

Chapter 15: Skinning the Cat

After Taylor had a chance to clean up and recover from her ordeal, she returned to the pit so that Pelleur could show her how to skin the cat. When the skinning was complete, Taylor had a forty-pound hunk of hide, dripping with blood, with thin patches of fat still clinging to it. Pelleur explained that it was going to take a significant amount of work to reduce and stretch this formless, bloody mass into a finely tuned membrane. She would need to pay meticulous attention to the tanning of the animal hide that would be used as her drumhead.

To begin the process, Pelleur and Taylor set up a workstation in the cavern's creek bed about twenty yards from the pit. Coming straight out of the roof of the cavern and hanging parallel over the shallow creek was a smooth root, nearly the size of a large barrel. It was there, on the root that Taylor would work on her skin.

It took over a week to prepare the hide. Taylor sweated out long hours over the heavy skin using the serrated scrapers that Pelleur had given her. When Pelleur was certain that the skin was at the desired thickness, he told Taylor to soak it in the creek, and then to throw it over the large, overhanging root. Then Pelleur and Taylor pounded long stakes in the creek bed, and fastened the skin to the stakes, stretching it over the thick root. That's where it hung for four days. And, as the moisture gradually evaporated, the skin tightened.

Before the finished skin could be stretched onto the body of Taylor's drum, Pelleur had Taylor complete one last task. This ritual, he said, was of the utmost importance. Together, Taylor and Pelleur sat down in the drum pit. Taylor was holding her finished skin in her lap, admiring its beauty. Pelleur had with him a large cloth bag and from it he pulled a hide that he had been preparing in secret.

"That's a bear's hide, isn't it?" asked Taylor, while getting excited and scooting closer to Pelleur.

"Yes, it is."

"Where'd you get it from?"

"This was the bear that provided the hide that you have in your lap. It was a very old bear. Big, big, fellow."

"Did you...?"

"I found him dead. Apparently, your panther put up quite a struggle saving you."

"Can I... touch it?" Taylor asked, knowing that if she did so without asking, she might also be violating some sacred procedure of the ritual.

Pelleur nodded. Taylor then put her skin down and gently took the bear's skin and held it in her lap. She couldn't believe it. Here was the giant bear that had almost killed her, the bear that *did* kill her panther. And now it, too, would become a skinhead for what would be a mighty drum.

When Taylor finished caressing the bearskin, she handed it back to Pelleur. "Now I invite you, Taylor, to do as I do." Pelleur stood up and laid his skin down on the ground inside the pit. Taylor obediently followed. Once the skins were properly staged, Pelleur sat down on top of his skin and folded his legs. Again, Taylor followed. They sat silently for quite some time before Taylor asked a question. "Pelleur, why are we doing this?"

It took Pelleur quite some time to provide an answer. He wasn't easily roused from his meditation. "First of all, we are once again paying homage to the great animals that sacrificed their lives. We must be grateful for their contribution—the cat for saving your life, and the bear for providing the cat with an opportunity to do so. Also, we are acknowledging our connection to the animals, making an effort to enter into the consciousness of the animal. In so doing, we also prepare

and impregnate the space—the pit—for the invocation of Divine Transcendence. Doing this helps to create a sacred space. We provide an inviting atmosphere which Divine Transcendence will find agreeable."

"Oh, I see."

Together, Pelleur and Taylor finished their silent meditations insuring that the skins and pit were finally ready. Pelleur then showed Taylor how to stretch her skin over the body of her drum. She laid the skin down, placed the body on the skin, and marked how big the head would be. After cutting the skin to the desired size, she cut laces that would be used to stretch and tie the head to the body. Of course, after everything was properly cut, Pelleur helped her to stretch the skin over the rim of the body so that it would produce the desired sound.

Taylor was given the choice to ornament her drum in the way she wished. Pelleur explained that this too might further enhance the quality of the drum's voice. If she wanted, she could attach additional skins, bells, or rattling instruments to the inside or outside of the body. Pelleur also suggested that she paint a mystical design or symbol on the skinhead. Threads, or even a skirt, could be hung on the outside of the body, as well. After careful consideration, and with Monka's help at home, Taylor chose to weave together a colorful web of beads and to attach them to the outside of her drum's body.

Chapter 16: Oom Coom Che

When Taylor presented her finished drum to Pelleur in his smoky pit, he took it into his rough hands and examined it closely. From the large smile that formed on his craggy face, Taylor could tell that he was pleased.

"Are you ready to drum?" asked Pelleur while handing it back to her.

Taylor took firm hold of her drum with both hands and stared up into his eyes. "How?"

"All you have to do is to hit it. Feel for the soul of your drum. This is something you'll do in private. It's a very intimate moment, the first time you play your drum. You've got to go into it. It has a unique soul waiting, wanting to sing. So don't play it until you're ready. Feel your drum, get to know it, then release its true essence." Pelleur turned and walked silently away, leaving Taylor and her drum alone in the pit.

Tucking her drum under her right arm, Taylor found a seat. With Pelleur gone, the dimly lit pit was completely silent. The burning sage that Pelleur had lit earlier continued to smoke up the corner of the cavern.

Taylor held her drum with pride. She went through a great deal to create her drum: finding the right tree for the body; risking life and limb for a skin; the great sacrifice that a loved and revered animal made for her; all the labor that went into its making. She caressed the drum lovingly, then brought it up to her nose and breathed in the smell of the wood and skin. She held it in her arms, as she would a newborn baby or puppy. She rubbed her face over the body, skin, and beads. Then she stood the drum upright and held it firmly between her knees. She rubbed her hands over the skin slowly, carefully.

Then with a deliberate motion, she raised her hands and brought them down hard on the tight head. Her right hand hit first, followed by the left, then nearly as fast as the lightning that struck the living tree from which she extracted her drum's body, she swept her right hand down along the side, flicking the beads hanging on the wood. With Taylor's urging the drum spoke: "Oom Coom Che."

She hit it once more. Again the name sounded strong: "Oom Coom Che."

She kept hitting it over and over, again and again:

Oom Coom Che, Oom Coom Che . . .

Oom Coom Che, Oom Coom Che . . .

She loved it's sound. Loved its name. It was a strong name, she thought. She had done well.

Taylor kept playing, counting out a four beat rhythm after hitting her drum.

Oom Coom Che, Oom Coom Che . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . .

Oom Coom Che, Oom Coom Che . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . .

That's when Pelleur appeared. With a huge smile on his face, he approached the pit dancing in rhythm with Taylor's beat. Turning round and round as he approached, his huge baldhead bobbed, his muscular arms flew and jerked here and there. Taylor looked up, saw him, continued pounding for a few more beats, and then stopped. To match Pelleur's, a huge smile beamed across her face.

"You have a very good drum, Taylor," Pelleur said as he stood above the pit with his hands on his hips. "You've done an excellent job. I can feel its pulse."

Taylor smiled up at Pelleur, then looked back at her drum and hugged it against her chest.

Chapter 17: Crystal Cave

With her drum safely tucked away in her bedroom, Taylor returned to her studies in the library. By now she had read through many of the library's texts and tomes. She had studied a number of Aztec and Mayan codices, Babylonian steles, Sumerian cylinder seals, Hebrew scrolls, Assyrian, Phoenician and Canaanite tablets, Chinese oracle bones and slats, Indian palm leaves, Egyptian Rosetta Stones, Greek and Roman manuscripts, and more. Tons of books.

Always, when she concentrated on the symbols, and learned in which direction to scan the words, she heard the voices of the scribes reading their words. At first, she wasn't able to repeat much of what they said, and still she didn't understand most of it. The languages weren't coming easily for her. There were way too many of them. She now knew why the Lemurian's studied all their lives.

In time, Taylor was able to identify quite a few languages, and memorize several short passages from a particular text, or two. Because some of the texts had been deciphered and written in English, she also learned the stories of the ancient cultures she studied. Through all this studying, Taylor was learning much. But it never felt like enough. Occasionally, she'd walk to the front of the library, over to the table where the Divine Design was still resting, pull out a chair and sit down. Never in all of her studying did she ever come across anything that she was convinced was *the word*; the secret word that Queen Nyla said she was supposed to know and understand; the sacred word that was supposed to open the Divine Design. Oh, she'd try by muttering something in Sanskrit, or Hebrew, or Sumerian, or Latin, or even Lemurian, but nothing worked. The old book just kept lying there, doing nothing, revealing nothing. Maybe, she figured, it was because she still didn't know *that for the sake of which* she was doing all this.

Then she got to thinking, if she was really supposed to lead the Sacred Seven back into the past, and because there were so many texts and tomes to read, maybe she ought to start thinking about where she might actually like to go. At least then she'd be able to narrow her reading down to a specific time and place, learn everything about that culture, and decide what sort of intervention she and her team could make to promote the changes the Lemurians were hoping for. But where and when could she go to make the greatest difference? And once there, what would she and the others actually do? Whenever Taylor tried to decide, she became even more confused and frustrated. She couldn't make up her mind.

In addition to studying for the great trip, Taylor also had to worry about her preparations for the Temple of Light. As she had been told, she would not be invited into the temple unless her drumming, dancing, and singing skills were keenly developed. And that's when she knew it was time to pay Etruceana another visit. For she needed all the help she could get with her voice.

Ever since that day in Etruceana's courtyard when Taylor fell into the pond, she had been applying the techniques that were supposed to enable her to enter the realm of pure sound, vibration, and energy. But Taylor found the going tough. And no matter how long and hard she practiced, she found this state of being to be quite elusive. Taylor had memorized the various melodies, yet for some reason, she fell short of achieving any kind of advanced condition that Etruceana had demonstrated. In due course, however, in spite of her failings, Taylor learned to enjoy the practice. It all felt like humming to her. And she'd hum her own little tunes, while on any one of her many jaunts through Telos. Sounding the tones and melodies seemed to calm her, energize her, and in a sense, awaken her. Still, she was unable to ascend to any height whatsoever, as Etruceana had done. One day, though, while out walking, humming and toning on her own, just for fun, like all the Lemurians she watched throughout Telos, she went up to a pretty flower and toned it a tune. She was totally surprised when the flower slowly turned and faced her.

Finally, she had time to visit Etruceana. As before, it had been a long while since she had last been with the old priestess. In spite of Etruceana's best efforts, Taylor found it difficult to bring herself to the courtyard. Oh, she loved the courtyard and all, and Etruceana, of course, but she certainly wasn't very fond of singing. Finding it much more enjoyable to listen, Taylor was having some difficulty finding the more intricate qualities of her voice needed for the higher purposes. And this worried her, for she knew that if she were going to make it into the Temple of Light, she would need to master these skills.

Taylor did make it to the courtyard, however, but this time, during her visit, she found Etruceana to be much less pressuring than before. In fact, this visit turned into a much-needed lazy day of lying around on the roots of the stage. After spending most of their time talking and enjoying one another's company, however, their conversation eventually found its way back to the topic of sacred sound and the capabilities of voice.

"Once before you said that you could use your voice to commune with matter. Is that really true?" asked Taylor.

"Of course," said Etruceana. "How do you think we created our city here in the mountain?"

"I don't know. I thought you had construction crews come in or something."

"Very funny," said Etruceana, while shaking her head in disbelief. "You're a joke a minute."

By now, Etruceana had gotten used to Taylor's sense of humor, but she decided to remain on the serious side, given the importance of the subject. "You see, Taylor, we use our voice to move people, animals, plants, even things some people consider immovable. We've been able to create this living space within the mountain partly through the use of directed and controlled sound."

"You're kidding. Through your voice?"

"Through our voices."

"How?"

"We alter physical vibrations through the tones we emit. And, we accomplish this by actually entering into the consciousness of the object itself, communicating with it, thus transforming it."

Etruceana looked out into her courtyard and watched a hawk take limb in one of her trees. "In your world they call it psychokinesis. They don't teach it anymore, and you hardly if ever hear about it, but sometimes you'll see people trying to exert a mind-over-matter influence on other objects. They do ridiculously simple, silly tricks like bend spoons and keys, or stop watches from ticking. We don't call

it psychokinesis here. Here we just communicate, imagine, and create—without any technological help. No tools are necessary."

"How do you do it? It must take an enormous amount of mind power." Taylor was admiring the mallards swimming about on the surface of the pond. They were busy searching for small fish or tadpoles upon which to feed.

Etruceana pushed herself up into a sitting position to lean up against the tree at the back of the stage. "We have learned to know, communicate, and cooperate with the forces of nature. We don't think of what we do as a form of control or power over nature. It's not a mind *over* matter kind of thing. We're extremely good at listening to what nature has to tell us."

"Matter has something to say?" said Taylor with more than a tinge of disbelief. "I still have a hard time believing that it's possible to communicate with matter." Taylor rolled onto her stomach and rested her chin in her hands.

"Well, I can understand why. You've yet to see it happen."

Taylor rolled to her right side, supported her head in her hand, and looked toward Etruceana. "It all sounds rather mysterious to me."

"It could be construed as mysterious," said Etruceana, while cocking her head to the side in consideration of Taylor's comment. "It's a kind of clairvoyant power—some perceptive, penetrating mental ability. But it's more than mental. Much more. These mysterious secrets of nature are only divulged to us through an awakened soul."

"So can you show me, then?" asked Taylor. "I mean, except for the time when I saw all the plants and animals leaning in your direction when I first came into the courtyard, I've never seen it done before. And I'd sure love to."

"Seeing is believing, I guess," said Etruceana. "Sure, I can show you. But, you'll have to remain quiet and still. Your energy is good right now, but I can't have it interfering with the other energies around us."

Etruceana then picked herself up from the stage, offered a hand to Taylor, and hoisted her effortlessly into a standing position. Taylor was amazed at how strong and agile the old woman was. Paying no attention to Taylor's surprise, Etruceana walked down the steps of the stage and made her way through the jungle growing in the large courtyard. As Etruceana led the way, she intoned, like always. A variety of animals and birds came close to where she was walking. It looked to Taylor as if they were coming to say hello, in a sense to feed off of the sounds emanating from Etruceana.

She brought Taylor to a small cavelike room, which extended into the wall of the large courtyard. The cave was barren, completely without vegetation. The walls were dark with dirt and the exposed brown roots of large trees growing overhead. It looked to Taylor as though someone had just dug into the wall of the courtyard and provided this cave to use, specifically for this purpose. Taylor took a seat on a large flat boulder near the entrance of the small cave.

After glancing toward Taylor to make sure she was in fact still and quiet, as requested, Etruceana then turned and faced the back wall of the cave. She stood there for a moment to gather her energy and to survey the other energies around her. Taylor figured that she must have been getting in touch with the vital forces of the cave, communing with the matter and dirt in the cave, contemplating on what they would do together. Taylor thought, to herself, What a conversation that must be!

Etruceana turned quickly around to face Taylor. "I told you that I needed you to be still, didn't I? That includes your thoughts, as well, Taylor."

"Oops! Sorry," said Taylor, feeling surprised and ashamed at the same time.

After turning to face the back wall of the cave, and after taking some more time for contemplation, Etruceana's wonderful voice began its song. But this time, as when working on Taylor's energy, her voice was directed toward the back wall of the cave. Taylor had to lean over to the right slightly, to get a clearer view.

Slowly, the dark wood of the roots began to bleed water. The water came in small drips at first, but gradually it began to flow freely. Soon the roots were solid no more. They were made entirely of water. The wood had been transformed. Energy rising from the roots of the tree's existence had been transformed into the translucent matter and energy of the source of all potentialities in existence, the bud of birth: water.

Gradually, the entire back wall of the cave became a beautiful, glistening crystal fountain. The water from the fountain gathered into a small pool on the floor of the cave. Then, as if someone were opening a curtain on a small stage, the entire cave poured forth with new life. From the fountain, a beautiful damp green moss crawled quickly outward, covering the walls and floor of the cave. From the moss, small green branches and then moist leaves, reached outward toward Etruceana. From the branches and leaves, small buds appeared. And then, slowly the buds, stretching and struggling, opened to expose the soft, colorful petals of a variety of exotic flowers. A flock of butterflies flew into the cave, past Taylor. Most of them found their way to flowers now present. Three of them landed on Etruceana's gray hair.

Taylor looked up in awe at Etruceana's work, and then glanced down at the flat boulder she had been sitting on. It, too, had been transformed into a shining crystal bench. Taylor stood up in complete surprise. She backed up past Etruceana and stood with her back nearly up against the side wall. Etruceana remained still with closed eyes, while Taylor stood gaping at the crystal bench.

Etruceana opened her eyes and noticed the look of complete and total surprise written all over Taylor's face. "Take a drink," she said, while motioning toward the fountain.

Jarred from her trance, Taylor looked at the fountain, knelt down at the pool's edge, and cupped her hands under the flowing water. The water filled her hands and overflowed onto her wrists and forearms.

"To be open to this fountain, Taylor," said Etruceana, before Taylor had a chance to bring her hands to her mouth, "is to be transformed by its life-giving water."

Taylor pulled her cupped hands from the fountain, and drank. And as the water ran down into her belly, it also flowed into her veins and nourished her body.

"Here in Telos," said Etruceana softly, "our world is continually coming into being and fading away. It's a self-organizing cascade of creativity, full of uniting pulses of sentient energy. We Lemurians have learned to tap into the universal life force. If you learn to communicate with this force, then you, too, will be able to defy the fixed natural laws that your world is limited by."

As Taylor continued kneeling by the fountain, she remembered back to all of her science classes in school; those classes where it was taught that the physical, material world was the real world. Where it was believed that if you understood the functioning of the physical world, you could explain everything in the cosmos. But now, the accumulation of her experiences challenged that. Taylor looked back to the fountain, slipped her cupped hands again into the flowing water, and helped herself to another drink.

Chapter 18: The DT Beat

"Are you ready to drum?" asked Pelleur when Taylor appeared early one morning at the rim of the pit, under the hanging roots. She was holding her drum. The air was hot and heavy with smoke. Pelleur was sitting crossed legged at the bottom of the pit and had a constant supply of steam rising off him. His dark skin was shining with sweat and oil.

Taylor nodded excitedly and jumped into the pit where she was promptly launched into the strange and mysterious world of Lemurian drumming. Pelleur taught her a variety of rhythms, which he claimed to be invocations designed specifically to summon the presence of Divine Transcendence.

"Being possessed by the DT beat basically requires two things," said Pelleur, as he stood upright in the pit.

"*DT?*" asked Taylor.

"Divine Transcendence," said Pelleur.

"Oh, right," said Taylor, while wondering if Pelleur had made up that acronym just for her. No one had used initials to represent anything since way back in her public school days. And school seemed so far behind her now.

Pelleur continued, "The first is listening. You must train your ears and your whole self to be still and to listen. You must feel the DT beat vibrating with your whole being. This is the pulse that is vibrating behind all other rhythms. When the DT beat makes itself known... it will speak to you. But you have to be paying attention."

Pelleur paused now, while Taylor tried hard to listen. Keeping her mind off of back home was difficult now that Pelleur had used an acronym. But she was able to focus in hope of hearing a beat in the distance.

"The second thing to remember," said Pelleur, interrupting Taylor's listening, "is to abandon your will. You must submit to the will of Divine Transcendence. You cannot be attached to 'I,' or 'me,' or 'mine.' If you *are* attached to your own personal will, there will be no knowledge of Divine Transcendence. You will be attached to your own beat, your own rhythm, and nothing more."

"I'm not sure I understand," said Taylor, still sitting in the pit, holding her drum, watching Pelleur who was now standing above the pit.

"You've got to lose your mind Taylor—in your drumming, that is. You can't think yourself into better drumming. Your drumming has to go beyond thinking. You can't clog up your mind with the noise of internal thinking. You can't will yourself to be in rhythm with the pulse of Divine Transcendence. You have to permit yourself to be thought by, willed by... Divine Transcendence. To hit the DT beat, one must drum willing nothing, knowing nothing, desiring nothing."

Sometime later, that afternoon, Taylor was in the pit drumming by herself. Pelleur was washing in the creek nearby. After drumming for hours, Taylor was still having difficulty keeping her mind still. Thoughts of home kept creeping in; images of her street, her house, her yard, her school, raced through her mind. Yet, her arms and hands were moving fluently, pounding her drum. Her head was bobbing up and down, her body swaying side to side. A heavy stream of sweat was pouring off her muscular shoulders and arms, dampening the head of her drum. All of sudden, she didn't know how or why it began, but out of nowhere, in the middle of this trance, words emerged. In cadence with the sounds of her drum, she heard herself chant the words to what she could only call a prayer. It started with the words, "God Come Down." One-two-three, hits. "God Come Down." And then she shifted into a new rhythm, extending that... *prayer*.

God – Come Down Come Down – God Come Down

God – Come Down Come Down – God Come Down

God – Come Down Come Down – God Come Down

Over and over again, she pounded out the same beat. Then, while staring off into the bottom of the pit, she remembered the marquis outside the Baptist church back home. She could see the words posted by the pastor: "Don't make me come down there. – God."

She stopped drumming and sat motionless in the pit. How ironic, she thought. Here I am in this mountain trying to make God come down, to possess me. What an act of deviance! Oh, how she loved it. And, oh how she wished the pastor at the church could see her now.

After realizing that something significant had happened to his student, Pelleur interrupted his washing and approached the pit. Taylor asked him all about her experience. "Yep, that's what we're trying to do here," he said. "We *are* calling to Divine Transcendence. And all our drumming is a prayer. But there's one thing you should remember about language. Language can be a major source of a sense of separateness. It can also be a sole expression of individual self-will. Sometimes it is all but impossible to describe the new awareness that comes when words are abandoned. One is put in a place where everything is fresh and wonderful. Words can enhance, yes. But they can also take so much away. You see, words are a part of our rational selves, and to abandon them in our drumming is to give freer reign to our intuitive selves. And this is where we allow ourselves to be possessed by Divine Transcendence. We give Divine Transcendence a chance to do the talking. We create a place where this God that you are talking about, can *really* come down."

"So I wasn't possessed by the DT beat just then?" asked Taylor.

"Not yet," said Pelleur as he turned and went back to the creek to continue his washing.

For days on end, Taylor practiced the various prayer-like rhythms that Pelleur had taught her. It took her much time, but after considerable effort and practice, her hands began to do the job they were presented with. She'd start drumming and quickly find the rhythm. Occasionally, Pelleur would join in. He'd merge with Taylor's beat and attempt to assist her by lengthening it. Taylor would keep the beat up for as long as she could, but eventually, she'd fall off the edge.

When this happened, as it often did, Pelleur stressed that she needed always to remember why they were drumming. "The ultimate purpose of drumming," said Pelleur, one day after Taylor had just stumbled, "is to invoke the presence of Divine Transcendence. The sound of the drum must be the sound of life itself. And the sound of life... is the pulse."

"What do you mean by pulse?" asked Taylor as she wiped the sweat from her brow with the back of her hand. "You mean the pulse of the heart, like when I take my pulse on my wrist or neck?" Taylor placed her fingers on her wrist, taking her radial pulse.

Pelleur put his drum down, as he would often do when teaching Taylor something significant. "There are many different kinds of pulse, Taylor. Your heartbeat is a pulse, the ocean waves, the change of the seasons, the migration of animals; these are all pulses. They are smaller pulses that echo the larger pulse, the *one* pulse. This pulse—the one pulse—is the movement of life, the sound that underlies everything. The cosmos is not silent, Taylor. Not by any means." He stood up and climbed out of the pit, moving through the hanging roots, listening closely to a sound far away. "It's full of living, pulsating rhythms and sounds." He paused for a long moment. "If you listen closely enough, really listen, eventually, you'll hear them."

As he explained this, Taylor noticed that Pelleur's entire body seemed to repeatedly swell and fade. Perhaps, she thought, it was with the rising and setting of the one pulse that he was talking

about. It seemed to her as if Pelleur, himself, were a steadily revolving celestial body, rhythmically traveling his own elliptical orbit.

"There are some who say," continued Pelleur, "that the world, the universe, is sound. Pure sound. A pulsating sound that started long, long ago."

Taylor sat there in the pit thinking, listening, watching Pelleur as he paced about on the ground above the pit. Maybe, she thought, this was what the scientists had been talking about when referring to the Big Bang.

"So our purpose," said Pelleur, "is to be one with the pulse, one with the will and voice of Divine Transcendence." He paused for a moment, then jumped back down into the pit and squatted next to Taylor, getting within inches from her face. "We must summon its groove!"

After these final words from Pelleur, Taylor returned to her drumming. In no time at all, while keeping Pelleur's words in mind, she began knocking out a beat; one of Pelleur's more complicated rhythms. She became caught in a circle of vision that allowed her a view of only her hands, arms, and drum. Lost in a pool of feelings, nothing existed outside of this small, delicate circle. But then, mysteriously, she lost all track of time and place as a rhythm greater than her own washed over her, and when that happened, her drum, arms and hands seemed to escape her. It was then that she could hear the living, pulsating sounds of the vast universe: She could feel the rush of rhythms arising from pulsars and quasars, from supernovas, red giants and white dwarfs, from fleeting and colliding star systems, even from the eruptions of our planet's sun, and the Earth's rotations.

And then her drumming stopped. Taylor's arms, shoulders and hands all went limp. She sat there slouching in Pelleur's pit, fading in and out of awareness, until finally, she was able to sit upright, move her arms, and remain fully present.

"That's what happens when drumming the DT beat," said Pelleur, after Taylor looked directly at him. "It puts you in a trance state which is a form of over stimulation. Sometimes, it takes a while to come out of it." Pelleur looked over at Taylor's drum now resting between her knees. "It gives you a sense of actually losing yourself." He then leaned over, picked it up, and placed it between his legs. Pelleur squeezed the root of lightning between his muscular thighs, rubbed his rough hands over the treated skin of panther, and smiled. "You must remember," he said after turning to drill his eyes into Taylor's, "the surest way to enter the DT beat is through a keen focus of attention. All other thoughts and concerns must be put aside. You must focus on staying in the groove, until pushing through to the point of transformation."

Chapter 19: Light Moves

While squatting on a thin pebble beach at the edge of a small, deep pond that was part of a much larger, multileveled water garden in the vast central atrium, Taylor could see in the distance, through a rich growth of trees and brush, the majestic Temple of Light. Looking at the beam of light still rising out of the temple, it was apparent that it was beginning to dim. In fact, the atrium, the tunnels, and the entire mountain weren't nearly as bright as when she first arrived in Telos, almost two years ago. The time was fast approaching when the Lemurians would need to enter the temple and perform the dance to make all of Telos bright again. This meant that for Taylor, time was running short. If she was going to make it into the temple to join with the Lemurians in their Dance of Divinity, to lead the Sacred Seven, she still had further training to complete, and a difficult test to endure. Yet, in spite of this

growing sense of urgency, thoughts of Pelleur, her drumming, and the hidden pulse of Divine Transcendence consumed her.

The pulse was now an integral part of her being and a fundamental force in her life. She could feel the organic rhythm of the pulse within her body in its many different forms: it was in her heart's contractions, her blood as it coursed through her veins, her lungs as she breathed, her walking, eating, and drinking, even in the cyclical release of an egg from one of her ovaries.

Sitting down on the tiny pebbles of the beach to admire her surroundings, she could now sense the presence of a pulse wherever she looked. *Everything* had rhythm, she thought; the pulse was in all places. It was the power that united all things.

Looking deep into the water of the garden, she watched all the goldfish moving silently under the surface. Each fish had a unique tempo of its own, their tails beating out one measure, fins another. She looked to her right at the cascading water of the small rocky stream emptying into the calm pond and perceived its pace and cadence. She watched a dragonfly hover above the water of the pond and recognized the beat in the rapid fluttering of its translucent wings. And, when she heard a repetitive swooshing sound overhead, she looked up to observe a large heron and its powerful wings pulsing through the calm, quiet air.

All of these early morning activities reminded Taylor of a complicated and intricate dance. And the thought of dance, in turn, made Taylor think of Queen Nyla. At that very moment, the queen appeared, standing right beside her. Without so much as a word, the queen offered Taylor a hand, helped her to her feet, and began walking her over to the open area of the atrium.

"The time has come to teach you our Divine Immanence moves. These moves will make you *very* desirable," said the queen, while raising her eyebrows playfully.

"Desirable to whom? For what?" asked Taylor.

“For the *light*,” The queen smiled. But her smile quickly faded, and then Taylor watched her face, gradually, turn to stone. Taylor knew that this was the dark, ancient face, worn from centuries of waiting. And when the queen got to wearing this hardened look about her, Taylor knew that she was about to hear some news that was going to upset her. “As you can see, our temple’s light is dimming. It must be illuminated. And on the outside, things are looking grim. Time is running short. We will need to dance soon otherwise all of Telos will be in the dark. Otherwise we will have no hope of ever getting back on the outside. In fact, there may even be *no outside* if we wait too long. And if you aren’t ready to enter our temple for the dance, all our efforts will have failed. For there will be no other chance for getting you into the temple. It will simply be too late.”

Taylor wanted to ask, ‘Too late for what?’ or ‘What’s going to happen?’ to challenge the queen to divulge her secrets, about how the world would end. But she still didn’t want to think about it. Why would she want to know how the world was going to be destroyed? She just wanted to get into the temple, do her job, and lead the team of seven. After that, she still had no idea what she could possibly do to save this ridiculous world of hers. So she bit her tongue. “Yeah,” Taylor said while keeping her eyes on the temple, “I figured time was running short. Everybody’s been running around looking a little nervous. They keep looking up, pointing at the temple, talking about the diminishing light. I think I’ve seen a lot more people in the library recently, too. They’re all brushing up on their studies.”

“Well, then let’s get started, shall we?” The queen’s stone cold face melted into a warm, sweet smile. She took a few graceful strides into the center of the space. "The first move we need to teach you is called Impulse. In this movement you'll express whatever your body is feeling in the moment. It's a type of dance that is potentially very freeing and wild. When you do this dance, breathe

naturally, and allow the feelings of your body to emerge in any kind of spontaneous, impulsive motion."

The queen demonstrated briefly. When she started, she looked deliriously relaxed, yet vibrant. She performed a quirky combination of movements. As she gained momentum her movements seemed to flow from limb to limb, travel up her flexible spine and then downward like the rhythm of unforced breathing. She performed dreamy launches, gentle rebounding, buoyant whipping, springing, dissolving, and drifting. She looked as though she were a delicate handkerchief being swept along on warm, mixed breezes.

Taylor couldn't imagine how the queen could possibly dance like that. Taylor wondered, how could she be all dreamy and buoyant after telling her all that she just did? The end is near and she's springing and bounding? *That's* the way she's feeling?

"Okay, now you try it," said the queen.

Taylor was breathing hard and beads of sweat were beginning to appear on her brow. Is that how the queen wanted her to dance? Is that what she should feel, too? Not her. Taylor took off jolting, jerking, stomping, and stamping. Her arms began punching, jabbing, poking, and chopping. Her entire body flopped on the ground, flung against trees, crashed and crunched into rocks. Whack, bang, slap, smack, smash! Then Taylor started running. She ran in circles, faster and faster and faster. She started pulling at her hair, almost screaming, when all of a sudden, a vision of Kyle, with his arms wrapped gently around her, flashed into her mind. With the image of Kyle firmly etched in her mind, she started slowing down, then began spinning, and while rotating ever so slowly, hugged herself ever so gently, and wound her way down onto the dirt, then curled up into a ball and rocked herself asleep.

When Taylor awoke, she opened her eyes and noticed Queen Nyla sitting cross-legged in front of her.

“Looks like you have the ability to dance your way through a plethora of emotions.” The queen then cocked her head slightly to the side. “And who’s the handsome young man?”

Taylor sat up, taking her time to answer, obviously accustomed to the queen’s ability to read her mind. How could she describe Kyle? To her, he was so much more than a friend. He provided great comfort, made her feel like she belonged, made her feel safe. But who knows if she would ever see him again. “A friend from back home,” said Taylor while brushing her hair out of her eyes. “So, what’s the next movement?”

The queen nodded, seemingly sensing Taylor’s reluctance to talk further about Kyle. “We call the next one, Whirl.”

“Whirl?”

“Yes, Whirl,” said the queen.

"Like spinning? I used to do a lot of spinning when I was little. I loved feeling all dizzy afterward."

"We'll be spinning, just not as fast as you used to, I'd guess," said the queen with an air of caution. "You'll need to avoid becoming dizzy. We need to make certain that you remain in control while whirling for long periods of time. You *cannot* allow yourself to become disoriented or unbalanced. This is something that simply must not happen in our temple."

Taylor nodded her head assuring the queen that she understood.

"When you whirl," Queen Nyla went on, "you'll need to hold out your left hand, with the palm facing upward. You'll lead with your thumb, as you turn counterclockwise. Your right arm should be uplifted, and it should follow behind. It will look like it's leaving a trail behind your body. Of course, the look and feeling of this dance is like that of a spiral. When you have finished, you should bring the palms of your hands together in front of your chest. And you should also be able to stand still on legs

that are spread shoulder width apart. This movement is especially effective in stirring your subtle energies, assisting you with realizing Divine Immanence."

"Sounds like the dance the Whirling Dervishes created." Taylor folded her arms over her chest, obviously proud of her newly acquired knowledge.

"Yes, very similar." The queen smiled. "Sounds like all your studying has been paying off. You've read of the Whirling Dervish?"

"That I have," said Taylor. "They're an ascetic Muslim group, known for their whirling dances."

"Yes, indeed," said the queen. To demonstrate, the queen gave the movement a whirl. And as she danced, spinning round and round, her body began to reveal a touch of the colored lights that Taylor had seen when she first happened upon her in this circular area of the atrium. "Hidden behind all this continual movement, Taylor," explained the queen while still spinning, "is the desire of the universe. And this desire is the fundamental motivation for all movement in the universe. We dance for the experience of a love so intense, that it gives us the power to transform. We dance to dissolve the veil of separation and to move with the universe." The queen then stopped abruptly to stare directly into Taylor's eyes. Her muscular legs were spread, and her glistening, sweaty arms were folded over her chest. And gradually, the subtle, colorful light that radiated from her beautiful body began to fade.

"Well, *I* desire to whirl now," said Taylor. "May I?"

"But, of course," said the queen, while clearing out of the way to give Taylor room.

Taylor walked to the center of the space, paused for a moment to place her arms and hands into the positions that Queen Nyla had explained, and then, with a deep breath, began to spin. Curling and turning, twisting and twirling, she was immediately taken away to a place deep within herself.

Within no time at all, she closed her eyes and soon gave witness to panoramic visions that reeled around her. All of nature moved before her in rhythmic patterns and waves. Everything on Earth—water in rivers and oceans, fire, electric storms, earthquakes, tornadoes, and volcanic eruptions—was oscillating, orbiting and unfurling, dancing for joy, expression, and survival. In her vision, she was lifted off the planet and given a view of Earth moving rapidly away from her. She watched the evolution of the entire planet, including its origin as part of the solar system, early geophysical processes, the primeval ocean, and the origin of life. She traveled further into deep space to observe everything in the cosmos moving and unfolding in this same intricate design: the Big Bang, the creation of matter, space and time, the birth and expansion of galaxies, explosions of novas and supernovas, and the contraction of suns culminating in black holes.

In a flash, she was zipped back to Earth where she would no longer watch *things*, but rather, participate in *events*. She whirled her way through the water and minerals in the root system of a tree, then up its trunk through the sap circulating in the cambium, all the way into the veins and venules of a lofty leaf. She was plopped inside of a germinating seed and coiled her way around the birth of a seedling. She curled down a stamen of a pollinating flower. She danced through the temporary openings of cell walls as they divided during the growth of a vegetable.

And, finally, she was plunged into the very substance of matter itself. While there, she joined up with a few molecules and bounced, round and round, with them for a bit. After breaking apart, she mixed it up with a few protons, neutrons, and electrons.

For Taylor, at that moment, all was a dance. A dance was all. And *all* of her partners danced the same delicate, intelligent design.

Eventually, Taylor's whirling slowed and then stopped altogether. Like the queen had done before her, she stood with her hands held at her chest and her legs spread wide. "Wow," she said, between the rise and fall of her heaving chest. "That was awesome!"

Queen Nyla circled her student, checking her form. And then, as if knowing exactly where her student had ventured during the dance, the queen began to explain: "You have to remember, Taylor, that the galaxies were created from a spiraling motion. The opposing centripetal and centrifugal forces of gravity and radiation churns subtle energy and light and vital force. And, whenever dancers gyrate in this way, they become resonant with the movements of galaxies. The whirling that you just completed intensifies the interior experience, so that the light and energy of Divine Immanence will stream outward and upward from our bodies."

"Was my light shining?" asked the eager student.

"Not yet," answered the queen with a smile. "But be patient, Taylor. It will come."

Taylor was noticeably disappointed, but, without giving Taylor a chance to feel sorry for herself, the queen picked up a twig and proceeded to draw a winding, spiraling labyrinth in the dirt. "The last thing that we need to do, is to provide you with the experience of spinning in a specific pattern. This will give your whirling a little more structure. And this structure will help your light to shine, and help with the summoning of Divine Transcendence, as well."

"Good!" said Taylor. "I can use all the help I can get."

"What we'll do is expose you to a simplified version of what you will find in our temple. You'll be dancing the path of life. It's a labyrinthine dance."

"It's a maze... zing!" said Taylor, playfully, while watching the queen carve out the pattern.

Queen Nyla laughed. "Actually, it's much more than a maze. It's a wonderful transformational tool. You see, dancing in this type of pattern enacts the involitional descent of Divine Transcendence

and the evolutionary emergence of Divine Immanence. Now, when you dance on this path, you'll proceed through a series of curves, turns, and reverse patterns. Basically, you'll be going through both clockwise and counterclockwise motions. Just allow your intuitions to guide you as to whether to spin one way or the other. Eventually, you'll arrive at the center of the labyrinth, the cosmic axis."

"Will this do anything for me today?" asked the eager Taylor.

"Maybe. Sometimes moving through a labyrinth can change your ordinary way of being. Think of yourself as moving so that your light shines with such an intensity, as to peak the desires of Divine Transcendence. This is what we do in the temple, of course. For now, with your practice here, you can imagine that experience."

Taylor stood at the entrance of the labyrinth and examined it carefully. It looked easy enough, she thought, yet the path *was* rather thin, and it *did* wind around quite a bit, so it would probably be challenging just to stay within the lines while keeping balanced from start to finish. Taylor entered cautiously and starting spinning, slowly traversing her way. As she whirled, she imagined what it would be like in the elusive temple, hoping that perhaps she might get a sampling of the feelings she would be experiencing when she did the real thing. Such was not the case, however. As the queen had explained, for now this was nothing more than the organized practice of an intricate dance move. And for Taylor, it was a bit of a disappointment. When she had completed the task successfully, the queen seemed to sense Taylor's thwarted hopes, yet said nothing to comfort her.

Chapter 20: The Divine Design

Sitting alone in Monka's pod at the kitchen table, halfheartedly eating the breakfast of fresh fruit and cereal that she had prepared for herself, Taylor was consumed with her studies. On the table were three piles of books. In one stack were Galileo's *Dialogue Concerning Two Chief World Systems*, Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, and Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. In another heap were Plato's *Republic*, and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. And in the third mound were *The Bible*, the *Koran*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Enuma Elish*, and *Baal*. This morning she was trying to get through Aristotle's *Physics*.

It had been nearly two years since Taylor had arrived in Telos, and she was now eighteen. Her body was toned, muscular, supple, and sleek. She was light on her feet and had a long, graceful stride. Her thick, brown hair draped down to the middle of her back. Her arched eyebrows framed a pair of deep-set, wild-brown eyes. And, her full, quick-to-part lips were capable of revealing a warm smile. But today, she wasn't smiling at all. Today she was frowning. Because today she was scheduled to take her test in the library with the queen and five others, and the Lemurian's most sacred text, the Divine Design.

When she first arrived in Telos her single solitary desire was to get into the temple, to experience once again, the feelings of that one fleeting moment so long ago. Much of her two years was spent wondering what it must be like inside, and now, with her training coming to an urgent end, all she needed to do was to pass her test and she would finally be allowed inside. Two years ago, this was her only goal, but now, she knew only too well that when she entered the temple she was also going to be sent on a trip back in time for the specific purpose of saving the world. This was the purpose to which she had been assigned. Assigned. All because of her *gift*: the astral projected,

remote-viewing dream. But what was truly worrying her, causing her to frown was the question concerning her return home. This was something she hadn't considered until now, for she was *way* too afraid of the answer. Actually, she was scared that she wasn't ever going to make it back home. And absolutely horrified that she might never see Kyle again. After all, this was supposed to be her final purpose, wasn't it?

Finishing only a fraction of her cereal, Taylor slam shut Aristotle's *Physics*, left the cereal bowl and book on the table, popped out of the pod, and began making her way through the tunnel to the library. When she reached the cavern where the administrative buildings towered, she noticed the others walking through the space, looking at her with a strange look in their eyes. She couldn't tell if they were attempting to wish her well for the test, or if they were only just now beginning to expose their yearning to be one of the Sacred Seven.

When Taylor pushed open the heavy doors of the library, she stood in front of a large round table. Queen Nyla was seated at the far end and another five accompanied her. And the ancient Divine Design was resting in the center of the table, as if staring Taylor down, daring her to open it.

The queen motioned for her to have a seat. Taylor obeyed.

"Taylor," said the queen, "I'd like you to meet Astar, Yogunda, Krona, Starla, and Hatonn. They will be joining us for your test today."

Astar must have been the tallest Lemurian male that Taylor had ever seen. His head poked out over the top of the high backed chair he sat on. He must have been over seven feet tall, yet he was a gentle looking man with a pleasant smile. Yogunda was an athletic, mature female. Her shoulders and arms were particularly muscular. Taylor imagined that she probably spent a lot of her time swinging from trees. Krona was a much older man with long gray hair. He also had a long dark mustache. Taylor thought this was unusual because she couldn't remember ever seeing any males in Telos with

facial hair. Starla was very young. Taylor figured that she was a teenager, a little younger than her. And lastly, Hatonn was a middle-aged male who wore a sour scowl on his face. Like Yogunda, he too had very muscular shoulders and arms. He was the only one at the table who made Taylor nervous.

After Taylor's survey of the guests, Queen Nyla continued. "Since you have accepted your mission, Taylor, you have been doing a lot of studying, learning much about our ways, and the ways of the world. You have read the words of many great thinkers. And you have had time to think about the words you've read." The queen paused for a moment and looked around the table at the others present. "We were wondering... have you discovered *that for sake of which* you are here? Do you know... *the word*?"

Taylor stared at the book for a long time. "Not a clue," she said, frowning. She was embarrassed. She could've at least tried something. But why bother? Nothing had worked before. Every time she went into the library she had tried a plethora of words. She wasn't going to just pull some random magical word out of thin air, know what it means and watch the book open. She had no idea why she was there. She was of no use to anybody.

"Well," said Hatonn, "which philosopher you think was the most important to the forming of the Western worldview?"

Taylor didn't take long to answer. "Aristotle." She had only just been reading his work, so why not? What did she have to lose?

The queen paused and looked around at the others at the table and nodded. "Why Aristotle?" challenged Starla, the youngest of the group.

Taylor looked directly at Starla. "Because he's the one who mapped out the major fields of inquiry, like logic, physics, political science, economics, psychology, metaphysics, meteorology, rhetoric and ethics. He also tutored Alexander. He wrote *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and

Politics, the entire *Organon*, and even *Poetics*. And his ideas about an Unmoved Mover had a huge effect on the church's perception of God."

"Tell us about his *Physics*," said Yogunda.

Terrific, Taylor thought. She had only just been reading it for the first time and wasn't sure how well she knew it. "The thing I got out of *Physics* was that Aristotle thought a lot about change. He believed that change was the most striking aspect of nature. He knew that nature changes, and objects come into this world. They come into being. He wanted to know all about this being, or coming into existence. And what he decided was that a thing is whatever it is by virtue of its form. This form is not purely material, but it is not some other-worldly entity, or Platonic Form, existing outside of space and time, either. He didn't agree with Plato's Idealism. To Aristotle this form must be this-worldly." Taylor now paused and gazed around the table to survey the other members of the group. Everyone looked back at her with blank eyes, so she continued. "So, for Aristotle, form is that which causes something to be the thing it is. And, this particular line of questioning led him to examine the notion of cause."

"That's a great introduction," said Krona. The old man's voice was quick and sharp, deep and crackly. "Now, do you remember his four causes of change?"

"Material, efficient, formal, and final." Taylor rattled them off one after the other. She sat up straighter in her chair, proud of her of herself for remembering the names.

"Can you explain them?" said Starla. To Taylor it seemed as though the little one was almost taunting her, daring her to fail.

She sank into her chair. Now things were getting tough. How was she supposed to remember everything? "First, is the material cause. For the material cause, a thing comes into existence because of its parts. It's that out of which a thing comes to be. It's like when we see a statue and realize that

it's there because of the marble. The parts cause the whole. Next, is the efficient cause, or the primary source of change. This is about the agent that initiates the change. There are all sorts of agents, nonliving or living that can cause a thing to change or move or rest. If we think of the statue, and how it comes into existence, the efficient cause is the man, the hammer, and the chisel."

Taylor looked around the table again and noticed everybody still looking patiently at her. They seemed satisfied with the explanation so far, so she went on. "Then, there's the formal cause, which tells us that a thing comes into existence because of its form, essence, or archetype. Be it a human, horse, or... *whatever*, the reason the statue comes into existence is because of the form the sculpture had in mind before beginning."

Then Taylor hesitated. Queen Nyla sat still, but the others all stirred in their seats waiting for Taylor to continue. Taylor took another deep breath and looked directly at the queen. "And the last cause is... the final cause?" Taylor paused for a moment, thinking. "This is the one where... he said it was...." She lifted her eyes off the table, and looked wide-eyed across the table at the queen. "...*that for the sake of which* a thing is done." Wait a minute! Taylor thought. Is this? "It is!" she answered aloud. "This is the purpose that something is supposed to serve. It's the aim, or the ultimate reason for it all. The final purpose. It's... the end."

Astar cleared his throat and sat up even straighter. "And do you know *the word* used for this... end?"

Realizing the significance of what she was about to say, she whispered it. "*Telos.*"

At that moment, the Divine Design's hinges cracked and spewed rust dust into the air. The cover started to open, and the hinges creaked. Then the book started sucking in the air all around

it, as if taking in a long, deep breath. When the enormous cover crashed on the table, a loud *boooong* sound burst out of the pages. It reminded Taylor of the big bang. *The Big Bang*. But it sounded more like a giant bell being rung.

The *ooooooooong* sound kept getting louder and louder, until it was so loud that it no longer seemed to be coming from the book alone, but rather from *everywhere* in the library.

Taylor looked down and noticed a strange script being written on the page. She looked up and saw the others staring, not at the book, but at her. When she looked at the book again, the script had filled up the entire page, and was now turning. This was the Divine Design's voice, its story coming to life. And, as the voice sang on, the markings on the page were so written. Taylor kept studying the strange symbols filling up the page. She couldn't decipher any words, but the script and sounds were magnificent, so she scanned on.

As page after page of the most luscious sounds poured out of the book and filled up the room, Taylor noticed a few familiar tones. Thinking that she heard something emerge from the sounds that Etruceana had taught her, her own voice joined in. When it did, it took her by surprise, not only because she didn't expect anything like that to come from her, but also because she could've sworn she heard the Divine Design's voice lower, as if accommodating her own.

Then the book's voice slowly started sounding more human, and Taylor could see that the symbols were clearly becoming more human-like. First, came the petroglyphs and pictographs, and then Sumerian and Elamite cuneiform script, then Egyptian hieroglyphics, Akkadian cuneiform, and Indus script. The pages kept filling up, then turning, one after the other. Taylor scanned Chinese Oracle Bone script, then Arabic and Hebrew, and then the Phoenician alphabet and Mesoamerican glyphs. Finally, a page lifted, but didn't exactly turn. It stood straight up, right out of the spine, swaying for a moment before falling to complete the turn.

The page remained quiet and blank for an unusually long time. For the first time in a long time, Taylor looked up at the others. They were still all staring at her. When she looked down, words in English were being written on the page. She started scanning, and the book read the words.

“Now, the causes being four, it is the business of the physicist to know about them all, and if he refers his problems back to all of them, he will assign the 'why' in the way proper to his science—the matter, the form, the mover...”

“That for the sake of which,” interrupted Taylor. She remembered the words. They were Aristotle’s. From his book, *Physics*.

The Divine Design paused, as if waiting for Taylor to continue. When she said nothing more, the book started again; writing, reading, speaking the words:

*There will come a woman,
For whom the doors will open.
From the outside,
She will hear the sounds.
From the outside,
She will see the light.
They will lure her,
And she will come to Telos,
To lead the Sacred Seven.*

Taylor said nothing. She was sure that the book was now talking to her. Staring down at the page, she waited for the Divine Design to continue.

But it was Queen Nyla who spoke. “*Telos* is also the word we Lemurians use for the name of our city. As you can probably tell, we’re especially fond of Aristotle’s final cause. For we have always started whatever we did with *the end* in mind.”

“For the Greeks,” said Hatonn with a big smile on his face, “*telos* meant ‘end.’ And from *telos*, comes the word *teleology*, which means the explanation of phenomena by the purpose they serve. Teleology is the theory and study of purpose in nature, whereby, phenomena seem to be best explained not by means of prior causes, but by *ends* or aims, intentions or purposes.”

The Divine Design’s voice filled the entire library:

So, what is your intention, Taylor?

Where shall we be sending you?

For we must know where to aim.

Taylor was more than a little shocked. She didn’t quite know how to respond to a book. She never really thought that *anyone* would ever ask *her* what she wanted to do to change the world. All throughout her stay in Telos, she had been hoping that somebody would’ve told her where to go, and what to do. When Taylor failed to respond the Divine Design continued:

What you must understand, Taylor...

Is that words create worlds.

*Words go into all the stories that are told.
And by the telling, your world is formed.
There is a design to your world,
Created not by someone else,
But by you.
And this design will be divine,
As long as the stories that form it,
Are forever changing.
The stories of your time have been static for too long.
And now you must puncture the fabric of your narrative,
To stitch a new story, thread a new theme, weave a new end.
What words do you wish to add,
To the telling of your tale,
In the forming of your world?*

Taylor looked up past Queen Nyla at all the bookshelves behind her. After almost two years of studying, reading and listening to all the words written in all those texts and tomes resting on the shelves, she still had no idea where to go.

Taylor...

The book was speaking again.

The Divine Design does not come from someone above.

No one is coming to save you.

There is no one to whom you will return.

Only you and your intelligence can make the design divine.

For you are both Creator and creature.

What words do you wish to add,

To the telling of your tale,

In the forming of your world?

Then the words hit her. *Under God. In God We Trust. And, Don't make me come down there.* —*God.* Oh, those words. Some of them said over and over and over again, year after year, day after day. She knew where to go, all right. But would they let her do what she really wanted to do? “I’d go to the Ancient Near East during the time of the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Canaanites.”

“What would you do once you arrived?” asked Astar.

“I’d go to the land of Canaan before the Hebrews and the followers of the god of Abraham get to it to destroy all their temples.”

“Why?” Queen Nyla had asked the ultimate question. It was the *telos* question.

Taylor took a while to formulate her answer. “For the sake of saving the world! That’s why I’m here, right? Because... because of the Bible. Because I think it’s the story most responsible for forming the Western world’s view about where we come from, how this all got started, what it means to be human, how to interact with the natural world, and how it’ll all end. Have you ever read Revelations? The story ends with the destruction of the world! You know what? I’d even go so far as to say that we ought to get rid of the Bible,

the Talmud *and* the Koran! They became scripture, didn't they? *Those* stories haven't changed."

Everyone at the table was silent. They were looking at Taylor with smiles on their faces.

Taylor could've sworn they were laughing at her, so she decided to back herself up with a few more pertinent details. "Do you have any idea how much trouble the Bible's *promised lands* have seen? After the Canaanites are gone, the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Hebrew tribes, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans all go to war there to spill countless gallons of blood, and kill hundreds of thousands of people. Then the Muslims kick out all the Christians, and then the Crusades begin, because 'God wills it!' And then the Egyptians go back, and then the Ottoman empire and Suleyman the Magnificent take control, and then of course the British get involved, and then there was—*what?*—fifty-plus years of Arab-Israeli Wars, the PLO, and all those terrorist bombings? The Christians, Muslim and Jews *still* haven't stopped fighting. We need to think about this? You've got to be kidding me! We've got to do something." Taylor looked around the table at the others who remained silent but smiling.

"I like her spunk," said Astar finally.

"Yeah," said Hatonn grinning broadly. "She's got issues."

"I'll say!" Krona was nodding his head vigorously. His long grey hair was swaying back and forth.

"I think she's got potential." Yogunda rested the elbows of her muscular arms on the table. "I believe there's enough of an emotional charge in her to help pull us where we need to go."

Starla huffed and said, "She'll do." Then she smiled.

Queen Nyla sat back in her chair, stared hard and long at Taylor and said nothing. To Taylor, her face looked as hard and as cold as stone. It was showing all the long years, decades, centuries and even millennia of living here in Telos. Taylor stared back, hoping that the queen hadn't just figured out that while the others were giving their opinions of her performance, the entire time she had been thinking about Kyle. Thinking about how she'd really rather just be sent back home to be with him. She still didn't like thinking that this journey really all about *her* end. Her Telos.

Remaining silent, the queen rose from her chair and walked around the table to stand to the side of Taylor's chair. Taylor looked up at her and searched for even the slightest hint of emotion or thought. The queen gave no sign of knowing anything about what Taylor had been thinking, or of being happy and excited, like the others. When she spoke, the queen addressed the entire group. "The dance will be held tomorrow. Spread the word that we are all to concentrate on the land of Canaan, somewhere in the neighborhood of 2000 B.C.E." Queen Nyla then looked directly at Taylor. Her face was stone. "Congratulations. I'll look forward to dancing with you in the temple." The queen then abruptly turned, walked to the doors and exited the library.