did their heads in?" he now mused in thought. The last part was plausible, as the herculean effort of wandering the deserts alone, some for many years, was definitely an almost ridiculous task. *"It definitely would have done me in,"* he thought, and *he* was as *determined* as anyone he knew. "Who knows, maybe it's mixed up with their honour code or something," he now said, out loud.

Then something else occurred to him. Maybe this single imprint was a perfect ruse; blanking out all sign and leaving this. "Maybe it's *too* perfect, Sammy?"

He shook his head though, as there were still too many questions and nothing solid. Even this small indent said nothing without related evidence. He had to see it as the only piece of *real* evidence, to see it *as it was*, and not get to theorising too much.

He *had* followed Senna Kytell about for a good while, but she too had led to no one. She seemed to be in her own game, if anything. He had seen the goings on with Cista, and Senna's fall

from grace that day. “Small minded, small fry,” he now commented out loud, dismissing her as a threat to the vote.

Sam had listened in on many conversations over the time he had been investigating, and people were generally happy that the vote was soon and that The Great Council would finally be formed. There was much comment about the great effort of the Caretakers in holding things together all these years, as well as much on how they had stayed servants, and true to their purpose. Mostly, just how proud people here were to be part of a movement that could engender such spiritual maturity. They all thought that it boded well for the future of the Beautiful Way, as they called it.

This had been all *so* boring for Sam though. No darkness, no clues, and a heap of happy people; just talk, and no evidence. Not his idea of fun at all, so much so, that he had occasionally gone and tortured Able a bit to keep his blood pumping. Well, that and talking with Etera before she had left.

“Yesterday’s news,” he now said out loud to himself, at the thought of Etera, knowing he didn’t mean it, but needing to move on.

He didn’t have *her*, and he didn’t have *any* hint of any major game below the surface here. He only had a passive aggressive fool who met her humble bone with a real crack, and a dot in the dirt. The thought of this small dot being all he had to go on made him laugh out loud and hearty, then say, “*Agent Deveroux. What a joke!*”

He looked at the small dint some more now, trying to gather if there was anything special about it. He studied it, and studied it, and he would work his way back up the chasm seeking out it’s like. He would look for any differences between it and any other stick marks he found, if there

were any discernible ones. He had burned the image of the mark into his mind from different angles and also noted the nature of the soil here. The dint seemed fresh, as that was quite clear in relation to the soil type.

He had then thought of staying here and waiting for whoever it was. But then realised that he could not wait because the vote was only days away and the *bad guy* may not return before then. He felt frustrated and powerless in it all, but then remembered what he had always done at home. He would always flick through the small book he had found until a solution came. It was not always in the text, sometimes an answer would come to him as he read them. He usually didn't think he needed any help, so he was even reticent to look sometimes.

He didn't carry the book with him, so hadn't brought it here. But he had read it that many times that he knew a good amount of it, and it had transformed his thinking as well as his attitudes. These Words had changed him, as even though Sam had stayed quite hard in *some* ways, he *had* found his heart again in this book. He now recalled a small sentence from it, and it buoyed him, realising that its contents would even be helpful with his Agency work, and it was *only now* that it dawned on him, that maybe, he did not find that small book by chance.

His pride was not happy with this realisation, as he had thought it was him who was running his life. That he was the one who stood tall; that no one else had, *sure as hell*, done his work for him. But he was beginning to see that the nature of things was an interaction. Sam *was* in charge of his actions and while it *was his* sacrifice and *his* hardship, he now remembered that he *had* asked for help. He had *yearned* for help as a youth, and it had come. It had come by way of everyday life, as such things do.

He did not feel so alone in his life's path right now because of this insight, and he *did* like *that* feeling. He could feel the flow of fate and order in this too. He *loved* that little book, and he liked being a part of this Agency. It was clear to him that he would be more purposed with others now, *only now* realising just how much he had yearned for that. With this challenge, this mystery of a dint in the sand, had come new understanding and self-understanding. Sam could feel himself growing again.

He began to walk back up The Great Chasm now *knowing* that a Deeper Power and our hearts were in constant interaction; an interaction, that not only seeks constant *spiritual* communion, but one that also reaches through life itself. He could also see now that the material world and its struggles had also helped create who he was today; that interaction with others and the material world is an interaction with God. "*He's still creating me,*" thought Sam, just gobsmacked at that thought.

He could see now how all things interact and intertwine in life and all things are part of it; life being a part of us and we a part of it. This insight was very freeing and humbling to Sam, as he had always seen life as something to fight and keep in its place. He saw now clearly that many forces shape our lives and choices, but that we still hold the honour of the choices and efforts we make. He now easily acquiesced to his place within the reality of things, and it put more bounce in his step as he moved on up the chasm.

MOSSD WAS SUDDENLY GONE. It had been a blink. Or maybe it hadn't, as Etera's thoughts were strongly on Sam today. She might have been wandering in her mind for a while; she wasn't sure. It was like she and Sam were still linked in some deeper aspect and she could feel a change;

a calm that come over her; one that was not hers. She knew it had to be him, as she had been linked before; to Ne-Vec. They were deep friends and intent on the same work, so somehow a link of some of Ne-Vec's thoughts and emotional feelings had risen in her at times. She never mentioned this link to her friend, but it was very real.

In any case, Mossd was gone. She looked for sign, so she could catch up, but there was none to be found. It was then that the two Sandwalkers who had escorted Hedden Spron home came over the dune; very surprised to see her. They smiled and turned around as Mossd came up behind them. They nodded just a little in respect for his skills, as they would not bow to mirth, and no Walker sought to raise the ego of anyone. They saw praise as a destroyer of the soul, yet, like most things, we all require a little encouragement and appreciation from time to time. If they praised another at all, they thanked The All for bequeathing them the skill, the knowledge, or the will, to do an act. It was never to be theirs, and so not feed the ego.

All four agreed without a sound that they would camp here the night and share stories of their journeys. It was a pleasurable way to share information, and a story may provide greater depth and detail, more simply. When they had eaten and washed, they listened respectfully to each other's story. All four stories were told, as it was not for any to tell a story for another. There were always differences, even if two had walked the same path together. In this style of communication there was more listening. It was then that they all sat in silence and recalled all the stories, reflecting on the content. After a time, a few questions were asked. Then it was done. Walkers were disciplined of mind and soul mostly, so they wasted no energy on lesser talk.

Etera then told a Great Story, even though she knew that she was on her way to the very Kingdom that the Icer hunter had been escorted safely to by these two other Walkers. Their stories

of his escape alarmed her a little, so telling a Great Story; one of crisis and victory, was quite apt and helpful right now.

The hunter knew her, so she would not have the luxury of time among the Icers before some persecution. She had hoped to walk and live among her people again, even with some real struggle, but this man would add to her pain, no doubt. She was also in deep fear for The Chasm and the people there, but she had to grow even more trust in The All, so she cast her thoughts away as she told the Great Story. She made some small errors, but this night Mossd and the others decided not to school her, as they knew what lay ahead of her, allowing their respect for her courage to take precedence.

THE DAYS ROLLED ON. Sam's work had been intense. He had seen Lassd and Enoss talking after he had followed some stick dents on the day following his visit to the labyrinth, and he was drawn to these two. The *'God-damned, God-forsaken, stick marks'*, as he had dubbed them, were all the same in the loose soil of the chasm. His only tangible lead had been a real bust until coming upon that conversation between these two respected elders. That was now three days ago, and the vote was tomorrow. Time was running out.

The two strong adherents had been in deep discussion and there seemed to be some tension between them; not that a man like Enoss would show it strongly, and Lassd, well...he was a Sandwalker. The look on Lassd's face as he walked away from the conversation though, was not the likes of any he had seen on one of these disciplined telepaths. There was darkness in them. It was almost surreal, or that there was real evil here, but the two had parted before Sam got close enough to hear anything other than the parting comment. It was a seemingly innocuous comment

to most, but it screamed loudly in Sam's ears. There had been a certain strain of talk that he was hearing over the last week; talk he did not see a problem in. But this one comment changed his perception of it completely, and it made it clear to him now that *this was the source*.

He had found his man, so he followed him, listening into every conversation. The proof rose and rose with every word; as well as every facial expression, both during, and after these conversations. His quarry's words were sneaky and measured. If any person came back at him, he commended them for their trust in The Power, or explained that they had misunderstood him. There were endless ways this creature played with words to deliver his poison to wherever it may soak in; even cover his tracks if it didn't. A small number of weak minds were even forced to agree by a bubbling of anger within his demeanour, while many others readily agreed with his concern that there would be no Interpreter; no one to *lead* them as *surely* as she had. He knew what he could use on each soul it seemed.

Now, today, Sam heard another conversation, one of so many, and he said, "Gotcha!" as his quarry openly talked to a soul who had his clear support, but too, was *as yet* hidden. The evidence had stacked up, but he had needed this obvious and open conversation of support to be completely certain. But if any Caretaker in The Great Chasm had heard *any* of these conversations, they would have been sure much earlier than Sam.

ALL HAD COME TO A HALT IN THE CHASM and the feel of the still desert air returned to it. There had been so much activity, over so many years here, that the desert above, surrounding The Great Chasm, was almost forgotten. A new more outwardly focused effort would come in time,

but in its time; the Beautiful Way had yet to mature a little more. Today would help, as many souls were drawn up The Great Chasm for the vote.

Any soul, of the full body of the community of Nov-Cikel, Edossd could be voted for, and no one stood for position here; no fame or favour sought by any. It was part of the spirit of justice apparent in many aspects of the Beautiful Way. It was a spiritual character and selflessness, as well as an ability to do the work, in someone, which would inform people's votes, and voting was seen as a spiritual duty, so a prayerful and thoughtful attitude attended the entire goings on.

The people who were tasked to provide the service of the secret ballot, and count the votes, were now busy, as those of The Clans and the Icer mountains entered the Great Hall; most though, filled the area around it, as there were so many here today. This large hall had been built as the seat of The Great Council and as offices for the new members of it, but it was already used for large gatherings. The members of The Great Council, once formed, would always pray in the cave before the entry to the cave of The Power before any meeting though. The remains of Nov-Cikel had been interred there too, which made it even more so the spiritual centre of the Beautiful Way. The expectant crowd now buzzed gently in the morning air; the noise of many conversations inside the hall, much louder.

As with all things of the Beautiful Way, it would begin with prayers, to reorient the mind and heart to The All. From small meetings to great meetings, it was always their way. Those outside prayed now, as the prayers began inside. After the readings and prayers were intoned, the person in charge of the meeting stood up and made clear the process and its stipulations. Then Cista Dusa made a small speech on the momentous nature of this moment, and quoted from their holy writings, making clear their high duty today.

As she sat down, Enoss Lenik, unbidden by the programme, rose to the same place. He cast his eyes about at the crowd and maintained silence long enough so that his words would be emphasised. He then spoke, explaining that he had received a clear message from the Origin of All that he was to take the reins of the Beautiful Way. That he was given a deeper understanding of why there was to be only one Interpreter, and that he did not seek that position. He went on to say that, only this morning in prayer, The All had made all this clear, and that he *was* needed at this time in the evolution of the New Way to guide the Great Council. He explained that the vote for the twelve souls today was to go ahead as was written by Nov-Cikel Himself.

“You all know me. You know my work. You know I have led the work here selflessly since the passing of The Interpreter. I stand here by the will of The All, *not* by my own. I am *His* servant and can only do *His Will* for me,” he finished.

He knew he had the respect of most of the souls in the chasm, which was most certainly true. So, he stood there now strangely believing all that he had shared was true. He believed that he would save this Faith from getting lost from its sure path, as they needed *his* guidance and knowledge. In his great delusion, believing that he had received Revelation itself, and would receive more, made it so for him. But he would not share that with the adherents today. He considered that it was a kindness to not do so, but it was truly the fear of not convincing, or confusing, those of the chasm today. What he had called for, *to him*, was all that they could *hope* to understand at this time.

Many were confused, many believing him because of his service and seeming nature. Some were shocked; others thought that he just looked ridiculous, while others seemed to be awaiting it. Senna was certainly surprised, but also elated, as he was *surely* the right man for the job. She had

always seen his greatness and *always* been drawn to him. *Now* she knew *why*; mistaking lesser attraction for a deeply confirming spiritual moment. Some were not sure *at all* what was going on, while a few rose to make clear their protests. What had begun in a great spirit quickly became a rabble.

Immediately Lassd walked up and stood beside Enoss. He put his hand in the small of his back and gave indication that he should leave the speaking place. But Enoss Lenik simply stood there, standing his ground, and by doing so, affirm his position. In the end though, it was just sad; becoming very clear by the many faces that would not look at him. Seeing the reaction, he made an excuse to leave, asking those who agreed in their hearts with him, to follow, "*As all could be lost this very day,*" he had finished, appealing to fear, doubt, and emotion.

Enoss had talked in many ears, but only a few stood to follow him out of The Great Hall. He became quite disoriented by the lack of those who stood to follow him. In a state of desperation, he couldn't help but rave of all kinds of seemingly spiritual proofs as he walked proudly toward the doorway; then shouting out to the crowd outside about the clear message he had received from The All, that he should lead them. The faces there too told of their various reactions; some showed amazement, and some nodded in surety, as many people there thought much of him and trusted him. Yet, others showed pity and looked down, while most looked away from him. But still he sought to bring questions to the minds of those who were still a little ignorant, hoping that doubt would build, and in time, spread through The Chasm. He knew that a good number were *at least* concerned about, and many others afraid of, not having an All-Inspired leader.

Ne-Vec now stood at the speaking place and explained why there could be no position of this kind; how Enoss had no true claim, in *any* sense. Another Caretaker, on the steps of the hall,

mimicked Ne-Vec's words as she spoke them, to the crowd outside. All clear stipulations on this subject from the writings of Nov-Cikel were read while all the other Caretakers sat still in place. Their calm and resolve were infectious, and those present began to return their full attention to the Clear Voice of Nov-Cikel, Edossd.

Sam had come to Ne-Vec when he believed that Enoss Lenik was definitely dangerous, sharing with her all the evidence that he had gathered. It was Enoss that he had tailed, not Lassd, as it seemed to Sam that the darkness in the old Sandwalker's eyes that day was revulsion of what he had heard from Enoss. The young Agent had heard the parting comment of *Enoss*, and had followed this trusted Caretaker, gathering the evidence that backed up this theory.

Sam's witness, unfortunately, had to be *somewhat* considered as hearsay to Ne-Vec, and even with all this evidence, *talk*, did not mean that there would be *action* on what was overheard. A meeting though, between a few Caretakers and a couple of other trusted souls, including Lassd, had taken place. Sam was not mentioned by Ne-Vec to the others, as when she had confided in Cista Dusa at first, it was decided between them that it was not wise to share Sam's presence and nature with the few others they would confide in. She was encouraged to put his findings forward to that handful of souls, as simply, from a forthright and inquisitive soul now resident here.

In the meeting, in the light of the evidence, some were quite shocked. These conversations were not ones *any* Caretaker would have with *any* soul. Lassd was most animated as he shared his disgust. In the end, they could not be fully sure if he would act on his words, but they had devised a plan ready for the day of the vote, all the while, hoping that it would not be necessary.

Enoss Lenik had walked this chasm for *many* years with the express reason to build his own fame, even though he was somewhat unaware of it. He saw to the work and thought that it

was what drove him. The whispers inside him though, grew into far more than that after the death of The Interpreter, and it was in the years that followed that he had begun whispering in the ears of the adherents here. Cista Dusa was quite glad that he had now come out of the dark, as if he had not made his claim outwardly today, he may have done greater damage within The Great Chasm with these delusions, and far beyond the vote itself. She wondered what endless machinations and intrigues he may have perpetrated in the darkness, or what he could have done if he was voted onto that new over-arching body.

Ne-Vec now finished, and sat down as the vote was carried out, saying quietly to Cista, “Crisis and victory.”

Cista returned no response, as so many eyes were on them. A sense of strength in unity had been returned to the room by this quick response and the clear rock-like resolve of the Caretakers present. It was now evident that this attack, this vile sad man’s words, had cemented, even *more surely*, the resolve of all attending. The Beautiful Way became stronger with this challenge; clarity and unity of purpose enhanced. It took a number of hours more, but The Great Council, the new guiding institution was, this day, finally born. The ring of light in the cave of The Power had been blinking a little as all this went on, but now The Power shone brightly.

ENOSS LENIK STOOD PROUD AND UNAPOLOGETIC. This man’s future though, had been decided immediately by the stipulations of the writings on such matters, and two Sandwalkers already waited by the wooden archway at the high entrance to The Chasm. Enoss Lenik, and a few hangers on, were now escorted up to the desert and would be cast out there. He could not believe that the Caretakers had acted so quickly, only now realising that they had known somehow.

There was no one for him, or those aligned with him, to play with as they were walked there, or as they reached the small camp set up on the rim of the chasm. The vote had taken all souls *there*, so the pathway was empty of the locals and resident aliens. The camp they were escorted to was temporary; to keep these people and their words away, while they prepared for a long walk into the desert. They would all be escorted to Enoss's Icer home, as that would be his final request. Only the newly formed Great Council would be able to overturn this charge, and the expulsion of these souls; only if it was clear that the person requesting it was indeed sincere in their wish to truly return and again be obedient to the Beautiful Way. In Enoss's case it would not be so, because he was lost somewhere in the nature of his being and his tangled mind, and truly, who would ever really know what dark brambles held him there.

The Messenger had made clear what damage those who sought to weaken or change the Beautiful Way could do, as well as to its communities, and indeed, the future of Temelj. The integrity of this New Way was created by sincere hearts gathering around the wisdom and laws of Nov-Cikel, and the warning about those who would seek to usurp control, or even water down the Beautiful Way, was also made clear. To accept The Messenger and to follow His instructions were inseparable. One without the other was impossible if the integrity of the Message from The All was to hold and transform this desert world. There would be many who failed themselves and fell down where certain spiritual laws were concerned, but only the act of seeking to undo the Beautiful Way brought this cutting off from the community.

Enoss Lenik would not be cast from the history of this Faith, to be forgotten. His name would be learned of; the acts he perpetrated, and even tell of the time in which he did serve well. Such was the integrity of this new Way, the full truth of its history respected, kept, and so learned from; the judgement made on him, also to keep that integrity. Justice and love before all else were

the essence of this New Way from The All; from a thank you, to reasonable return for effort given, to the law and order of this new culture. Justice was to be within every movement of life; for *truly*, it is embodied in *all* kindness, generosity, and love. Love and justice were to be the pillars of the New Temelj.

But even now, Enoss's words were mouthed, as they were *all he had*; just as those in his company also sought their words to have effect on the Walkers in the camp. Enoss even had words for Lassd as he had escorted them along the paths down the chasm and up the carved stairway. Lassd had *words* for him when they reached the desert above. But the words of this small band of wreckers were mere words, like the chatter of children to these deepened Walkers, as they began making preparations to escort these wreckers away.

There would always be rumblings, and this would not be the last of those who would seek to break the very foundations of this Cause, but another layer to that foundation had now been laid down, making it stronger for when such storms lashed it. The leadership of this new Faith on Temelj had been safely passed on. The Beautiful Way was secure for now and the circle of light shone brightly in the Sacred Place.

"There is still endless work," now said one of the members of the newly formed Council, at the speaking place in the Great Hall. "There will still be much crisis and victory, and also many heroes to rise before this Faith can fulfil its potentials. There are great moments, but the work goes on, and should be our focus. We are *truly* humbled. *Praise The All.*"

"*Victory!*" called out one Sandwalker from the crowd, with his stick raised high; to which, many shouts and cries of celebration were added.

Enemies

“There is no force on earth that can equal in its conquering power the force of justice and wisdom ... There can be no doubt whatever that if the day star of justice, which the clouds of tyranny have obscured, were to shed its light upon men, the face of the earth would be completely transformed.”¹³

The enemy had not been defeated. He was near. Able had set his trap patiently, lulling this fool into a false sense of security. Then an invisible force suddenly lunged at him. Able moved deftly and added impetus to this creature’s fall into the water.

Sam came up with a smile on his face. Able could only imagine it, and the splash he would have made, as Sam did not displace any water. The Agent couldn’t get wet, but Able knew that the victory of this battle was making sure that *he* did not get wet; *or* be bested. Not that he minded water, he loved water, but it was time that Sam knew who he was dealing with. Able knew he got him, as Sam said, “What took you so long kid?”

“Patience,” said Able. It was a statement to his quarry, not an answer to Sam’s question, as he could not hear him. Only Etera had been able to communicate with all the visitors; Able losing his ability when he was made corporeal.

Sam now realised that *the kid* had been slowly, but surely, learning all his tricks as the young Agent had toyed with him. Able had been busy with his work, and had left Sam to his, but now, being a young man, he had also been on for the game.

“We’ll see what you *really* got, boy?” said Sam, as he watched himself put his hand in the water that he now stood in. It was such a strange experience, watching nothing happen, that he just liked doing it. Now though, standing hip depth in the water, he finally realised, that strangely, it *did* resist his matter, and so support his body like water did normally. “I got time on my hands now. So, *watch your back*,” he added, as he looked up again. He was about to add some more of his *top dog* comments, that Able *couldn’t even hear*, when he saw that Able had vanished.

He wandered out of the water, and “Damn...” was all he got out before he was unceremoniously crash-tackled back into the water again.

Sam quickly launched himself back out of the water he was cast back into, but the lad was nowhere to be seen. He had to be under the water...and then, for the third time, young Agent Deveroux went down as his legs were snatched away from under him. He quickly grabbed for his enemy, but the lad eluded him once more.

Sam had then been very intent, spending a lot of time thrashing around under the water, seeking his quarry; well, thrashing was not really the right word, as no water moved as he moved. Able laughed loud as he realised Sam was staying down so long. Able could sense him now. He was almost sure of the kinds of faces he might be pulling too, and what his comments might be as

this battle ensued. It was from his very short time with him, when they had first come to this place, as well as memories of larger-than-life characters like him on television back on Earth. Even that short time with Sam, though, was enough, as a Sandwalker is ever attentive. They see and remember almost everything. Their lives depended on it.

SENNA KYTELL WALKED UP THE STAIRS WITH SOME FOOD. She had prepared a meal for the man she loved and honoured, asking the Walkers standing watch if she could deliver it to Enoss in his tent. As she had long been an assistant to him, these two charged with taking him away thought little of it. But one gave a warning to her about the poisonous words of a soul that would seek to usurp the healing future of this world, and the nurture of its peoples; words that would seek to undo the clear agreement between The All and the peoples of Temelj.

Senna could not believe how they had treated him, though; not really hearing the warning just given her. They had cut him off so quickly and they had not listened to him *at all*. They had marched him straight up to the desert from the meeting. He deserved more respect, to be fully heard, or *at least* had the chance to respond to any charge, to her way of thinking. She now called at the closed entry to his tent and a man came to usher her in. Enoss then bade the others who he was in conference with, to leave, and beckoned Senna to join him. She nodded respectfully and put the home cooked meal down on the rug in the centre of the tent.

“You are kind, Senna. Thank you,” he said.

“They forced you away too quickly. I just *had* to come.”

Enoss now saw in her what he had not before. She *cared for him*. He had seen many things in her; certainly adulation, but not this, and immediately the Whisperer came more alive again inside him. The beast had not been humbled; even though feeling defeated for now, it had wanted none of it. Plans for his imagined position in exile were already being arranged in his mind; where he could gather those who thought like him and where he could begin to seek influence among other adherents of The Way beyond the chasm. The beast was enlivened by this visit, and this evil within, now placed kind eyes and body language, with a pinch of an honourable man defeated, on the face and frame of Enoss Lenik.

She turned and continued to prepare the meal, as he began gently putting forth an argument; one that made it clear that none were aware of the interactions between himself and The All. It went on until the meal was prepared.

“Please; *two plates*. Let us eat together this *one last time*,” he said, thinking that he may have eyes and ears here in the Chasm after all; that by garnering her compassion and playing on her clear love for him, get more of his words to the people *here*, through *her* in time.

“I would be *honoured* to eat this meal with you,” she replied, calm outwardly, but elated inside.

They sat and they ate as more words flowed from this mouth of poison. Senna drank it all with relish. His words eventually rose to the required crescendo of her possible honoured place in the future of this Faith. That fighting beside him she would be loved by future generations. She knew now that she *was* special; that she *did* have a critical place in the future of this great Faith. Her mouth then flung open, sharing with this wolf, all about the cave of The Power and the symbols on its walls.

Enoss was elated. It was all he could do to keep himself composed as this willing dupe gave him what he needed; what he could not have hoped for. What she shared was a wedge of doubt that he could use to hammer into the hearts of the people of The Great Chasm, but he held a calm exterior as he listened. He was *so* lost now, *so feeling in power* again, that once again he fell to his own lies. He did not see this new information as merely raising doubt. He saw it as truth, and justice; that Senna was the grace of The All, granting him assistance through her to take the esteemed position he sought. It was all *so clear* to him now.

Senna knew what she was doing. She hoped that this great Icer man would be able to regain his rightful place and lead the people of this new community “*properly*”. As he went on, he would cast glances of love at her, and she would be energised to continue. It was the saddest of things to view; both thinking their conversation was high and inspired, yet they were deeply lost in lesser things. Poor Senna, lost in the great love of a woman, this great gift often given to men who are not worthy.

Neither of these two souls were innocent though; both fallen to pride and some arrogance, as they talked on into the night. The Sandwalkers were very concerned that she should stay so long, but good manners, too a sign of justice and love, stayed them from ejecting her. When she emerged, she had some leaves of paper that Enoss bid her to take to the Caretakers, and a copy of the same to deliver to The Great Council. They were well hidden in her robes, as no communication was to be suffered between these souls and those of the chasm; just as poison is needed to be kept from the mouths of children.

He would again seek position, using the information provided by Senna’s misadventures, to help them *realise* just *who* he was. Such was his delusion, such was his loss, and such is the

nature of those who are so lost in their own mind that they even disregard reality. What sort of narcissism drove this creature, how this malevolence had developed in him during his life, surely, none but The All would be privy to.

MOTHER SAT IN THE EVENING, LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION. These two men of science from two different worlds enjoyed their evenings greatly. They had so much to share and consider together; so much to hear on so many subjects, even beyond science. Garran was simply a man of Earth, so the wonder of this place, along with the descriptions of life on Acktan's world and the nuances of his society, were more than simply interesting. They drank in each other's words with relish and were constantly animated.

She sat there, across the table, enjoying her father in his youth, thanking the Creator again in her constant prayer as she did. Her communion with The Creator *was always*, as He is *always*. Once beyond the shadows of material existence, it would be like a plant forgetting the Sun, or becoming unaware of the rain and the nutrient that flowed in from the soil. It was then that she saw three dark clouds over the chasm. It was a clear flash of insight; and below these clouds in the Chasm, she now saw two dark creatures in the stealth of a hunt, hiding, and then rushing from shadow to shadow. She could see that all the enemies of this burgeoning spiritual movement had not been cast away as it had seemed. More dangers lurked above and within.

It was not her place to share these things. It was her place to help bring life to the natural places; to enhance the plant life here with her father. Each of them had come here with particular skills and each would do their part, just as all of the people here did their part. These intrigues and designs were certainly The All's business and of little importance to the likes of this ancient soul.

This was not trust or faith; it was knowledge, as such was the way of the deepest places. Her work rose in the deepest places, and she would bring to this place and others, what was her duty to bring forth, just as the many other souls who walked beyond the physical, and those who walked with all the people here as they went about their work building this new Foundation.

“Have you had any inkling of how long you will be here?” asked Acktan.

“I *feel* that it’ll be a full year for some reason. Even though there are no seasons here, I feel that a year needs to be completed. But I really don’t know.”

“Being a husbandman, that would make sense. Do you think the same is to be said for the boy?”

“I don’t know, he keeps busy on the irrigation and on the water wheel work that he started with his grandfather. Now Jack is gone I should visit the lad more often. It is strange how he feels like family to me; so much more so than his Jack and Jennifer did.”

Mother smiled knowing that the realm of the soul runs far deeper and wider, even within a physical human existence. Its wide expanse provides feelings and intimations, and sometimes various quite aware experiences for a person while still living in the material universe. Dreams, flashes, feelings, inner vision, even some foreknowledge of events which are experienced outside the imagination. Man living in two worlds, has two experiences; two sets of eyes and ears, the inner ones perceiving many aspects of meaning. But, for the most part, these experiences were confirmations; confirmations of a deeper reality within us, of an underlying spiritual plan, and to gather outward signs of surety in our current path and service.

“It is a shame that he had so little time with Jack and his grandmother. But some time is always better than none,” offered Acktan.

“Yes. We should go tomorrow and visit him. Maybe we can enhance his work.”

“Yes. We should stop making time our enemy and think a little more with our hearts.”

It was strange sitting with a creature of such obviously higher scientific learning than him and hearing just as much the essence of love as the essence of knowledge in his words. It was new and satisfying. He could see now how dry scientific and intellectual environments could become without the heart; indeed too, how even the drive of high spiritual endeavour could fail without true caring and love. But it was not so here, with this creature. He was of the water and the land, the spirit and the mind, the heart and the soul. His great love was for the *discovery* of science, not the knowing of it. His heart searched for new knowledge and his ego did not stand upon the ample knowledge he had obviously gained. His was in no way aloof or superior.

Arrogance is a great enemy of all science, indeed, all knowledge, just as ignorance is the enemy of all the possibilities of the future. True spiritual intent and love need flow within processes of discovery and knowledge too; they need flavour them, along with intellect and reasoning. Otherwise, human intellect would bring stunted growth in the least; in the extreme, greater weapons and the chaos of misguided singularly profit-driven science. Intellectual and scientific endeavour needed ethic; indeed, far beyond *mere ethics*, it needed to be a deep intent, a deeply held reverent promise to all that is good; it needed justice and love in its processes and even more so in its direction. *Both* arrogance and ignorance are the enemy, no matter one’s profession or standing...no matter, and love and justice are the best intent.

THE STORY GIVEN TO THE CREWS DROVE THEM ON. They were told that they were searching for a downed airship, to bury the dead out of respect, and that Lord Hedden Spron would lead them there. The real plan could only be told when the Chasm was in sight, as the stakes were high and nothing could be shared, or would be shared, early on, because any man *against it* would die and all men *for it* would be guilty by their acts. Edron's plan was intricate. All possible outcomes had been calculated.

An intimation of a secret danger to the Icer culture was also alluded to by Lord Clovek to each man he had hand-picked. He had made clear *the enormity* of it in no small way, explaining that it needed to be kept close for now. In the end though, he could not be sure if he would be among enemies or friends when he finally made clear their actual objective, but he would speak *strong and well* to them when they were almost upon the chasm, and he knew that they were all strong patriots.

They were running low to the dunes now, dangerously low, but on sure motor power. The story was that the wreck may have been covered by sand by now, so they did not want to sail past it. The sails often put out below the gondolas of these airships were not to be used, and the hulls were even hitting some of the high dunes, as they were flying so low. The propellers were above the deck at the rear, even though some airships had a single prop at the back, and others, two motors on structural arms that jutted out each side, near the stern. All three today had two motors mounted high out the back of the stern, as they were attack ships.

Hedden walked out on deck. *His* enemy was very clearly, *himself*. He had created this situation, and it was *his* sin, even though no man can be excused for his actions in a wrongdoing another starts. He knew that he had to bear the full weight of what would come, and it was now

far beyond his control. He felt weak and a fool. Edron watched him walk the deck, seeing that this man did not like what they were to do, but he was not aware of the deep struggle tearing at the soul of this new Lord.

As Hedden walked the deck though, being in among three low flying attack ships, he also felt the pull of his Icer spirit; to now be a Hunter Lord and mightily purposed with others of his kind. He had taken part in hunts, but nothing like this, and even though struggling, part of him strangely held on to this proud way to keep him upright. How could he be so changed, *so easily*? He shook his head as he realised, that this *New Way* had him *too*, and that there was seemingly *no way back*. He would have even now *gladly* led the hunters away, if he had not worked with Edron on the position of the chasm, and the course required to reach it, on their first meeting. The older man, a very experienced political strategist, had made sure of it. It was done, and that was that. The people in the chasm would not know what hit them. They would try to protect each other and themselves, but they could not take a life to do so. The die had been cast.

THE TWO SANDWALKERS WHO HAD COME UPON MOSSD AND ETERA had left early the next morning, as there would be need of them if the chasm was attacked. They had taken a very direct route home. That was some time ago now, and for Mossd and Etera, seeking a safe route to the Western mountains required a very irregular path. It had been decided to give the Icer hunter mercy, even though they all knew what helping him could bring. The Walkers *had* been tempted to do otherwise but were so spiritually disciplined, and too changed by their belief, to end his life for him, or even let him perish.

A clear injunction of non-violence and the command of never taking a life, ruled their hearts, no matter the calls from their minds or clear emotional urges to the contrary. The Caretakers had made a clear decision in their instructions to the Walkers, and they had followed it, as was their duty. Etera was now very ill at ease, as she followed Mossd along a rock pathway between two great waves of dunes. The enemy would surely come upon the chasm, unless by some miracle the man had been changed by the gracious decision of the Caretakers, or the obvious mercy of the two souls who had escorted him; or maybe, just maybe, his calculations would have been off due to his ordeal. The Sandwalkers *had* definitely made clear to him *the mercy* of their accompaniment. She prayed that his soul was changed, because she could not imagine the consequences of the contrary.

Etera now thought of all the souls she loved in the chasm, and it tore at her heart. Then she thought of Sam again; that he was there, that he was invisible, and that he lived under his own rules, so maybe there was a chance for some. But any buoyancy of hope within that thought fell away, as she knew that the force that came would be merciless and Sam would be able to do little, to nothing, about it. The Caretakers had spoken, or more truly, Nov-Cikel had, and no one would hide from their duty. Those of The Great Chasm would not run and hide, they would stand like Nov-Cikel had before all physical danger, yet she was sure too that all effort would be made to save lives and protect themselves.

She now wondered about this Agency that Sam was a part of. As she considered it, she realised that many planets would have had long histories of war and conflict, and that, by Sam's accounts, this Agency seemed more of a police force. It was not something that would often involve itself in any world's wars or natural evolution. The Agency would not be along in any case, as it had sent Deveroux to The Doc, and had only watched the goings on in the courtroom

with The Judge. The wider designs of life had brought Sam here, as this was a natural pathway to his future work, and like all the others who had come by the Deeper byways, he would forget Temelj on his return. He would not remember her, or any disaster befalling the souls in the chasm. He would be changed, but he would forget.

Mossd felt her glumness, as they were continually linked at low levels for their safe journey, and at higher levels for open sharing at times. At this time, it was a shallow link for any need for quick and silent warning. This had allowed some feelings to leak though.

“Our sorrow only lies in too much focus on ourselves, our fears, and our own power; our wants, and our shallow knowledge,” Mossd now shared, in symbols of the mind. “Fulfilment is in what we *can, actually* be to others, and the rest is The All’s. Leave Him to His work and attend to yours. You are *going out* to a *dangerous* place and may yet sacrifice what those in The Chasm may have to. The power of the noble spirit within us, is that it is willing to sacrifice in many ways, so that true justice may find its way to all peoples on this planet; to *every* soul. So, every mother and child may be nurtured and protected. Our cause is unity and justice.”

ABLE KNEW THAT HIS FOE WOULD SEEK RETRIBUTION. So, he tracked him, little knowing that Agent Deveroux was leading him into a trap; that particular young man was not about to be bested. Able was now heading down the chasm and came upon a single stick indent over the Agent’s tracks. This would not have been strange, but for the fact that there were no other tracks or indents leading to it, or near to it. “*A Sandwalker is tracking Sam,*” he thought. Then Able silenced his thoughts too as it would take real stealth to take the Walker off Sam’s scent.

Able didn't want Sam's presence to become known, at least to anyone else, as it had been clearly requested by Cista Dusa, through Ne-Vec, that it should be so. Able thought that he would have to take the Walker off track somehow, or at least find him and send him to Cista before things got out of hand. Sam was known to Ne-Vec and Cista, but to no other resident of the chasm. Able thought that it was probably not strange that a Walker here had found Sam's sign and followed it, but he did not know something about the stick mark; that it was indeed identical to the one at the mouth of the labyrinth.

He followed quickly and silently. He did not believe Sam was in danger, as he was quite unaware of the nature of the creature that stalked his friend. This Walker had remained hidden, not physically, but figuratively since his initial arrival here a very long time ago; as well as through the vote and all the carryings on with Enoss. He knew how to remain hidden and go about his work, seeing Enoss as just another Icer fool. Such insidious enemies as he, were rare; this Walker more so an *enemy* of the Faith, as he was not truly a believer. Those who sought to change the Beautiful Way appeared mostly at the times of change of leadership. They *were believers*, usually emboldened at such times to act, with arrogance, or out of ignorance, as they fell to outward seeming or their own imaginings. Enemies like this Walker, within and without, would always be a part of the terrain for this New Way.

This particular creature simply did not like the Way of Nov-Cikel, Edossd and how his people were taken from the old beliefs so easily. He and his family saw their culture change into something alien, so he worked to cripple it as much as he could from within. That upstart intruder, Garran, had nearly uncovered him, but he had not been *seen* before that day. He despised all these new visitors, as they were undoing a good deal of his work. He was indeed seen, but by his games, not noticed. He was also proud of his effort in managing to look again into Garran's mind, to find

what he *truly faced* within this short alien. They were *all* short, *these aliens*; pale like the Icers, and not *tall* and *proud* like the purple folk of the fields.

The sad thing was that he did not realise that all cultures needed to evolve to be healthy and that the new Messenger had seen the different cultures here as flowers in a new greater garden. Although Nov-Cikel had indeed brought a new deeper Revelation from The All, he had also made it clear that all the Great Messengers of the past were equal; and were to be respected as such. He made it clear that His Message was the Will of The All for *this time* in their evolution and that it was the New Pathway required, but also, that those of any other belief should only find genuine friends within its communities. Such was the high spiritual mark; set very high in such a violent, fractured, and unforgiving place. Such was the sacrifice required to bring the vision New Way to the eyes and ears of those of Temelj. Many lives, and any hope of ease, would be cast away in service to this noble spiritual cause, as only sacrifice truly changes a world.

In any case, this man had driven hard to be one of his clan's Walkers, even though telepaths such as him were once Priests of the Clan Faith. Such was the hatred of his family toward the New Way, especially as the Clan leaders had accepted it *for* them, that they planned together to unhinge its efforts and erode support for it. This was only for their clan originally, but as things progressed a wider purpose arose in him. His passion in *this* pursuit, had won his right to find *this chasm*.

It was not the wish of Nov-Cikel, Edossd that clan leaders should decide for their people, as he had made it clear that each individual heart must seek out the truth of this Faith. In any case, taking this Faith was the choice of the heart; one that this man did not truly and freely choose. But he did choose to work against it with stealth. He had travelled widely to spread seeds of doubt among as many individuals and clans as he could, working with others among them who felt the

same way about the erosion of their culture, all the while being seen outwardly as a great hero of this Cause.

It was well into the night now, but fortunately the two moons were partly illumined, so Able could still hunt. It was an hour after sunset, and he could sense people near. Suddenly Sam jumped down from above him. Able was only *just* able to ‘*not be there*’. Sam hit the ground and looked around cussing, when Lassd stepped out of the darkness, and asked, “What are you doing, boy?”

Deveroux froze, and Able answered quickly, “Tracking you.”

“No. You were tracking *him*,” he said, pointing straight at Sam. “It seems we are all in a game. Who is this invisible soul? What is his business here in the chasm?”

Lassd, being an elder of this community and a Sandwalker, held great respect here. Able had learned that same kind of respect for Dossd, but also from his interaction with Cista Dusa, so he struggled with himself not to answer. Sam then put his hand high on the front of Able’s middle chest, the other on his middle back, to signal that he should hold strong. He then tapped the lad’s elbow very gently, returning to his rocky perch above them and sat there. Lassd did not realise that he had lost him, assuming that Sam still stood where he had pointed, as he saw no new tracks or footfalls. Thankfully too, the ground here was baked hard and did not push down or disperse when Sam deftly pushed himself up.

Able got the intended message, keeping his mind even more silent. Even though Sam could maybe get away tonight, Able knew that a Sandwalker was not a fool when it came to such things and would not be tricked. So, he said, “You should go to Cista Dusa. I cannot divulge anything of this, as it is not my place.”

“I am of this community, *you, are not*, and whatever that creature is, *it is not*. You do not *know* our ways and *I* would like an answer.”

Able was on new ground here but stood there silently in the discipline and wisdom he had learned from Dossd. His friend and mentor had been a good teacher, in that he lived his nobility in every word and action. It was almost easy for Able to emulate him now. He simply stood there stoic and silent.

Lassd on the other hand was now vulnerable. He believed that he still remained hidden in his outward persona, but he could not be sure what this invisible creature knew about him. “*With Cista Dusa involved, there is even more danger,*” he thought.

He had followed that fool Enoss and listened to him talk jibberish deep in the dark labyrinth, now surmising that it must have been this invisible alien who had warned Ne-Vec and Cista Dusa of that stupid Icer’s idiotic claim. He had hoped that the *Icer idiot* would have succeeded in his claim to lead them though, so he had gladly let things play out. He had even covered the fool’s tracks, as well as his own, to the labyrinth and down its passages. If the egotistical Icer had succeeded, Lassd would have gladly toyed with his ego, and so his fears, to create a lot of pain and fracture in this place.

He now gathered himself. “Well. Come with me, boy. We will visit with Cista,” he said, as he waved his stick in an arc, seemingly naturally, to point the way, but really checking for the invisible creature before they headed off.

The invisible being was gone; it *had* made tracks, so his wood should have found it. He did not know the powers of this creature, so would have to be very careful with his words and behaviour with it now present in the chasm. He knew that he would now find out more about it

from Cista, so he had not pushed beyond what might seem normal, even for a Walker. Knowing nothing of this creature, he was deeply concerned, but he now regarded Able as they walked together, saying, “Your Walker has taught you well, I thank The All for giving him such ability.” While inside he was *disgusted* that this short human *pretender* should consider himself even a *mere shadow* of his fellow Sandwalkers.

Aliens were even worse than Icers, to him. That the boy should hold *any* favour, or even be involved with their peoples and their planet, was an aberration. He would get this boy, the other interlopers from this Eart’, and definitely the hidden creature, all cut off from involvement and influence here. He could not push for any more than that, or he would be seen. But that would be enough, and he nodded gently now at Able as they walked up the chasm.

SENNA STILL SAW HERSELF AS A SERVANT TO THIS FAITH. Not at all its enemy, as she presented a copy of the letter to Cista. This servant to Enoss, had already delivered the first copy of it to the desk the newly formed Council, and gone on her way. She would gather *their* response on her return. The copy of this letter to the Caretakers was to garner support among them, nothing more. The Great Council held power here now, so Enoss was more focused there.

Cista Dusa, like a small number of other Caretakers, had not accepted a place on The Great Council even though they had received enough votes. Some had, but six, including Cista, had allowed others who were next in number of votes to take their place on it. They had thought it important that fresh minds enter the leadership, to make the change of leadership *very clear*, and also to show, once more, the importance of humility in The Beautiful Way. The Caretakers were

to be no more, even though they would all certainly go forward in the work using all they had gained. Their counsel would still be sought out, no doubt, but now, they held no position.

Cista looked over the letter's contents, then up at Senna, still standing there. She was saddened for Senna, but not surprised that she would be a willing messenger of Enoss Lenik.

"*Oh Senna. You are mistaken* to be in league with such a creature. Did you study the writings as I requested?"

Senna was hurt by Cista's obvious distaste and did not make eye contact, as a deep confusion suddenly entered her being; one so strangely, and suddenly, violent, that it sought to rend her heart. Leaving the letter with the secretary to The Council had also not felt like it should have. She had felt the darkness in her clearly from the pure spirit which existed within the man she left the letter with. It was even more so with Cista. She was just beginning to wake from a bad dream, one that had been going for a very long time. Now, in front of this great lady, she clearly felt her foolishness, even now seeing that she may be an enemy of the Way she loved so much. She cried, and fell to the floor, showing outwardly the full measure of the confusion in her mind.

"You have been close to the person of a poisoner for a *long* time now. The tongue and words of such a creature will always cloud our minds, if not quickly, then insidiously, and slowly."

"*I am responsible. I do love this faith, and Nov-Cikel, Edosd. I have sought to serve these with all effort, but now I can see that I have also sought other things,*" admitted Senna, feeling like she was in a whirlpool and wondering how she could get out before being dragged down within it.

"Your love for Enoss was apparent and your selfless efforts have been felt, but yes, you *are* responsible. This claim has no substance. *He* has no substance. He *does not care* if you are

brought down like this, so he does not love you. This *poor* attempt to gain standing after his clearly violent act against this loving Way shows his desperation, and his lack of *any* understanding of the true nature of the New Infusion.”

The truth of Cista’s words were very apparent to Senna. “*How could I have thought that this was...*” she now thought, not knowing even how to end that sentence, as there were so many endings to that sentence, and each one damned her, or clearly showed her foolishness.

“Any soul could have gained entry to the cave, as it is not guarded,” explained Cista, to the lost face in front of her. “You see, there is something else in that cave; something that may only appear for those given the right or allowed its Power. *I* have not even seen it, but The Great Council *will*. Only the representatives of it and those aligned in high duty to the Essence of the Beautiful Way may experience it.”

“It was *me*. *I* was in the cave. *I thought...*” Senna broke down even more from her seat on the floor.

“I am so happy for you today, Senna,” said Cista, in a kindly way.

Senna looked up in real surprise, also feeling a deep hope of redemption in those few words.

“You have worked against the very essence of this Faith, you have leagued with an enemy of this wondrous Revelation, but your eyes are now open. If you like I will accompany you to the Great Hall. We will ask to consult with the members of new Council and have done with this business. It would be my pleasure to study the words of Nov-Cikel, Edosd more deeply with you, if you wish?”

“Yes, ” she said, then crying again as she rose to go with Cista. “It would be an honour,” she added, becoming even more humbled and thankful for the mercy inherent in the culture here. She was relieved by the love that Cista Dusa was now pouring on her; this beginning to show clearly on her face.

“This is not a Cause of ego, power, or position. It is not a Cause of Icer or of Clan. It is a Cause of loving justice,” finished Cista, as she put her arm around her.

THE THREE AIRSHIPS WERE NOW AT FULL POWER and heading directly towards The Great Chasm. Etera and Mossd had camped in the curl of an oddly formed sand dune and now woke to the sound of the whirring electric motors and the propellers of Icer airships in the pre-dawn air. The great wooden hull of the lead ship then crashed through the high dune only three feet above them. It sent sand flying. Etera ducked as the deepening curve of the keel brought the wood even closer to her head.

Mossd was up at the mere sound of the propeller blades and had crouched as he gathered their loose possessions. He now lunged at Etera as the last of the keel continued through the dune. Sand now flew madly everywhere as the propellers above the rear of the hull made their powerful presence known. Mossd gathered Etera and himself within a large sheet of woven material. It was over his head and hers quickly and he rolled them both down the dune within it. It was so that, the sand cascading down from the dune’s wound, and the violent wash of air from the propellers, would immediately cover them. There was some sign left; but no time, meant it had to simply be as good as he could make it.

Etera went to get up, but Mossd held her there and set the cloth better for them both to breathe under the shallow embrace of the sand. Then he projected in thought for her to be still and quiet of mind, and they both hardly breathed. Then another hull rode through the scar on the dune. Its propellers were so much louder and stronger that they sent more sand down on top of the two travellers. The third ship came soon after. It too passed over them quickly. Then all were suddenly gone.

They had been moving *very* fast, and Etera now waited for Mossd's lead. He waited, then with a thought symbol of 'stay' and 'silence', he slipped from the shroud and out of the sand, quickly making his way up to the gash now in the lip of an even taller dune in the direction the airships were heading.

She breathed with some relief and prayed that the hunters had not seen them. Mossd had given them the best chance by keeping under their hulls instead of rushing out of their way. The pre-dawn light too had been a grace from The All. Its shadows and tricks, and truth be known, the creative magic of a new day, would be in their favour. Mossd now watched them charge off toward the chasm, flying low and fast. He knew they were only a day away at that speed and he almost wished they had seen him; that he may waylay them a little at least, by being seen, and then not seen. It would have only delayed the inevitable though, and these ships would not have turned from their course for a single Sandwalker in any case.

In a short while he came back and gave the telepathic signal that all was safe and Etera rose from under the sand.

"How did you know what to do?" she asked, telepathically, as she dusted herself off.

“If you hear their engines like that, then they are low, and in line; in attack formation. They follow each other so it may look like only one ship and at the right time they fan out and charge. I have seen them do this when I saw four portals open at once and three alien ships come through. The Icers were slow to the portals that day, but they *were* prepared. I have shared stories with all Walkers in the Chasm; we share our stories and skills, so I also learned to stay under them, in the sight-shadow of their hulls.”

Etera now scurried up the dune Mossd had to watch the ships heading quickly towards the horizon of higher dunes not far away. The airships also ran so low to keep from being seen from greater distances. “They are going for the Chasm, aren’t they?” she asked, but knowing.

“Yes. It would seem so. It would seem that our mercy has not been met by mercy.”

“I feel quite *lost*. What am I going to the Icer world *for*? They are *beyond reason*.”

“There are awaiting souls everywhere,” said Mossd, plainly.

That fact was not lost on Etera. She acknowledged it, but now spoke her heart. “The Chasm will be gone though. They will decimate it with three ships that big. It is only a baby yet.”

“*Faith*,” then pronounced Mossd. “Trust *The All*. *His* is The Power, *He* is The Storyteller,” he finished as he headed off back down the dune and away.

She looked to the airships now disappearing over the horizon. Then with a sigh, she headed off after Mossd. Fortunately, her duty was not about her, no matter what had come, what may come, or what she felt right now. She had to help bring true justice, in all its manifestations, to this world, as that was the ultimate will of The All.

LASSD WAS MORE THAN PLEASED WITH HIMSELF. The new Council had decided after much consultation, in part with Lassd, that Sam needed to stay within a certain precinct near Etera's home. Cista had indeed informed them before now of Sam, and his place in the recent happenings; also reporting, in confidence, what she knew of the others. The new Council had taken time for reflection on what it may or may not do with regard to Sam, but Lassd's concerns about knowledge of this invisible Agent spreading had forced its decision forward. Sam would be allowed to interact with the others from Earth, but that was all, as having time for things to settle after the vote, and all the recent goings on, had to take precedence for now.

It was also decided that Garran would live in the same abode, as Jack was now definitely gone. Sam then seeing the younger Doc was a *real* surprise, but kept his peace, as Mother informed him that he was not the man he had met in The Seed and would not be for some time. That Sam should not give any intimation of his future while communicating with him. It was too hard for him to communicate with the visitors in corporeal form anyway. So, very unlike himself, he took direction, and listened mostly.

"All these Eart's in one place," thought Lassd, as the meeting had played out. It was a more than suitable arrangement for him.

All the visitors would be allowed to work nearby, and at times, to move beyond the boundaries placed on them, but only with permission from The Great Council or escorted by a Caretaker. The title Caretaker *was* gone, but regard and respect remained for these souls in the eyes of this new Council. Lassd would know where they were, or at least *could be*, this way, as he had the eyes and ears of dupes all up and down the chasm. *Dupe*; what a *terrible* word. Does it malign trusting souls, who free of suspicion, walk in the light, or represent fools lost in some

darkness or immaturity within; either of these, so much so, that they may be used by the hidden wolves of life?

It was a real win for Lassd to also have Garran in the same place and under the same restrictions, as when he looked deeply into *that* Earther's mind, he had only seen a strong warning. When he had pushed through that, a closed door had completely shut his abilities out, so he would certainly keep away from *that* short alien.

The Walker, cheered by this victory, now sauntered down the chasm, but clearly more cautious. He would continue to play with the lesser things in others, or use their loves, to aid his destructive ends; maybe even as others, who had *no* ill-intent toward this Cause would in smaller ways. There were always going to be egos, fears, old inner wounds, ignorance, irrational expectations, misunderstandings, and even psychological dysfunction at play, which would slow the work, or even stunt it at times here and there. There would be enemies within, and enemies without, in the times to come. Hopefully there would be few. But its generality strove ever-forward, and it would *also* grow many *friends* outside it, as its beauty was proven by the actions of its adherents, and the loving wisdom of its institutions.

Nov-Cikel had pronounced that this faith would succeed, no matter what came, no matter what befell it. But that each soul's understanding of the nature of divisive influences and them being alert and circumscribed, would also be a guard. Even small childish, or petty, suspicions would hamper the growth of this new tree. Ego was the greater foe of this Way than any one enemy the likes of Lassd. Ego in any sense, in any person, in any situation, would stem to different degrees the love that flowed through this Way. Love made it great and only love would grow this Sapling and enable it to reach out, and fruit; bringing justice, peace, and feeding the souls of all on Temelj.

“I SEE YOU STRUGGLING, BOY. Is it the killing of your Icer brothers and sisters that ails you? Or thoughts of those vermin walkers that escorted you home?” said Edron, finding Hedden out on the foredeck.

“It is both, Edron.”

“You made it home by praying to the God of *our* ancestors. We are only an hour from them. Where is *their* God today?” Then Edron yelled out loud to the sky beyond the balloon, in defiance of The All, “*Where is their God?!*”

Hedden said nothing, and Edron sighed at the lack of response; to the zeal of his words, in his cohort. He then smiled easily as he looked out to the desert in thought. After a short time, he said, “It was their fearless mercy that you honour. I *understand* that, but you and I know that it is for that *very reason* we *must* do what we have to do today.”

Hedden nodded, but was now certain that there was only one Power; that it coursed through all true religions. He knew that he was damned for his actions, old belief or new, as The All is The All. He knew now, from his own inner being, that any true Message was never made to destroy, but to protect and nurture; *no matter* the beliefs or actions of angry fearful souls who *thought* they knew The All’s Will or misused His name to justify their crimes.

“It will *soon* be done. *Be strong,*” finished Edron, as he grabbed the younger man’s shoulder and shook it a little before walking away.

SAM WAS NOT HAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING. But he respected this new Council and abided by their judgement. He had not worked so hard to save it from its enemies to then not respect its rulings.

This Council would follow the instructions set down by Nov-Cikel and keep His laws. The words and spirit of Nov-Cikel guided this community. *They* guided the Beautiful Way. It would continue to evolve, and none really knew the heights it would yet attain, as none had the vision of Nov-Cikel. Theirs was to work for its evolution and to wonder at its constantly unfolding beauty and wisdom.

Sam now sat thinking of The Agency and what his future would be like. It was strange; his situation and being on this planet. He wondered how many other planets he was yet to visit and how many strange beings he may encounter. He was more than ready; very intent to take on the responsibility, and definitely wanted to learn some new skills of the trade. It felt great, as he now remembered the small world of his community at home.

It was just like all the small places that made up the chasm and he saw a little more clearly the power of these small places. It was in these places where the future rose. It rose from the ground, from people, their hearts, and small communities. It rose from small groups and will; the will to stand and build a better, more nurturing, and more *just* future in these small parts of the world. It rose from people who would labour for the future, not just for themselves, or just their own. A wider vision, but through local effort, and in little things.

He leant back on the chair in Etera's home, smiling and shaking his head. As crazy as all this had been, and would be, it was now his life. He would definitely make the best of it. He always made the best of what was thrown at him, and life had thrown plenty. Just then it threw some more

at him, as the chair was propelled backwards and downwards. He reached instinctively and immediately for his foe. Unfortunately for him, Able was *not there* when he did.

Vision

“The fundamental truth of the Manifestations is peace. This underlies all religion, all justice. The divine purpose is that men should live in unity, concord and agreement and should love one another.”¹⁴

Hedden knew that they were near now. He was cowering in his cabin, wracked with guilt. He prayed in deep sincerity to The All to take this great burden from him; begging for forgiveness, and offering his own life for the lives of those in the chasm.

After he finished, he walked out onto the deck, still within a deep cloud of remorse, to throw himself to the desert below. He could not be part of the slaughter, was serious in his prayer about offering his life for those others, and in any case, he no longer saw himself worthy of life. He was completely despondent as he now shuffled to the rail, not even considering the fact that the airship would not be high in the sky. They still slunk low as do predators before they strike, and he looked down in abject failure at the chance of even taking his own life, but only *now*, as he

looked up, he realised that the airships were spread out and at full charge. He cast his eyes down again, as they flew fast over the lip of The Great Chasm. He would cast body there, not to the sand hills that he had wished would swallow him and his guilt.

People below were calling to the young ones and scurrying for cover, as the airships appeared over the lip of The Great Chasm. Many though simply stood and awaited the barrage that must surely come. Cista came out of her dwelling and was greatly saddened at the sight of these predators above them. She simply stood as people came up to her and stood with her. Able had seen these craft before and he knew what was next. He had seen the merciless fervour of these hunters firsthand and felt he should now fight to save who he could. He called to people to help gather them and get more of them inside, but many people outside now simply stood as Cista did; clearly accepting of the Will of The All. He looked at them, and he was saddened, and elated, as he saw their resolve to be true to their call. They had to bring the Rains of Nov-Cikel, Edossd to all people, and show the power of His Message, even by their own deaths.

Hedden thought how fitting it was that his body would lie *here* in death, as he looked to all the innocent souls below looking up at the terrible force about to rain hell upon them. He began to climb over the rail, but Edron was alongside him before he realised it. As he took hold of Hedden he saw the complete loss on his face.

“Where are you, boy?”

“At the end of my life. I am responsible for the deaths of those poor souls down there,” he said, in deep pain and as he tried to release himself from Edron’s grip.

“It will be over soon. We are close now.”

“Close?” stuttered Hedden.

“Yes, these dunes yet hide it. But we will be on it soon, and it will be done. *Be strong.*”

“*You do not see The Chasm?*”

Edron looked at him strangely, as it became apparent to Hedden that not only could Edron not see The Great Chasm, but all his men could not either. They flew hard across the rift valley, still under full charge, over the verdant fields and the souls below, with their eyes forward.

You see, only those with vision could see The Great Chasm; with eyes of the heart. Not eyes of the head, of self, of arrogance or fear, or the many other eyes people choose to see with. Even though a few who see with these eyes, to a lesser degree, also walked within The Great Chasm's walls and called it home. But such is the nature of the human heart and other varied perceptions in all of us. Such is the nature of human vision. We need to see things for ourselves and through the Glass of Revelation; as such the way of The All.

ETERA TOSSED TONIGHT. There was so much concern in even her dreams, when suddenly she was given relief. She almost woke as the strain inside her was suddenly released, and between sleep and waking, she was taken to a mountain; one on another world.

She felt sure here and noticed Jack. He was seeking a way through the gates above some gardens that cascaded down the mountainside below her. He could not gain entry, so he then walked around down to the bottom of the gardens to a gate at the base of the mountain. It too was closed, so he wandered around there for a while, and ate some strange fare, until a lady walked up to him and said his name.

They talked a little as Etera wandered along behind them, obviously unseen, then in through the now open gate as Jack was ushered in. The guide glanced in her direction just before turning to walk with Jack up the steps of this mountain garden. She wondered about the nature of this place, while gently following Jack and the guide, hearing the calls of many small flying animals. They landed on trees and the ground, and flew off again, going about the business of their day, and their beautiful gentle calls eased her even more.

Looking up she saw a building of light. The building itself crowned the gardens. It was surely the mountain of The All on this strange planet, but she wondered at Jack and why she had been brought here. It was no doubt a gift, whatever the reason was, and she knew it was a place, not merely a dream. Again, the guide glanced back her way for an instant.

This had to be the centre of the Beautiful Way on this world. She now looked around and saw a Great Hall. It was not the one in the chasm; it was far more beautiful and ornate, and its colonnade of columns gave it a grand feel. She knew that some kind of Great Council was seated there and was sure that this Way must have its own Great Stories.

The guide saw Jack to a small building eventually. They disappeared for a time and Etera looked out the bay below the mountain. The guide then reappeared without Jack, and then returning to her, asked her name.

“I am Etera.”

“Hola, Etera.”

“Why do I come here?”

“Why do any come here? To find an anchor for our hearts, maybe. Each has their own experience here, but coming to the mountain of God is a tangible link to God and the Messengers. The stories of their lives are told here.”

“The Great Stories?”

“Many stories, great and small.”

“I should like to hear some. Maybe as we walk?”

“Yes. That would be good,” answered the guide, and she began the first Great Story of this world as they walked gently off through the gardens of that place.

“THERE IS ONLY SAND,” responded Edron, while realising that, by their calculations, they should have been well over their goal by now.

Hedden now looked at him with a seemingly crazy stare and started laughing madly. Edron looked to the sand hills below and then back to Hedden, as this man’s now very obvious madness became apparent to him. *“The desert must have deeply shaken his mind,”* he now thought. The Chasm, the Walkers who had escorted him even, were all the delusions of a man who was lost in the desert for too long. *“The others must all have perished,”* he thought, *“in the crash, or in the desert.”*

The other two airship captains *had* been told that there had been information on a hidden enclave of enemies to the Icer Kingdoms; one deep in the desert. They had been made aware of the small ruse about a search for a downed airship and were schooled on the plan of attack before leaving the Western mountains. The crews had been informed only *just before* they had fanned out

to attack; every one of them taken immediately and easily to the passion of the hunt. Some had known that this mission was something more than they were told, mostly by the nature of the ships that they had left the Western Mountains aboard. These great ships were armed to the teeth and the first mates at least, had received looks intimating more than a search from their Captains early on.

But Edron had told none that there were Icer souls in the place they were to raid. He was leaving that to the *very* last; to make sure that there was no time available for any dissention; even to be able to seem surprised himself. He would call out that the Icers below were the enemy, *traitors* to the Icer way, and he was more than confident all his hand-picked men would, in the heat of battle, respond. By his caution though, he had thankfully kept his honour intact, keeping too, the Western Lord's political power uninjured. It was a great relief and a relief not to have to take the lives of any of his own people. He was thankful for that most surely.

It is strange how a creature can care for his own, and see the light of being in them, but be a merciless murderer of those considered not of them; ones who hold within them the same light. Not *seeing* beauty in difference, only an enemy. It is a shame, such things; such ignorance, arrogance, judgment, hate and fear, which are often sadly mutual; even between one individual and another in a shared community due to some otherness, of which there are naturally many. But *all* are...of us; *all* peoples, and each individual soul...one kind, one family.

Edron was elated that this Great Chasm *was* a myth and *only* existed in the minds of zealots and fools. He laughed loud as he now turned Hedden towards his cabin and gave him a small push. "*The Great Chasm*," he thought, in satirical tones, and he smiled as he reflected on this whole

misadventure. “*Maybe Hedden did even come across Sandwalkers, and they had played with his mind,*” he thought. He would put *nothing* past those creatures, those *telepathic vermin*.

He now called out above the engines for the signalman to end the charge. Then smiling, and saying loud to his first mate, “It seems that this place does not exist. It seems the lad has been lost within his own mind this whole time. *Come about.*”

“*Come about. Home boys, home,*” then called out the first mate.

The other two ships reduced speed at the signal and all three began turning back in unison. They moved in a wide arc to return. It was terrifying for the souls below watching them spread out and turn back in the sky above the far rampart. The people again waited for death as they came around, but it did not come. The ships simply sailed back across it and disappeared back over the other great rampart of The Chasm, still oblivious to its presence.

It would be a few days after those bullet-like balloons and their great wooden gondolas had disappeared over the lip of the chasm; a few days before the hearts of those below would rest more easily; and before the activity of life resumed fully. The sounds of those engines were definitely lodged deep in their psyche, though, and would not be easily forgotten. It had surely been a momentous week; one that many stories would be told of in the future.

Hedden had walked, confused but elated, into his cabin. He was not sure of anything right now. *He* saw it, why couldn’t *they*. Surely his whole experience had not been madness. Maybe he *was* mad. But he went down on his knees and thanked The All, in any case. His relief and laughter on the deck had not been that of a mad man, but a soul being released from a deathly sentence and greatly joyful of it. He now sat in reflection over what had occurred; this, and all he had experienced since the crash of his airship in the desert nearby. He could gather no story that his

mind may have suppressed, and even less so, that he had imagined all this, so he simply gathered all that he had learnt.

When he had finished, he wondered if it was all quite useless anyway, as he was *surely* deluded. His heart was settled, but his mind was still quite lost as the questions continued to fire from it, just like the cannons of the great airships would be firing right now if The Chasm had been real. He found himself mentally embattled, *no matter* if he were mad or not. He was being overcome with confusion again when he remembered the words of the older Icer Lord who had voted against this hunt with him. He had said to come and speak with him, *no matter* the outcome, and it seemed that there may be an answer in those older eyes to the chaos in his mind right now. It was like the old man knew that he would need a safe port, so Hedden now clung onto those words like it was a great rock in the midst of the storms of The Passing. He held on, as the airships, now high and with full sail out, sailed home.

TWO WALKERS LED THE OUTCASTS OUT INTO THE DESERT; out beyond The Great Chasm, and away. Cista Dusa stood there with Sam, and watched as these sad creatures, still walking with pride, disappeared over the third set of dunes. He had seen her walking past and had followed her up the stairs. He had gone gently, but she now sensed he was beside her, and soon would bid him return to his place.

She thanked The All for Sam providing his service here and let him watch with her as these few were cast out. She loved Sam's spirit. She did not know him, but what she did know of him was that he had a determined spirit; like the one that had built and spread the Faith. The likes of

Sam pushed on and acted while others talked incessantly, as did those who *went out*; those, who lost in their love, could not be held back.

He realised that she knew he was there when she began to talk to him, saying as the small band went out of sight again, “They must be cut off like diseased growth in a fruit tree. They need be cast away. The tree needs remain One Tree, not *many trees* which are trained and grown by the minds of men.

They are in The All’s hands now. Some may turn back in time, while others will drift endlessly in their ego and imagination. But rest assured that the trees of any seeds *they plant* can only give forth diseased unpalatable fruit, if at all. They will only poison themselves, and very few others will wish to eat the sour fruit. In time even their sad tree will rot because it is built on ego, not love. Its sap will be weak, as it seeks an ascendancy, a power, it can never claim, and the sugar of its fruit will be tart and never satisfy. Lost in pain and ego it will wither and come to nothing.

No one has the right to usurp a people’s future. That is of the past. We are to be one, *not many*. We are not the noble beings we are created to be when we step beyond our station or stop working for each other. *Each other* is the future, and the fresh Spring of The Messenger’s will flow, and again, and again, no matter our small minds, or besmirched hearts.”

Sam now followed Cista Dusa deeper again to the chasm floor, as Cista continued, “The requirement of a Messenger to renew The Power in each age, to help people to again know of The All and renew their souls and societies, is the greatest victory. We will strive for this goal on Temelj in this New Age. The formation of the newly formed leadership will surely aid its arrival. This time will long echo into the future of this world. The Beautiful Way’s roots are deep and strong, and once again settled. But we will still need to protect it.

If we seek only to eat, drink, and hoard possessions, what use are we? If we do not engage in the meaningful action of the high cause of justice, then what use are we? If we seek inner poise but do not live and strive to love, what use are we? If we seek to tear down, and not build up, what use are we? If we do not seek to be responsible for our own lives and care for people and our communities, what use are we?

If we believe, but do not love; if we believe, but sit idle, who *are* we? If we fail to love, who are we really? What are we really? Spirituality is selfless action and good character, not games of the mind. Meaning is found in *love* and *justice*; meaningful connection and noble purpose. These two great pillars orient us, animate us, and bring endless good fruit.

If we do not engage in these things, we walk as dead.”

Sam thought about love and justice, as he was about to embark on a new journey in his life. He did not see love and kindness as justice before today, but now realised that he had been living it and growing it in his neighbourhood. It was indeed about love and caring. He saw how people left to starve, or to struggle in a galling way, while others lived easily, was also injustice; certainly not loving. He was just as clear that everyone making an effort to put into society, to give to *the whole* as well as themselves, was also justice. He shook his head now as he realised that this too was love; that doing nothing was a selfish act; one that did not make anyone a better person, make them happy, or fulfilled.

But he knew justice was also about what he had always seen it as; as reward and punishment. People needed to be protected by this justice too. Communities and schools at home were becoming more and more chaotic, as the general social narrative seemed to be all about individual rights, and strangely, a misguided kindness that allowed for greater breakdown and

violence. It was a *so-called* kindness which somehow allowed people to remain spiritually weak, apathetic, and self-interested, so not take part in the wider good; strangely too, a pseudo kindness that seemed driven by anger, and words calling for *others* to change. To him, it was all words, no action; plenty of arrogance, and no love. A world of apathy or protest, with no will to build, or to unite; a world of argument, lost in a manic drive toward self-nurture alone, and no self-sacrifice.

His mind seemed to be looking *everywhere*; now realising that justice, like love, pervaded everything in the human reality and provided for the peace and security of all humans. Justice was alive in kindness, love, reward, punishment, character, caring, sacrifice, work ethic, honesty, trustworthiness. It was in effort, basic respect, and in what we taught and expected of our children, as well as in not letting others suffer. *All* these were justice, as was an effort towards equity of opportunity and laws for protection of all; and so much more. He could see, that we had to see, the wisdom of justice in *all* situations within life. It was a core essence of life, complex, and far more than just about individual rights.

Sam knew that his new work would be like the effort in his neighbourhood. That injustice and social breakdown could not just *be left be* to swallow the hearts of people and make life unbearable. Apathy had been the enemy, yet hope was there ready to flare in the hearts of people. He had learned that it takes will to stand before injustice, but that it also takes will to bring out what also lies in potential within a person or community; it takes honesty, it takes courage, and it takes a continuing effort. Apathy clearly an enemy, and life ongoing.

It would take a long time for Sam to reflect on these things, and he knew now that some deep reflection on justice was necessary for all souls. In any case, he would be soon taken from this place, and returned through the portal he had come through to Temelj. Mother was to stay a

good deal longer, as The All had a little more work for her it seemed, and Able and Garran would remain to give a year of labour here. Able would enjoy the exercise, as well as the plentiful food and water, to fill out his growing frame. He and Garran would be visited now and then by Cista, as no matter how important anyone was here, they were *all* to care for one another.

Jack and Jennifer too had returned whence they came, finally freeing Jennifer of the burden of memory loss, and returning Jack to a normal life. Well, there was a question there on Jack's reality, but even so, in the wash-up, can anyone call the miraculous wonder of a human life, normal, when seen clearly.

All the visitors, including Jennifer, would forget this place, and these times, when they left...just, as maybe, we should not.

We are all wandering through the designs and tests of The Fashioner, and such are the mystery of His ways. So far beyond our understanding that we, so small before His Vision and Knowledge, can only take each step life brings to us. The people of The Great Chasm though, would continue to seek the guidance and wisdom brought by Nov-Cikel, Edossd, and strive to be of value to those who graced their lives and in service to their kind.

The Power goes about its business and life goes on for all of us; no matter what we believe, or what we believe we know. But *every* heart *knows* the truth of love and justice. We *all* know what they are, and we don't need a Messenger to know this. But it would also seem that humanity needs Mediators to remind it from time to time; so that we remember our noble spirit, renew the structures of love, and rebirth the essence of justice, from era to era.

When humanity is lost in the darkness, at its lowest ebb, The Messengers come. The All never leaves us alone. He is our Mystery, as it is said, and to us is left the duty to strive for our nobility and for a better world; for an ever-advancing civilisation.

“He is the King, the All-Knowing, the Wise! Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise singeth upon the twigs of the Tree of Eternity, with holy and sweet melodies, proclaiming to the sincere ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One, informing the severed ones of the message which hath been revealed by God, the King, the Glorious, the Peerless, guiding the lovers to the seat of sanctity and to this resplendent Beauty.

Verily this is that Most Great Beauty, foretold in the Books of the Messengers, through Whom truth shall be distinguished from error and the wisdom of every command shall be tested. Verily He is the Tree of Life that bringeth forth the fruits of God, the Exalted, the Powerful, the Great.”¹⁵

IT WAS AFTERNOON, ON A LOVELY EARLY SPRING DAY, and Jack Johnston woke in the grass. He felt a little worn out and his chest hurt; but just a little. He did not seem to want to get up though, when someone kicked the bottom of his feet, and said, “Com’on, Jack. Get up. Let’s go!”

“What?!” said Jack, still trying to get all his senses back online.

“It’s not about *you*, Jack!”

“It’s not about me,” he said gently, still on his back and looking up to the sky, as the small amount of pain left his chest.

He got up and smiled at Jennifer, who now sat on her knees on a carpet that hovered a foot above the ground. Jack then boarded another carpet that had slipped out from under Jennifer’s.

“How *deep* is your love?!” she said with a smile, as she took off.

Jack smiled wryly, and said, “Well...*here we go again.*”

He was soon after her and they spiralled around each other in the air. They built up speed and the spiral got tighter as they flew towards the horizon. Soon it was hard to tell that there were two of them, and they both yelled “Whooooaaaah!” as they became a single blur of white light and disappeared.

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE FIRST DAYS OF SPRING. Jack Johnston woke up in the grass. He got up, feeling strong and well, and he walked up the small rise in his paddock with more energy than he had felt before.

He smiled and waved to his new neighbours as he walked in the back door of his house. They were a little surprised, as he had shown no care for them before today; they felt that they were, at best, an *inconvenience* to him. Jack was now feeling *very* alive inside. He really couldn’t believe just how light he felt as he walked through his kitchen. He was going out tonight, and he smiled. It was more that he *had* to go out tonight, when he had thought of it this morning. It had been just an imposition on his solitary existence, *but now* he was *really* looking forward to it.

He wondered at this joy and new energy inside him, but he was not one for wondering; he was one for doing.

Oh, and by the way...just like Jack and Jennifer, we go through cycle after cycle, little ones and big ones all mixed in together, as we travel through this life; and as we do, humanity goes through its cycles too.

We will fall often, but we have to get up, gather our feet, our ground, and go again...and again. It is a process; a perfect one, constantly unfolding for the whole time we walk here. There is no getting 'there', there are just more steps to take. Change is constant, as all things, good and bad, come and go; new challenges and understandings flowing to us through the river of life itself.

It is mostly in that we have helped elevate other souls to higher love and knowledge, and that our own intent rose more from true love and true knowledge, which truly counts; that we have grown our souls and watered the souls and lives of others; maybe too, that we have built something good. Are these all, not justice?

Do not expect justice though as you walk through this place, as it is not always available here, but seek to supply it to others, as then it will become more available in the world. You see justice, love, and all virtue, flow through each of us into this place. We are the channel for these into the world, so we are responsible, and only the pure love of our Source will suffice.

The flows of justice, love, and virtue are plentifully available to us through the Creative Word and through open hearts connected passionately and authentically to the All Loving; while truths and situations, bathed in the light of Revelation, create clearer vision.

But it takes a life; it takes humility and honesty, selflessness and courage, hardship and surrender, to truly own wisdom, and to become more of love's true essence here; our character and our actions of character, the only proof of our love and maturity; certainly not some imagined spiritual ideas or station. We need get into the tussle of life together to realise our spiritual potential; to come to know ourselves better and what we have to give. Who we are and how we act toward others, is spirituality, and truly, where justice is done or undone.

Life will bring us times of galling hardship, confusion, and frustration, and at times, deep loss, but if we meet the good and the bad with courage and kindness, with honesty and love, we will see more the wisdom of life and feel ourselves growing stronger. As much as this life produces pain, it also grants with it an endless flow of understanding. We could not hope for a better school.

We will be less, and we will be more, and we will have crisis and victory, but we need to relax with ourselves, and with others, as we learn, and hopefully we may find meaning; in Him, in His Message, in people and in purpose; in learning to be driven by love.

It's all in just taking part, so...chase life down. Do good things. Be passionate. It's all in the tussle, and it's all good.

AUTHOR'S OTHER BOOKS

As human beings we learn, discover, evolve, and grow, and what I can give as an author at the time of writing is subjective and relative; and so, does not seek to be absolute. There is much in these books that is symbolic, so readers can hopefully find their own perceptions of the concepts, which they may or may not be in agreement with. My main hope for these books is to awaken investigation and discussion; even self-reflection, while also entertaining those who read them.

James D

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH TRILOGY

The first book of this series, "*The Department of Truth*", is the original adventure of Jack Johnston, who is taken away on a journey of discovery, that he wanted to take, but did not realise it. Its main theme is the search for truth. It is an existential journey, and seeks to explore the nature of truth, and intimate that the continuing journey of humanity is full of promise. It is a wild and wonderful journey that wanders to many different worlds, and places deeper, as it explores universal themes. It hopefully mimics the feelings of awe, questioning, confusion and realisation, of a spiritual journey.

The second book, "*Expectations of Happiness*" seeks to explore the nature of a human being, the nature of this life, and therefore, the nature of happiness here on planet Earth. The main character,

Jack, is struggling to get the great things he learned from his first journey, on the ground in life, and is again drawn to places deeper to find answers. “*Expectations of Happiness*” is about meaningful purpose, and connection in life; it is about striving and acceptance; it is about seeing ourselves as noble, and working at that. It makes it clear that happiness is not something that can be sought within itself, and is not, only an inner, or only an outer experience. The book is mostly about the *personal transformation*, which is required for any *collective human transformation* to occur.

The final book, “*The Halls of Certitude*” attempts to meaningfully explore aspects of finding a sure way forward for humanity, collectively. The human race and its future evolution is a wondrous story to me, not one of darkness that most seem to believe lies ahead. There may be some big tremors, some chaos, and outmoded ideas we have to deal with and cast aside, but the way forward is ripe with new fruit. There is much to share on this subject, and we may find that the answers to building a *new civilisation* are more about local communities, very much simpler than we might have imagined.

The *Search* for knowledge, *Growth* of that knowledge within us, which transforms us, and action in *Service* to others, therefore transforming our world, are key building blocks of life; *the* building blocks to a new future for humanity. “*The Department of Truth*” turned out to be seminal in that way, as its three secondary themes have become the main underlying themes of the three books, respectively.

THE STORYTELLER TRILOGY

This is the author's second trilogy and continues on with what will be a series of nine books. It introduces many new characters and renews our connection to some old ones. These books lift the storytelling to new heights.

The first book of "*The Storyteller Trilogy*" is, "*The Storyteller*". It is a story of the passing into adulthood of two young souls, Able and Eedra, while Eedra's world and all its peoples are in the same process on a planetary level. It talks to some of the nature of this time in the life of a person, and this time in the evolution of a planet; the challenge, upheaval, but great beauty and potential of these '*passings*'. This story holds other stories within it, and all between its covers attends to the theme of crisis and victory.

The second book is, "*Letter to the World*". It is a prequel to "*The Storyteller*" and talks to the story of good versus evil. It is a look at humanity through an angel's eyes, and a street kid and two visitors who get caught up in His mission, the story shows the disjointed psyche of the world, and the distractions that take us from ourselves; mostly our own minds. Also, how we need to battle the forces of decay, by seeing them clearly.

The last novel of the trilogy is "*The Traveller*". It is a prequel to "*Letter to the World*", and explores civilisation; its great power, and how we mere mortals may wield that power in our own neighbourhoods; no matter what our own ignorance, or the social norm seeks to put in our way. It also seeks to portray how the great dark force of self is our enemy, and that we are all friends; a human family now finally being united in one river, and one future.

THE KNOWLEDGE TRILOGY

James D Connolly's third trilogy completes a series of nine books, whose characters and storylines intertwine. These stories are again, like all the author's books, wild, untamed, and joyous adventures. They attend to big themes in enjoyable and symbolic stories, leaving readers spellbound and reflective.

The first novel of this trilogy is "*Knowledge*". It asks us to talk honestly, yet with respect, about what ails us as a society, as we are responsible. It asks us to open our minds to more exploration, to more open communication, in a more and more ideologically tribal world. It challenges the clichés of apathy and shows how a small group of people can take part in community building; no matter their age or outlook; no matter how seemingly ordinary. It has a good hard look at the world, through common, day to day eyes, as well as spiritual ones. It seeks to show how we have the power of initiative, and how we can utilise growth engines to transform lives and communities.

The second novel is "*Volition*". It attends to human will and its nature, and looks at different stages in life, finding our vocation, relationships, family life, and child rearing. It looks at three core times in life, and how the knowledge we use underpins how we will act. It also seeks to create more understanding of the power of consultation in all parts of our lives, and free ourselves from the rising noise around us.

The final book of the trilogy, "*Justice*", looks at the boundaries of human life, and how the ego can seek to subsume the greatest within us and threaten take people away from their high destiny. It talks to the inevitability of a mature, just, and unified humanity: and explores the power, and nature, of our link to the Creator as humankind.

CRASH and THE HUMAN CONTINUUM

I wanted to write a book to explore some of the implications of our burgeoning AI and robotic future. What I found as I wrote though was *how amazing* it is to be human. I *was* able find *some* clear implications in the rise of AI, but indeed, it turned out to be more a look at the seemingly small, yet powerfully amazing, aspects of our human creature.

The story is about Crash; an AI crash-test dummy that wanders out into the world by chance. He is a lovely fellow, experiencing a good deal of struggle as he explores further safety solutions for humans. Strangely the damage enhances him, allowing him access to deeper fields of the human continuum. Mmm, *maybe*.

See what *you* think of Crash and his journey in the human continuum.

UNITY

"I don't know what turn of fate brought these two together. A woman of beauty and dreams, and a killer born in the belly of hatred itself. I don't even know where they were headin'. But the day I saw their path's cross was somthin' I wouldn't soon forget.

I've prospected all over this planet in my one hundred and twenty years, and life was hard out here back then. Much harder than it is now, and most folks were just lost in the grip of desperation. Well...it was that way beyond all the walled cities, and away from the high planets.

Those places weren't caught in the grip of desperation and loss, or bein' chewed up in the violent chaos on some other rocks, but they were livin' in their own kind'a hell, and growing a chaos of their own makin'."

CLOWN TOWN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Duncan Connolly is an Australian writer and artist/ painter of Irish descent. He grew up in a Christian family, but as a young man his quest for knowledge and understanding of the meaning of life and the spirit, led him towards the Bahá'í Faith and has been a member of the Bahá'í community since then.

His driving interest is the nature of the human creature, and this life. It has led him to many sources from psychology to history to religious texts. He also believes in the spiritual wisdom written into nature, and in human inner vision, as great sources of joy and understanding; but believes that only by living life can anyone really hold knowledge. His writing and art are greatly influenced by his Faith and life experiences, and those of humanity.

He has been writing philosophical realisations and poetry, under the acronym JDC for a number of years, and has now written upwards of nine novels; which will be published, when edited and developed.

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15. Bahá'u'lláh. (2005) *Bahá'í Prayers: Tablet of Ahmad*. Wilmette, USA: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. p. 307-308

RECOMMENDED LINKS

For further information on the Baha'i Faith the following links are recommended

www.bahai.org

www.bahai.org.au

www.bahaiebooks.com