

**Chapter 5: Telos**

Early the next morning, Taylor asked Monka to show her Telos. When Monka opened the oval door of her pod, leading out into the mountain, she took a deep breath and walked through. Monka followed.

Taylor stood in a long tunnel. It was about twelve feet tall and twelve feet wide, with soft dirt and green grass underfoot. Vines, branches, and an occasional white root growing overhead shaded the tunnel from the golden light pouring down the walls and ceiling. This was the passageway that connected all the living pods.

As the pair began walking on the tunneled path, they passed a few wooden, oval doors. A small covey of birds flew past Taylor's right ear, just over her shoulder. They startled her for a moment, but she kept walking, wondering where they were headed. An occasional squirrel could also be found directly overhead, hidden amongst the growth, chewing on a seed.

After walking for a while, the winding, tunneled path began to expand and grow larger. Eventually, they reached a large cavern where a variety of buildings had been carved into the back wall. To Taylor, it looked somewhat like an earthy strip mall. The place was packed with Lemurians. And everyone was busy, talking, walking here and there, taking care business, it seemed. Some were carrying packages that looked a little like briefcases; others toted small bundles of papers; and still others lugged around huge, ancient looking books.

Monka stepped in front of Taylor and began pointing out the various buildings. "Here we have our administration and government facilities. There is a courthouse where we promote what we believe is an enlightened judicial system, a hall of records, art and entertainment facilities, a library, and even a hotel for visiting foreign emissaries. We also have a communications unit and a spaceport.

The spaceport was designed long ago for those who still require a device to travel through the cosmos."

Taylor noticed what reminded her of a multileveled parking garage in the far, back corner of the cavern. At the moment, the garage was empty. "You mean to tell me you have people from other planets visiting here?"

"From time to time," said Monka, flippantly.

Taylor continued staring at the spaceport while Monka advanced through the cavern. Taylor was astonished. Never would she have imagined. When she caught up to Monka at the far wall of the cavern where the spaceport was located, Monka led her through another tunnel. They walked silently for a time as the tunnel twisted left and right, then up and down. As they walked, Taylor became aware of how quiet it was. "So, how have you managed to live in this peaceful mountain all this time?"

"We've always lived where nature gave us an opportunity to do so," said Monka while picking up the pace. "We practice the art of living sustainably. In Telos we've created an ecosystem that interfaces with the animals, plants, and landforms of the area. Telos is really a symbiotic system that has taken on a life of its own."

"But where do you get enough food to feed everybody?" asked Taylor. "Your garden at home didn't seem to have *everything* growing in it that we ate. Do you have markets where you go to buy your food?"

Monka laughed. "No silly. We don't have markets. Here we grow and raise our own food."

"Everybody grows all their own food?" asked Taylor.

"Yes," said Monka. "We do it here right here."

The tunnel opened up into a large, brightly lit room. Unlike the cavern that they had just traveled through, this room had a large domed ceiling. Taylor and Monka now stood in front of the Lemurians' gardens. A number of various-aged Lemurians were tending to the plants growing in small ponds scattered throughout the room.

"These are our hydroponic gardens," Monka explained. "Our communal gardens. All the plants growing here contribute to feeding all of us living within the mountain. And they are free to all. We don't store our foods under lock and key and make people pay for them like you once did in your world. And we *certainly* don't have our food constructed by little robots. Here, everybody contributes to the upkeep of our hydroponic gardens."

"But don't you have some people who choose not to work or help out?" Taylor asked. "You know, people who are lazy and live off of others."

"Actually, no. You see, first of all, we're not all that concerned with how much one can produce here under our mountain. We don't measure worker productivity, or gross national product. We're interested in happiness, not production. So, there's less of an emphasis on how much work someone does. We know the gardens are vital for our survival; and because everyone living here knows this, each of us contributes what we can. And if someone doesn't contribute here, he or she contributes to our well-being and happiness in some other way."

"Hmm," mumbled Taylor. She turned away from Monka and watched the Lemurians climbing in and out of various ponds, walking around on the surface, kneeling down, pulling and tugging at the plants. They seemed to be massaging them, comforting them, making them feel cared for and at home. "Why do you garden this way, with plants growing in water rather than soil?"

"Hydroponics has several advantages over soil gardening. The growth rate on these plants is thirty to fifty percent faster than a soil plant grown under the same conditions. The yield of the plant—that's how much fruit or vegetables are acquired—is also much higher."

"Why?"

"Well, the extra oxygen in the water helps to stimulate root growth. Plants with ample oxygen in the root system are able to absorb nutrients faster. The nutrients in a hydroponic system are mixed in the water and are thereby directly accessible for the root system. The plant doesn't have to go searching around in the soil for the nutrients that it needs. And the nutrients are supplied several times a day. So, the hydroponic plant requires very little energy to find and break down food. Because of this, the plant uses the saved energy to grow faster and to produce more fruit or vegetables."

"Boy, you sure do know your plants."

Monka nodded. "But remember, we *do* grow much of our food in our homes." Monka then turned to lead Taylor out of the hydroponic garden through another tunnel. This one was tall and wide.

"Hey, what about water?" Taylor said while walking alongside Monka as they made their way through the large tunnel. "How, and where, do you get your water?"

"We catch rain and snow melt. We live on a snowcapped mountain. And we've built vessels to catch the water. We would *never* think of living somewhere that didn't provide us with our energy needs. Just as in your world it is thought to be ridiculous to build a house without a roof, in our world it's also just as absurd to build a house—any habitat—without the capacity to generate its *own* energy needs."

Taylor had been unaware of it, but the winding path they were walking on was actually leading them to a lower portion of the mountain.

"Sounds like you Lemurians have been doing a lot of thinking. How did you learn all of this? Did people compete with one another to produce better and better products and systems?"

"Actually, no. In our community we're not compulsively attached to competition. We play games—or sports, as you call them—and all of that, but we're not really too concerned with the outcome. We're more interested in having fun. We think of ourselves, our society, as a cooperative. We work with each other, sharing information, helping. We don't have people keeping secrets because he or she wants to create the better product. In some ways, our lives are competitive, but underneath the competitiveness, there is a more cohesive or cooperative-like quality going on. And we are all very aware of it. When you begin to see that all things are connected, you will understand this more."

"Maybe I will," admitted Taylor.

Finally, Monka led Taylor around a sharp turn in the tunnel. It was then that Taylor began to hear the heavy beat of drums, and singing voices. And it immediately made Taylor quicken her pace. Eventually, the tunnel opened up to the large central atrium that Taylor had stumbled into when first arriving in the mountain. But now she was on the main floor and it felt like she was in the middle of a giant jungle. Never would she have imagined a subterranean habitat to be so alive, so teeming with life. Yet, through and over all the trees, Taylor could see it standing tall and glowing: the tower. The beam of light was still shooting out of its top. And the golden waterfall of light was still cascading down the walls of the dome. She realized then, for the first time, that aside from the windows that exposed the sun in Monka's home, this tower was the only source of light in the entire city. Its cascading, golden light reached everywhere under the mountain.

As she walked on a thin path in front of Monka, listening to the pulsing of the drums and the sweet melody of voices she passed many Lemurians. Some were walking on various cross paths,

absorbed in the affairs of their day. Others were sitting on benches off to the side of a path, surrounded by green leafy plants, talking, laughing, relaxing. It even appeared as if some of them were actually having conversations, *communicating*, with the plants and animals living there. Most paid no special attention to Taylor, but some did nod hello, occasionally acknowledging her presence. They didn't seem at all surprised that she was there in their midst. Like Monka, all of the Lemurians were wearing robes, even the men. And it was difficult for Taylor to determine the men from the women. Except for their slightly wider shoulders and more robust bodies, the clean-shaven men looked very much like the women. Everyone, however, was not overly concerned with all the beautiful sounds that Taylor was hearing.

Eventually, Taylor came to a large clearing. There in the open space was a crowd of Lemurians; there must have been at least a hundred or more. A large circle of drummers and singers surrounded the group. Enclosed within this outermost circle, others were dancing in a series of concentric circles, each moving in opposition to the other. Moving in rhythm with the beat of the drummers, the dancers appeared to be circling around *something* in the center. As Taylor took a position just outside of the outer circle, the beat of the drums quickened, the sounds of the voices heightened, and the dancers moved faster and faster in their circles. Taylor stood behind the drummers and singers with eyes wide open, breathless. The hair on the back of her neck stood on end. Her beating heart felt like it was going to pound right out of her chest. Goosebumps ran up and down the length of her arms. And the sounds pulled at something deep within, urging her to move.

But then, everything came to an abrupt stop: the drums, the voices, and the dancers. In unison the circles of dancers turned and faced the center, then dropped to one knee, and bowed their heads. Revealed in the center was a woman whose entire body was enclosed within a great sphere of light. The sphere itself looked like it was made of large, shimmering strings of layered, yellow light. Inside

of the sphere's walls, a colorful, fluid rainbow of light swirled around the woman. And in the very center of this cocoon-like sphere, emanating from a point inside of the woman, directly above her navel was a bright, white, star of light. The star's many arms radiated outward from the woman, and her cocoon, reaching every single dancer in the circle.

At that moment, while Taylor stood motionless at the edge of the circle, captivated by the light, the woman turned, and looked directly at her. "Hello, Taylor," she said, with the calmest of voices. And then, while stretching her arms out far and wide, within her bright, sphere of light, she added, "Welcome to Telos."

Taylor stood motionless, saying nothing.

At once, the woman began making her way through the crowd of dancers. The dancers began standing and turning to face Taylor. And, as the woman approached Taylor, the light surrounding her body and the great, white star of light coming from her body's core began to dim. Taylor noticed that the woman moved through the crowd of dancers with the most delicate grace and poise. Each flowing movement of her body, along with the composure in which she held herself, actually appeared to be a part of her own radiant dance. Eventually, by the time the woman stood directly in front of Taylor, her light had dimmed completely. "My name is Nyla, Queen of the Dance," she said, offering her hand.

Taylor looked down at the queen's hand and slowly reached out and took it. She was speechless. All she could do was to stare at the queen. Even with her light now gone, the queen was still an entrancing presence. She was a tall, elegant lady with a long neck framed by long, black hair, a most distinctive nose and eyebrows, catlike brown eyes, full lips, and the most exquisite, velvety, chocolate skin imaginable. She was wearing a flowing, milky white, sleeveless robe with a center split exposing a set of muscular arms and shapely legs. The contrasting colors of the robe against her dark

skin made her look all the more beautiful. Around her sweaty neck she wore an interesting necklace inlaid with a variety of precious stones and pendants.

"Thank you for taking good care of her, Monka," said the queen, releasing Taylor's hand.

"And from the looks of our young guest here, it appears that you've done a wonderful job of it, too."

"Quite my pleasure, Queen Nyla. Glad to be of service," said Monka while bowing gracefully.

"And I would also like to thank you, Zanadar," said the queen, "for bringing Taylor here to us." Taylor was unaware of it, but Zanadar had only just appeared. Standing directly behind her and Monka, quietly watching all that was taking place, the great Pleiadian had arrived specifically for this occasion.

Seeing Zanadar for the first time since he left her all alone on the mountain, Taylor abruptly ran to him, threw her arms around him, and buried her face in the long, gray beard that was covering his big belly.

"No need for thanks, my lady," said Zanadar as he wrapped his large arms around Taylor.

"The pleasure was all mine."

Loosening her grip around Zanadar's belly, Taylor looked up at his smiling face, but then gazed behind him at the tall glowing tower. Captivated by the sight, Taylor moved around Zanadar, to get a better look. She saw then, for the first time, the great wooden doors of the tower. They weren't glowing, but a strange symbol etched in the wood, most certainly was.

"I saw that in my dream," she said finally, turning back to the queen. "That's where the blast of light came from after the doors of the mountain opened, isn't it?"

Smiling approvingly at Taylor's exuberance, Queen Nyla walked and stood next to Taylor.

"We call it our Temple of Light."

"Why's it shaped like a cone?" Taylor couldn't take her eyes off of it.



"It's shaped that way," said the queen, "because it assists us in the expansion and evolution of consciousness."

"Hmm," said Taylor while frowning. "What does *that* mean?"

"The temple provides us with an environment that allows us to discover our deeper nature."

"What do you do in there?" Taylor continued staring at the temple. "How many people can you get in there? It's huge!"

"They have these really great parties!" interrupted Zanadar. "Thousands of Lemurians fit inside."

The queen looked at Zanadar with a tinge of disapproval. "Actually, we do more than *party*, Taylor. In our temple, we cultivate the expression of Divine Immanence.

"The light within," said Zanadar with a grin.

"*The light within?*" said Taylor.

Queen Nyla turned and faced Taylor squarely. "We start from knowing that each of us is ultimately an expression of the divine. In the temple, we express our inner nature, our inherent divinity, and we become light. And, as we all become gradually brighter, we become so bright and intense that our lights merge. This one light rises up through our temple and converges with the descending light of Divine Transcendence. Together, we become the light of Divine Unity."

"Was that what all of you were doing when I saw... and felt..." Taylor stood, staring as if in trance at the temple.

"Yes it was," said the queen. "And it's also one of the reasons for your having been brought here. But, you will be required to expend a great deal of effort before you will be able to join us in our temple."

"You're going to love their party, Taylor," said Zanadar, who had walked around to stand in front of both the queen and Taylor. He was nodding rapidly, obviously very excited.

"But for the uninitiated," said Queen Nyla, "these *parties*—as you call them, Zanadar—can be extremely dangerous. That's why we must be certain that you are well prepared. Taylor, should you pass all your tests, within the little time we have, and if you then choose to join us, your experience in our temple will be one you will never forget. For the Dance of Divinity will send you off, on a journey to fulfill your final purpose."

"My *final* purpose?" Taylor wasn't exactly too keen on the queen's choice of words. "What exactly is that?"

The queen turned and faced Taylor squarely. To Taylor it looked as if her face had turned to stone. But really, it had just turned old, is what it did. Real old. Old and worried, maybe. "It is hoped," said the queen with a cold, expressionless face, "that you will learn this before time has run out." The queen took in a long, deep breath, and her face softened and into a warm smile. "Taylor, we are aware that you have already been tested thoroughly. Fortunately, you followed the Yaktavian's mighty bells, and made your way into our mountain. You passed your first test. Your fortitude, your courage, your relentless, unwavering desire to return here to our mountain, and most of all, your pure heart, have served you well. It has also exposed your enormous potential. And for this, we honor and congratulate you."

All those present, including all the many dancers, bowed in great respect. Again, Taylor was speechless. Never before had she been given such royal treatment.

"We are very grateful to have you here as our guest," continued the queen. "I hope you have found your living arrangement with Monka to serve your needs."

Taylor nodded her head, and smiled. Monka, who had been watching and listening, stepped forward.

“Good. Then if Monka is in agreement, you will continue to live with her during your stay here in our city.”

"It will be my pleasure," said Monka politely.

“Very well, then,” said the queen. “Staying with Monka will be good for you; for you will need the comfort that her pod provides.” The queen stepped toward Taylor, lifted her arms and placed her hands firmly on her shoulders. Looking solemnly into Taylor’s eyes, she continued: “Your life, Taylor, has been set to a grand purpose. Much depends upon your ability to thrive here. So go now. Go with Monka and rest while you can. For soon many trials await you.” Queen Nyla then removed her hands from Taylor’s shoulders, caressed her chin ever so gently, turned, and began walking back to the center of the circle.

Taylor didn’t move at all. Her eyes dropped from the queen and then looked out into the large crowd of Lemurians still gathered, watching her. All of them, Taylor decided, had looks of hope in their eyes. Yet behind all the hope, lurking just below the surface, Taylor could also sense a tinge of desperation.

Monka then moved next to Taylor, took her by the hand, and walked off with her down the path on which they had arrived. Taylor looked back over her shoulder at the others still standing, watching. Queen Nyla, too, was watching from her position in the center of the circle. Zanadar was the only one smiling. He had a twinkle in his eye and was waving good-bye.

**Chapter 6: Tune Up**

“Did the queen say the... *Yaktavian's* mighty bells, yesterday?” Taylor was with Monka, in her pod, sitting at the kitchen table, sipping on a mug of tea. It was the morning after her meeting with Queen Nyla in the central atrium.

Monka was just now getting her mug of tea and joining Taylor at the table. “You want to know about the bells that drew you here to Telos.”

“Yeah,” said Taylor as she watched the steam rise off her tea. It was a bit chilly in Monka’s kitchen that morning.

“Well,” started Monka as she spread her elbows on the table. “Those bells that you heard are controlled by a strange tribe of furry little creatures called the Yaktavians. Don’t worry, the Yakies are a harmless bunch. They live deep within the vast mass of Shasta, in their city Itheleme. But they spend much of their time hidden on the outside, guarding the mountain.”

“Do they make the bells themselves?”

“Oh yes,” said Monka. “The Yaktavians are specialized bell makers. They use their bells for hollowing out the caverns where they live, and also to produce all the light and power they need. A huge clapper hits the bell and it releases the essence of the special metal from which their bells are made.”

“And they’ve got their bells everywhere under the mountain?”

Monka nodded while finishing her sip of tea. “Everywhere.” She put the cup down on the table. “The Yaktavians go through their tunnels, in and out of their many portals, day and night. They know where each and every opening is, of course. And they have an incredible communication system. You should see them. The little Yakies hide among the trees, rocks, crevasses, gulches, and

gullies of the mountain, and send detailed messages that tell whenever and wherever someone is approaching. They're very good at explaining, without speaking, the specific bell to be clapped to force an evil intruder away."

"And if I go out there," Taylor pointed at the door, "I just might find myself in one of the Yaktavian's tunnels or caverns?"

"You might," said Monka while smiling and raising her cup to Taylor as if to salute the beginning of her adventure.

Taylor smiled, stood, kissed Monka on the forehead and exited the pod. Instead of turning right as she and Monka had done when making their way to the central atrium, this time Taylor turned left. She walked down the path for a short while, but then, sensing that someone was following her, turned around quickly and stopped. It was Zanadar. "How long have you been walking behind me?" Taylor asked, while resting her hands on her hips.

"Ever since you came out," said Zanadar, innocently. The big old guy had discarded his purple wizardly wares and was now dressed in what was perhaps the best camouflage outfit anyone ever saw. Leaves and branches covered his entire body. In fact, he looked like a walking bush. Taylor could barely see his eyes because he was wearing a hat covered with leafy vines that concealed his broad face. "I was practically walking right beside you. You couldn't tell?" Zanadar folded his branchlike arms over his tree-trunk chest, obviously proud of his stealthy ways.

"No, Zanadar, I didn't know," said Taylor, slightly irritated. "Why do you need to sneak up behind me like that?"

Ignoring her complaint, Zanadar continued, "So, you've been getting a dose of love, doing some gardening, having a few feasts."

"Yeah. I've been eating the best food ever." Taylor walked with her head down, staring at the ground.

"And you're learning, too."

"Yeah. Monka's real smart. She's been taking good care of me. But I don't understand most of what she's trying to teach me."

"I can imagine," said Zanadar as he playfully skipped along next to Taylor. "These Lemurians have an entirely different way of looking at the world than what you're used to." Zanadar pulled pensively on his long, now green and brown, beard. Actually, it looked more like a drooping growth of dirty leaves hanging all the way from his chin to his waist.

"Yep." Taylor plodded along, staring at the ground. "Monka has been trying to teach me about that, too. "

Finally noticing that Taylor wasn't exactly very cheerful at the moment, Zanadar stopped short and turned serious for a moment. "So what's troubling you, Taylor? You seem a little down."

"It's all of that 'save the world' stuff I've been hearing. First it was you back in the store in the mall and when you transported me here to the mountain. And then, yesterday, Queen Nyla." Taylor turned and faced Zanadar squarely. "Look, I came here because... I don't know. I wanted to get away from my parents, school, and that awful store in the mall and what they were going to do to me. I wanted to go back to that place in my dream, to feel the way I did when the light came over me. But now I've got to first get through all kinds of training. And, with the way it sounds, I don't have much time. Then, when I'm done, I've got some grand *world saving* task to accomplish. Because I'm *the one*? So, I'm supposed to save the entire planet?"

Taylor turned away from Zanadar and started trudging down the path again. Zanadar followed. While Zanadar caught up with her, Taylor waited for Zanadar to say something, *anything*

about her predicament. She was hoping that he'd have something wise to say to make her feel better to reassure her that everything would be all right. But instead, Zanadar kept quiet. Walking by his side, Taylor stared the Pleiadian down, waiting, knowing all the while that he was going to make her figure this one out for herself, too.

Gradually, the tunnel opened up into a large cavern. Then it opened further still into a tall courtyard. Enormous trees climbed way overhead. Colorful birds flew from tree to tree, branch to branch, feeding, singing. The gold, flowing freely on the walls, carried a bright hue. This lightened the room, considerably. Taylor noticed that she was even beginning to feel lighter.

"You see those tiny light-blue birds over there?" Zanadar pointed toward little gathering of birds with peaked heads high up in a tree. "They're the Tufted Titmouse. And those over there are the Black-capped Chickadee. Yippee for the Chick-a-dee. I love their little black caps!" Zanadar gave a zany little hop of delight while clapping his huge hands in front of his chest.

Taylor saw his cute little hop. She noticed the birds, but mostly she had been watching the big Pleiadian's hidden bright eyes while he was pointing to and watching the birds. "You're really like a little kid, aren't you?" she asked.

"Expressions of joy always look youthful," said Zanadar.

Forgetting her troubles for the moment, Taylor focused her thoughts on Zanadar. "Hey, can I call you Zanny?" she asked. "Or maybe I should call you Zany. Can I call you Zany, too?"

"You can call me whatever you want, Taylie," said Zanadar rolling his head, looking more than just a little zany. But then, quickly, his expression turned serious as he faced Taylor. "So where are you off to now?"

"I don't know. I just wanted to get more of a look around."

"You're off on an adventure! Into the wild, green and gold yonder!" Zanadar's singing really *was* a bit on the zany side.

Taylor closed her eyes and muffled a chuckle. When she opened her eyes to look at Zanadar again, he was gone.



Taylor stood alone in the courtyard, now. She thought she might stay there for a while. Enjoy the birds. Climb a tree, maybe. Perhaps somebody else would show up. Aside from Monka and now Queen Nyla, she really didn't know any other Lemurians. Walking leisurely into the courtyard, she noticed the multitude of birds singing, chirp-chirp-chirping away. Like the main atrium, this smaller courtyard was bursting with life. Butterflies, insects, small creatures of every kind imaginable were crawling, burrowing, climbing here and there. Frogs and toads were croaking, rodents were squeaking, snakes hissing. Then, suddenly, somewhere, someone began singing.

Immediately, all life in the courtyard fell silent. And then, strangely enough, everything in the courtyard started... leaning. All the plants—trees, bushes, grasses, and flowers—tilted toward the voice. Even the animals were leaning. Birds on their branches, spiders in their webs, snakes and rodents on the ground, inclined in the direction of the sumptuous stream of sounds.

Taylor, too, was drawn toward the voice. But, was it a voice? Now, she wasn't sure. It couldn't be. Could it? A voice alone couldn't be that beautiful. It had to be an instrument of some kind.

Something about the sounds resonated within her. The strange vibrations touched and tickled places way down deep inside of her, and as a result, she was pulled along, urged to move closer to the source. But as she walked, it eventually became difficult to determine the origin of the sounds. They



appeared to be coming from all around her. Only the plants, which were still leaning in the original direction, gave hint as to where she should advance.

After pushing her way through a tall, thick growth of grass, Taylor finally determined the source. It was coming from an old woman. And she was standing on what could only be called a stage—an uplifted platform formed by the exposed, twisted roots of an enormous tree growing at the far edge of a calm pond. It was almost as if the gigantic roots had created a stage above the small pond for the old woman to stand on. From her position at the other side of the pond, Taylor gazed in wonder at the elderly woman. She was tall with extremely long, thick hair. It was blonde mostly, but it also showed long streaks of gray throughout. She wore a rose-colored robe designed much like Queen Nyla's.

Sensing Taylor's presence, the old woman stopped singing. But the sounds of her voice continued bouncing off the walls of the courtyard. Taylor looked up searching for the source. The old Lemurian woman walked to the front of the raised stage and spoke to Taylor from across the pond. "Hello, Taylor. I see you found your way."

"Where are those wonderful sounds coming from? I thought they were coming from you?"

"They were coming from me. They're just continuing to reverberate."

Taylor made her way through the tall grass and around the small pond until she reached the enormous roots. Eventually, the beautiful sounds subsided and the plants and animals ceased their leaning.

"Reverberate?" asked Taylor

The old woman made her way slowly down a series of steps in the large roots and joined Taylor at the edge of the pond. After sitting down on one of the larger roots, she patted it, inviting Taylor to join her. Taylor sat down, and like the old woman, dangled her feet in the cool water. It

tickled Taylor's delicate toes and ankles, and gave her little goose bumps on her calves and thighs. Now, sitting next to the old woman, Taylor noticed that she seemed somehow to be humming. While inhaling and exhaling, beautiful tones emanated from deep within her.

"Yes, reverberate," she said. The sounds are echoing over and over again, off the walls of this chamber."

"It sort of felt like being in a sea of sounds."

"You sensed that quickly. Excellent."

Taylor took a good look at the old woman. She was much older than she had originally thought. When Taylor first saw her, she believed her long hair was blonde, or platinum maybe, with just a few streaks of gray. But with a closer look, it became obvious that her hair was silver. She was beautiful, but old. Very old.

"What's your name?" Taylor asked.

"My name is Etruceana. I am a Priestess of Song."

"Etruceana," Taylor said, repeating the name. She liked the sound of her name, especially when the woman said it herself.

"Were you singing a song?" Taylor asked.

Etruceana smiled, and the wrinkles around her eyes and mouth deepened. "A song begins with an idea, really, yet the voice—my voice—takes on a life and purpose of its own. It moves in the direction it needs. I am simply a vessel gratefully receiving music, surrendering to it, being guided by the song."

"Were there words to your song?"

"Not really, dear. The songs I sing come from a time when language was not separate from nature, when words and things were not yet divided, when sounds were indistinguishable from

creation and the making of reality. My songs express emotions too deep and intricate for the simple patterns of words."

"For a while there, when I was listening at first, I thought it was an instrument of some kind."

"Nope, no instrument, honey. Just my voice. The voice is capable of sounds no man-made instrument can create."

"It's so lovely, your voice. It actually seemed to pull me here. Even the plants and animals were leaning toward you. How do you make that happen?"

"It's called resonance. When two or more bodies have similar or identical vibrational frequencies, a natural sympathy happens. But the bodies have to possess a readiness to respond. Obviously, like the bodies of the plants and animals here, some part of you was already resonate; therefore, you were pulled here, to this place."

"Okay," said Taylor agreeing, but not entirely understanding. Enjoying the cool water of the pond, Taylor gently kicked her feet back and forth. Little whirlpools formed every time her toes breached the surface.

"So, now that you're here, whatcha wanna learn, honey?" asked Etruceana.

"I, I... I don't know. What do you have to teach?" asked Taylor.

"Well, let me have a look at you." Etruceana stood up and assisted Taylor to her feet. She then took Taylor by the hand and led her up the steps to the stage. Once center stage, Etruceana turned and took a long, scrutinizing look at Taylor. First she stared into Taylor's eyes for a long time. Then, she examined the top of Taylor's head, her face, the inside of her mouth, her shoulders, chest, abdomen, lower back, thighs, calves, and even her wet feet. Taylor had no idea what Etruceana was doing. She felt a little strange, standing there while the old lady—beautiful though she was—examined her.

"Okay, first thing we need to do is to work with your energy. We need to get you into alignment. Tune you up. You need a lot of work."

"Yeah, but, I've got to be a lot better than when I first came here. Monka helped me out a lot."

"Yes, she did. But now we're ready to go a little further. What I need you to do is to simply stand there and to take in the sounds that I'll be emitting. You'll help out tremendously by just relaxing, listening, and concentrating on absorbing the sounds."

"That doesn't sound too hard." Taylor shifted on her feet a little, spreading her legs slightly, getting a firmer base of support.

"Today I'll do all the work, but soon we'll have to teach you the proper techniques so that you'll be able to use them, and do this yourself, when necessary."

With no further explanation, Etruceana began singing a series of ascending chords. Taylor immediately entered into a deep trance state. She was aware of what was going on, and concentrated on the sounds, but she was also being transformed by Etruceana's voice. As Etruceana continued to sing, a strange sensation started to rise from the base of Taylor's spine to the crown of her delicate head. When Etruceana completed the toning exercise, Taylor stood swaying slightly, with a gentle grin on her face. Taylor had no idea, but she had been standing there for hours captivated by the sounds of Etruceana's voice. In her trance state she had lost all track of time.

"So, how do you feel?" asked Etruceana, when she had finished.

"Great! When you were doing that, all kinds of tingly things were going on inside. I felt this really weird sensation rising up my spine. It felt as if someone were unscrewing a giant bolt that had been tightened down on top of my backbone."

Etruceana reached up and cupped her hands gently around Taylor's cheeks. "It's just one of the many ways of beginning to feel the raising of your consciousness, the expressive lifting of your Divine Immanence."

"What does that...?" began Taylor.

"Well," interrupted Etruceana, "that'll be all for today. Now you're free to do as you please. I suggest that you be still for a while. Perhaps stay here and enjoy the birds and the cool water in the pond."

"When can we get back together? Can I learn more from you?" Taylor was disappointed with Etruceana's elusiveness. She wanted to keep going.

"We'll get together again soon. I'll find you, or you'll find me, I'm sure. As for now, I have some things of my own to take care of."

Taylor watched Etruceana walk down the steps of the stage, around the pond, and through the tall grass. When she disappeared in the thick brush, Taylor threw herself down on the steps, taking a seat on the large roots of the tree at the border of the pond. She sat there for a long time, trying to control her impatience. She tried to follow Etruceana's advice and simply enjoy the beauty of her surroundings, but that didn't work. Eventually, thoughts of home, her family, and Kyle, helped her to forget about the questions that Etruceana seemed unwilling to answer. She wondered how everyone at home might be doing. Were her parents looking for her? Were they even concerned? How was Kyle doing? Was he getting along okay? Taylor knew he could take care of himself, but still, she worried.

She had known Kyle for little over a year. She saw him at school and was sometimes in the same classroom with him, but, when school was over, she had no idea where he went. Occasionally, she would see him at the library reading, or at a park in the neighborhood talking with friends. Kyle was an attractive mystery for Taylor. And only now was she becoming aware of the depth of her

feelings for him. Of all the things she could be thinking about back home, she missed Kyle most of all.

## **Chapter 7: Turned Away**

The day after her session with Etruceana, Taylor once again ventured out into the mountain. She left Monka's pod early one morning and had been hiking for hours, turning this way and that, winding her way downward through a never ending network of tunnels, and was now far below the base floor of the central atrium.

Finally, she made a sharp left turn on the path and the narrow tunnel opened up to a large, warm cavern. The cavern was dimly lit due to all the large roots coming out of the walls and ceiling. They blocked out much of the golden light. In the middle of the cavern, sitting alone in a pit, under the twisted roots of what must have been an enormous tree was a strange, baldheaded man. The entire hanging root system looked like giant fingers from two hands, providing a comfortable shelter for the man to nest within. Alongside of the small circular pit, a gurgling creek ran the entire length of the cavern.

The man was sitting against the back rim of the pit, facing Taylor. He had a variety of drums spread in a semicircle in front of him. His long legs were crossed and his baldhead was hanging low, hiding his face. He was wearing a leather vest that exposed muscular shoulders, chest, abdomen, and arms. His skin was shining as if he had just waxed himself with oil. His hands were huge. On his lower body, he wore baggy cloth pants. The pants were gathered at the ankles exposing big, bare feet.

And, oddly enough, he was also vibrating. His entire body was expanding and contracting, pulsing rhythmically like a giant beating heart.

Without invitation, Taylor walked through the thick hanging roots and paused at the border of the pit. The pensive man lifted his head slowly. With his eyes closed, he cocked his head as if listening, not to Taylor, but to something far, far away. After a while, he stopped pulsing, opened his eyes and looked directly at Taylor, taking a very long time before speaking. "Hello, Taylor."

"Hi," answered Taylor hesitantly. She was still standing just above the pit, holding onto one of the larger roots.

"And, what can I do for you? Is there something you want?"

"Do you... play those drums?"

"I am Pelleur, Lord of Drums. That is what I do."

"Can you teach me? Can you teach me to drum?" Taylor was about to jump down into the man's pit, but then decided against it. She hadn't yet been invited.

"That is something you may learn, yes. But, as Lord of Drums, I have a little something more to teach, Taylor. If you choose to learn from me, what we will concentrate on will be a disciplining of the will."

A disciplining of the will? Taylor thought. Why can't it just be about drumming? Always, it has to be about something more.

Pelleur continued. "If you choose to learn from me, we will learn the difference between the personal *self* beat . . ." the Lord of Drums reached out with his strong hands to the drum directly in front of him and knocked off a machine-like cacophony of metallic hits that sent a nasty shiver up Taylor's spine. It reminded her of rotating the tuner of her radio with the volume peaked. "...which, we wish to avoid..." said Pelleur, grinning mischievously. To rid herself of the cold, nasty, machine-

like feeling resting on her spine, Taylor had to shake like a wet dog. "... and the pulse of Divine Transcendence," continued Pelleur, "the pounding source of the cosmos! To do this, we must focus on the willful beat of the transcendent." Pelleur took a deep breath, closed his eyes, once again tilted his head to listen to something far, far away, and then began drumming. At once, he became lost in trance as he beat out the most soulful of sounds.

The beat tugged at Taylor's very core, filling her insides with an energizing, almost hot sensation. It made her ears, eyes, nose, and throat tingle. The hair on the top of her head stood up on end, goose bumps crawled all over her body. Uncontrollably, Taylor started to move. She began swaying; the message from the pulse of Pelleur's drums was so great, that she just had to.

"Wow!" said Taylor, when Pelleur finally stopped. "That was amazing. How did you do that? You've *got* to teach me how to do that."

"You'll have to if you are to make it into our temple." Pelleur didn't waste anytime letting Taylor know the seriousness of her task. It was obvious how great her desire was. But before Taylor would be allowed to enter the temple and participate in the dance, she would have to gain the favor of a will greater than her own.

"Come. Have a seat." Finally getting the invitation she had been hoping for, Taylor leaped into Pelleur's pit. Mirroring her new teacher, she plopped down on her butt, crossed her legs, and rested her arms on her knees. When she was settled, Pelleur continued. "Why do you think we drum, Taylor?"

"I don't know. To get a good beat going. To keep everyone in step for the dance in the temple."

Pelleur's eyes closed, he took a slow, deep breath and continued talking. "Yes, but that is only our surface objective. Our goal here, within this mountain, is to live as much of our life as possible in



a state of perpetual inspiration. Here, our drumming aids us in our search for inspiration. For the purpose of helping us to realize our final end.”

There it was again, Taylor thought. That final purpose stuff.

“Our ultimate destiny is to be one with the Divine, in a place out of time and self. And, here in this mountain, we attempt to align ourselves with the pulse of Divine Transcendence, to help us find our way. To achieve this, we call on the presence of Divine Transcendence. Our drumming is more than just a *good beat* to dance to. Our drumming is a prayer, an invitation that we send out to the transcendent.” Pelleur sat still for a long time with his eyes closed, breathing deeply.

"So how do we get started?" asked Taylor, wishing he would open his eyes and hurry up already.

"Well, we must be patient, first of all. Beyond that, what do you think we'll need to do?"

"I figured that you'd let me use one of your drums, and we'd get started. You'd show me how to knock off one of those beats you did."

Pelleur flashed open his eyes. "One of my drums?!" he shouted. "These are sacred tools!" Pelleur was angry now. "You can't expect a tool to become sacred, and to stay that way, if strange hands play it. A drum has a life of its own. And the voice of the drum must be coaxed properly from it. You will need to make your own drum."

Taylor regretted what she had said. Wishing she hadn't offended Pelleur, she sat quietly now, waiting for him to tell her what to do next.

Pelleur picked up one of his drums and held it like an infant in his lap. "Great care must be given to each stage of the making of a drum. The risk in making a drum is that even though you follow directions exactly, you can give birth to an instrument that sounds flat and empty. The voice of

the drum is a soulful thing; it provides us with a link, a connection to the transcendent. And this is why we go through great lengths to make sure our drums have a proper voice."

Trying to be patient, Taylor took in every one of Pelleur's words. But her enthusiasm got the best of her. In fact, she was so excited about the possibility of creating her own drum that she was bordering on being anxious, as well. And this Pelleur could sense. So he sat there, waiting for Taylor to calm down. One got the impression that Pelleur was accustomed to waiting.

Rocking back and forth in her seated position as if to give some action to her anxiousness, Taylor could no longer contain herself. "*Sssoo...* how do I go about making one of these drums?"

Pelleur calmly placed his drum back on the ground, looked at Taylor carefully, and smiled. "I believe it would be best for you to come back when you are more ready."

"But I *am* ready!" said Taylor. "I am *soooo*, ready."

Pelleur continued smiling while saying nothing. In fact, he would say nothing more. He closed his eyes, lowered his head and once again returned to the meditative state he was in prior to Taylor's arrival.

Finally, getting the hint, Taylor picked herself up, turned, and stepped out of the pit. She stopped at the hanging roots and looked back at Pelleur. He was still meditating, listening, and pulsing again. Frustrated, Taylor huffed, and made her way through the hanging roots and stomped out of the cavern. As she found her way back through the winding tunnels to the central atrium, she eventually began to slow down. She was disappointed with not being able to get started on her drum, but she did realize what Pelleur was looking for. Just because she was willful of starting didn't mean the time was right. Next time, she vowed, she would be in a better state of mind, and she would allow a will greater than her own to determine the course of events.

**Chapter 8: The Lemurian Library**

Taylor strolled along the balcony that bordered the large central atrium. The glowing temple was standing in the middle emitting the steady beam of light out of its crown. No matter how many times she gazed upon it, the temple always amazed her. Most of the time, she couldn't take her eyes off of it. She wondered where all the light came from. How could so much come out of it?

With no particular destination in mind, she had been stopping to talk with many of the Lemurians. Taylor found them to be a friendly people, always eager to talk. They were an inquisitive lot, always asking questions, probing Taylor for information about herself, and the world outside.

When she wasn't talking with someone, she paused occasionally to lean up against the railing to admire the view of the enormous atrium. Mostly, she studied the temple. By now Taylor had become quite familiar with the structure. She noticed the strange symbol carved on the arched doors. It was a design that reminded her of the shuttlecock she hit with a racket when playing the game of badminton in P.E. in school back home.



On the top of the symbol was a design that had a centermost circle enclosed within two triangles that were superimposed on one another, like the six-pointed Star of David design Taylor was familiar with. And centered on the six points of the star were another six circles. Then, another circle surrounded the star and seven circles. And around the outside of that circle, were what looked to be

the petals of a flower. That entire configuration also had a tail that fanned out from the bottom. Taylor thought it looked like the feathers attached to the head of the shuttlecock.

For a while now, Taylor had been wondering what it meant. She had meant to ask Monka about it when she was with her in the pod, but somehow she always forgot.

Not having been allowed in the temple yet, Taylor often wondered what it looked like inside. She wanted to know how the light beaming out of the top, pouring over and down the walls of the dome and through the tunnels of Telos, could be generated from within. And what exactly was the temple made of? And how was it that its light sustained itself for so long? This was the very same light that lit up Pelleur's pit, Etruceana's courtyard, Monka's pod, and every other room, cavern or tunnel that she had visited.

She also found herself thinking about Queen Nyla. And then, while remembering that she had promised herself to learn more about the queen and the Lemurian people, Taylor pushed herself off the railing and took off running until finding a set of soft, winding, earthy stairs leading down to the main floor. From the main floor, Taylor ran up a trail that took her all the way back to the cavern containing the spaceport, administration and government buildings, hotel, courthouse and library. It was to the library that she was heading.

She walked by the spaceport parking in the back corner of the cavern, looking inside hoping she'd see an alien craft and some weird looking extraterrestrial climbing out of it. She stopped when she became aware of a big round bubble hovering over in a corner. But then the bubble popped and was gone. Taylor rubbed her eyes thinking that maybe they were deceiving her. She took a step into the garage to look for any remains, but then, remembering her original purpose, stopped herself, turned and continued on her trek to the library.

When she reached the large building carved out of the side of the cavern, she pushed open the huge wooden doors and was immediately overtaken by the smell of old, musty books. Laid out in front of her was a wide row of tables. Around each round table were a number of chairs. The chairs had tall backs, large cushioned seats, and soft, velvety arm rests. On the far side of the tables, lined up one after the other was row, after row, after row, of tall, wooden shelves. The shelves extended back into the dark toward the rear of the library. As Taylor stood gaping at the sheer size and quantity of shelves, she realized that they were rocking back and forth. It was as if they were cradling the books like babies in a mother's arms.

Taylor walked past the tables and entered an aisle between two tall rows of shelves. The shelves were jammed with books. Aside from the typical books covered in leather and cloth, she also found crude, simple books made with pages of wood and bamboo. Others still had intricately carved, wooden covers, and heavy metal hinges and clasps. She walked past stacks of clay, wood and bronze tablets of all shapes and sizes, then piles of rolls and scrolls of papyrus and parchment, and then heaps of cylinder seals and stamps. Walking still further, she came across pieces of bone, stone, and jade set with all sorts of interesting glyphs, runes, signs, and script. She even found silk handkerchiefs, vases, vessels, huge stone steles, turtle shells, and bamboo strips marked with various symbols. Taylor figured that archeologists in her world would've absolutely loved to get their hands on all of this stuff.

After traveling a considerable length down the aisle, a book with an ornate wooden cover inlaid with decorations of gold, silver, and jewels caught her attention. She reached out to pull it down from the rocking shelf, but the shelf moved, shrinking away from her. Undeterred, Taylor moved closer and poised her hand to snatch it off the shelf, but the shelf, like a mother protecting her young from the hands of a stranger, extended a sort of cupped *hand* of its own, and slapped Taylor's away.

Frowning, Taylor turned and continued walking deeper down the aisle toward the rear of the library. And the further she walked, the thicker the air, and more pungent the smell of the books on the shelves. When Taylor finally reached the end of the narrow aisle, there in the dark, in the middle of a large open space was a great, cascading pillar of light. To Taylor, it looked like a winding waterfall made out of liquid light. In the middle of this column of light, which was about as big around as a full-grown redwood, Taylor could see a blurred image. She moved closer until coming within a few feet of the cylinder. Standing there, looking inside, the fuzzy image wouldn't come into focus. Taylor guessed that she would have to step into the column to get a clear view.

Taylor took a deep breath and walked inside. She was immediately suspended above the planet directly over an oddly shaped continent. That freaked her out for a second or two, but then she got her orientation back and simply stood still. As the image brought her down closer to the great body of land, she could see people living there. But this was no modern civilization, rather one from a long ago, distant past. For the people here lived comfortably in scattered settlements, rather than jammed into large, crowded cities. The dwellings, if that's what you could call them, looked altogether different than anything she had ever seen. Some were shaped into the land where they existed, others were round domes, and still others were pyramids, prisms, cylinders and cones. And the people living there were wearing the same kinds of robes that the Lemurians in Telos wore. Taylor realized then that she was witnessing a living history, full of life, of the lost continent of Lemuria.

Taylor's experience streamed along in fast forward fashion, showing the Lemurian civilization at what appeared to be its peak. Over a long period of years, as the seasons changed over, and over, and over again, the ocean around the continent began to swell and rise, to crawl onto the grand land's sandy shore, and up its mighty cliffs. The people living there obviously knew what was happening and began to prepare. They started building various sized boats and ships. Taylor also saw many of

them working diligently to load a great golden disk onto an enormous barge. The disk was huge, round, and at least the size of a major league baseball field. And by the way they handled the great disk, Taylor could tell that it must have been something of great importance and value.

When all was ready, and the people and possessions were loaded onto the boats and ships, then, what was left of the land that remained above water, began to shift, turn, shake, and roll. A great earthquake rocked the land. Volcanoes spurted smoke, lava and fire. And within seconds the sea rushed in and swallowed up what was left of the continent and the Lemurian civilization.

With nothing left for Taylor to see other than the churning ocean waters, the image blurred again, and then disappeared altogether. Then the cascading column of light faded and left Taylor standing stunned in the middle of the rear of the library.

Then suddenly she realized that she was not alone.

“Now you know what happened to us and how we got here,” said a voice from behind her. Taylor turned. It was Queen Nyla and she was leaning up against a rocking shelf at the end of an aisle. Apparently, she had been standing there for a while, watching Taylor. “What you have just witnessed was a chapter from the Akasha Chronicle. This chronicle is no ordinary testimony of history such as those written about on the pages of an old, crusty book.” Queen Nyla raised the book she had been holding, and the shelf reached out a hand, gently took the book from the queen’s hands, and placed it back to rest. “The Akasha Chronicle is a living story. It appears in full life. And it cannot be easily... *seen* by just anybody.”

Taylor altogether missed the significance of the Queen’s last remark, so focused was she on understanding the Lemurians’ history. “So your continent really did sink, didn’t it?” Taylor turned and approached the queen. “Back in her pod, Monka told me about Lemuria, but I found it hard to believe. And when you left your continent, you all settled here inside of this mountain?”

The queen stepped out of the aisle, moving around Taylor out into the open space. “When Lemuria finally sank, my people resettled from Lake Titicaca, through Central America and Mexico to as far north as here, Mount Shasta. I settled here in Mount Shasta and helped to create our city, Telos.”

“You mean you’ve been around that long?” The pitch of Taylor’s voice rose considerably. It was almost screechy. “You used to live back during the time when your continent sank? Has everybody here been around that long? That means you’re all immor...”

“Noooo,” said a calm and serene queen. She placed her hands on Taylor’s shoulders and settled her down. “Not all of us are immortal, Taylor. Actually, I’m the only one.” The queen lowered her eyes.

“You’re immortal,” whispered Taylor, while stepping back out of the queen’s reach. Now she looked at the queen altogether differently. She knew the Lemurians were special. They certainly had different ways. And she *had* seen the queen all alight during the dance. But this was different. She’s been alive all this time, Taylor thought. Now gazing upon the queen, Taylor straightened up, stood just a little taller and calmer, and breathed a bit deeper, too.

The queen raised her eyes. “As you may have gathered from the Chronicle, my people were very advanced. In spite of our simple existence, Lemuria was a highly sophisticated civilization. We had been around for about 52,000 years.”

“That’s a long time,” agreed Taylor. “A lot longer than our civilization has been here.”

“About six or seven times longer,” added the queen. “But in the very beginning of our Lemurian civilization, a priestly brother- and sisterhood called the Naacal formed. The Naacal were a trained body of masters devoted to the study and application of the priestcrafts and sciences.” The queen paused for a moment, and then began pacing around, avoiding eye contact with Taylor. “My



parents were amongst the last of the Naacals. Ay and Tiya were their names, and their specialty was lovemaking. Lovemaking was one of the priestcrafts.” She glanced at Taylor with one raised brow. With a heightened air of seriousness, the queen went on. “They worked very hard at it, too. They studied hard and long.” The queen softened and looked deeply at Taylor. “They were very skilled. They even taught their techniques at the Naacal’s mystery school. They were the first to discover that if you make love in a particular way, the child, when born, would be immortal.” The queen now approached Taylor and looked her squarely in the eyes. “My mother and father did it because they had to. For that was their job, their destiny. And I am here because I have to. For this is my job, my destiny, my final purpose. I am here to help complete the task that they started.”

Taylor was afraid to ask what the queen’s task was. She had thoughts that maybe, somehow, she was involved in all this; that in some way, her life was tied to the queen’s, and the queen’s parents, and their destinies and final purposes. And just now, she really didn’t want to know how, for the possibilities scared her.

“You want to know what my task is, but you’re afraid to ask,” said the queen. “You want to know if you’re involved in the task, and whether your life is tied to mine, my parents, and our destinies and final purposes.” The queen kept staring at Taylor in spite of the fact that Taylor was stunned and had a blank look on her face. “My task, Taylor, is to help *you*. Because it is you who must enter the temple. You’re the one. The one destined to lead the Sacred Seven; the team of time travelers. You’re the one with the gift. The one who can be in one place and another at the same time.”

“Nonlocality,” Taylor mumbled the word, remembering Zanadar’s use of the quantum physics term, and of what she learned about it at school.

“Excuse me?” said the queen.

“Nonlocality,” repeated Taylor. “It means action-at-a-distance. When speaking about quantum events, physicists say that even when superluminal distances separate the events, those events are correlated in such a way as to behave as though they are a unity. In other words, at the implicate quantum level, so called separate events are really interconnected, or one and the same.”

“You see,” said the queen, “this is why you’re the one. The things you know.” Queen Nyla paused for a moment and took a deep breath. “In the ancient Naacal texts it is written that a young woman from the future, an outsider, will be born in a time when people no longer value the priestcrafts. The crafts are shunned. All of them. Most people ridicule them. Some even work and scheme to destroy them. Yet, during this time, it is written, there will be one born with this gift of... nonlocality. And this one, this outsider, this one of the few remaining natural humans, will come to us, enter our temple and be sent on a miraculous journey back into the past with six other learned travelers. Once there, the Sacred Seven are supposed to set things right. It is written, if this is done, then all of us Lemurians, and Atlanteans, and visitors from above, like the Pleiadians and Sirians, will emerge from our mountains, come down from our clouds, and live amongst the others once again.”

“And you believe that *one* is me?”

“I have read the texts, Taylor. I see the signs. I know what’s happening out there in the world. Like before, when we knew that our island of Lemuria would perish, we know that this world is about to face the same predicament. Only this time, if the world is destroyed, it will be for good. There won’t be any rebuilding, this time. The final deluge is drawing near.” The queen took a step toward Taylor. “And I know what you can do. You came to our mountain. And we don’t know how, but the portal opened for you. You felt our warmth, heard our song, saw our light.”

Taylor turned and started rushing toward the front doors. “You want me... *to save the world?* What am I supposed to do? I don’t know anything. I’m only sixteen!” She was shouting now. “You

should've gotten somebody else! Someone older!" She charged right at the huge doors of the library, and without slowing down, shoved her way through. "There's got to be somebody else out there with *the gift!*"

The great doors of the Lemurian Library slammed shut behind her.

## **Chapter 9: Knots and Guts**

Taylor woke up the next morning in her pod then walked out to the kitchen where Monka was sitting at the kitchen table, sipping tea from a mug, reading an open book. Taylor pulled out a chair, silently took a seat at the table, yawned and rubbed the sleep out of her eyes. Having grown tired of the long, sometimes restricting robes that the Lemurians wore, Taylor was now wearing a pair of loose-fitting pants and a halter-top, which left her shoulders, arms, and belly exposed. Like the rest of the Lemurians in Telos, in order to be more in touch with the soft earth, her feet were bare.

Monka took sip of tea and turned the page of her book.

Taylor noticed that it was an old book, probably an ancient one that had been checked out of the library. The library. It reminded Taylor of Queen Nyla and their talk. No way she wanted anything to do with the library, time travel, ancient books, Queen Nyla, her so-called final purpose. Or any of that save the world crap, either.

She stood up from the kitchen table, now fully awake and agitated. "Um, I'll be seeing you, Monka. Got some things to take care of." Taylor practically sprinted out of the pod, nearly slamming the door behind her as she entered the tunnel.

Once outside, Taylor realized that she had left the pod without eating breakfast. And she was hungry. In fact her stomach was growling. Taylor put her hand on her exposed belly, as if to stop the growling, and looked first to the right, then to the left. She had no idea where she wanted to go, but she knew she didn't want to go back in, even if it meant that she'd have to go without breakfast for the day. And, she knew that if she turned right, she would eventually arrive in the large cavern that housed the Lemurian Library. She didn't want to go anywhere near the library, so instead, she turned left and started walking toward Etruceana's courtyard.

It had been awhile since Taylor had seen Etruceana. And now she wanted to find a way to avoid Queen Nyla and Monka, and anyone else who might attempt to convince her that she was "the one." All she wanted was to find something nice and easy and relaxing to do. Maybe, she thought, Etruceana's voice would help to calm her and settle her nervous stomach.

Arriving in the courtyard, Taylor found Etruceana sitting on the roots of the large tree on the far side of the pond. She had been soaking her feet in the cool water, listening to the birds and animals singing their songs.

"Oh, there you are," said Etruceana recognizing Taylor weaving her way through the tall grass. "I was just thinking of you. It's been so long. Are you ready to continue?"

"Definitely. Will I be listening again? I think we need to align my energies again."

"Not today. Today, we'll begin to work with *your* voice."

Taylor's empty stomach turned into a knot. She wasn't too keen on her voice. Mostly, she would have preferred to listen and enjoy Etruceana's—anybody's—voice, but certainly not her own.

Etruceana picked herself up and started walking up the steps to her stage. "The voice, Taylor, is an expression of spirit and character." Etruceana turned while gathering up the bottom of her robe, so as not to trip on it. "Voice is also a manifestation of breath, and breath is life itself."

"Okaaaaay," said Taylor, trying hard to be agreeable. She plodded up the steps thinking only of how much she was going to hate using her voice.

Once Etruceana was center stage, she turned and faced Taylor. She didn't seem to notice Taylor's apprehension; or, if she did, she was simply ignoring it for the time being. "Now, the more we learn to unite the use of breath, voice, and mind, the greater our force and power in life. As we increase the force and power of breath, voice, and mind, we open ourselves to worlds that once were only the product of an overly active imagination. For now, however, we'll begin working on ways that will open *you* up. Clear away some things. Find that power hidden within you, waiting for expression."

Etruceana circled around and paced back and forth on the stage. "We Lemurian priestesses have developed a technique of focusing on inner sounds that are awakened through outer toning and chanting. This assists us in realizing our inner nature, our Divine Immanence. We use outer sound projection to create inner vibrations. And we've learned that the head and chest are resonance chambers for the entire human body."

"Can you please just explain to me exactly what we're going to do?" Although she wouldn't admit it to Etruceana or herself, Taylor was scared really, and just needed a little reassurance as to where they were going first.

Etruceana was amused. "Don't worry, dear," she said teasingly. "We won't be doing anything that will hurt you. We'll simply be toning various sounds. This will create a reverberation, so that when the toning or chanting stops, the sounds will keep echoing within your mind and various chambers of your body. Each sound will open a particular part of the body."

"So you're saying that when I tone or sing a particular sound over and over again, it'll echo inside of me and eventually open a part of my body?" Taylor put her hands on her hips, spread her

legs, and cocked her head just a bit. "What's going to happen, is my stomach going to open up, and together we'll watch my guts spill out all over the place?"

"Oh, you are a funny one, aren't you? Perhaps we should continue this another time?"

Etruceana turned as if to exit the stage.

"No, no, I'm sorry," said Taylor, while stepping closer to Etruceana. "It's just that sometimes this all seems so strange."

"I can understand that." Etruceana turned back around to face Taylor. Her voice became exceedingly calm and warm. "Especially if you've never spent any time concerning yourself with the subtle, yet vital energies of your body. You have such a beautiful body, Taylor. Learn to nurture it, and you'll be amazed when it reveals its capabilities."

Etruceana's compliment captured Taylor's attention; and, as a result, her fears subsided. She looked down at her feet and shuffled them a bit. She was a little ashamed of herself. After kicking at the stage lightly, she said, "Okay, let's continue."

"Are you sure?" asked Etruceana delicately.

"Yes, I'm sure," said Taylor, while nodding her head without looking up. "So you're saying that all of this is a matter of caring for my body. And there's something inside of me that needs to come out. It's something inherent. My deeper nature." Her mind was beginning to put it all together.

"That's correct." Etruceana stepped closer and gently placed a weathered, old hand on Taylor's bare shoulder. "Now, you must not forget to tone or speak the sounds internally while inhaling. Without the inner sounding occurring before the outer, audible sounding, the effects will be minimal."

"I'll remember," said Taylor, while spreading her legs and centering herself to begin.

Etruceana then began to teach Taylor the series of secret sounds the Lemurian priestesses had developed so long ago. Starting first with the sound that was designed specifically for her abdomen, Taylor followed Etruceana's instruction, inhaled deeply and toned the secret sound. Taylor's lungs and diaphragm expanded, thus pushing the contents of her abdomen downward. Immediately, Taylor's entire exposed midsection started gurgling and moving, bulging and puckering outward. She looked down in surprise at the queer actions of her stomach and then continued toning the sound while exhaling. Then, as if someone had gotten hold of a zipper right below the bottom of her halter-top and pulled it downward all the way to the crest of her pelvis, Taylor's skin and abdominal muscles parted to expose the entire contents of her insides! All at once, her small and large intestine—all 25 feet of it—fell out of her belly and plopped onto the floor of the stage.

“Ahhhhhhh!” she screamed, and then watched in horror as the tangled pile of guts began slithering on the ground. Her intestines seemed to take on a life of its own as the knots that Taylor's anxious mind had created earlier began unraveling, untying right there on the stage in front of her. Then, after the twisted ball of knotted guts had finally untangled itself, just as fast as they had emptied out of her abdomen onto the roots of the stage, they picked themselves up and slithered back into her body. When everything had neatly found its way back into place, Taylor's belly zipped back up, and closed tight.

“See, it's simple,” said Etruceana without so much as blinking an eye. “When the breath, voice, and mind work together they have incredible force and power. You just need to learn how to control your mind a little better, is all.”

Taylor stood there in wide-eyed shock, unable to move.

“I think from now on, Taylor,” said Etruceana, smiling wryly, while patting her stunned student on her bare shoulder, “it would be best for you to be careful about what you think and say.

Obviously, your mind has enormous capabilities. If I were you, I wouldn't be thinking about anything else opening up and spilling out onto the floor."



**Chapter 10: Splash in the Pond**

Taylor had been spending a lot of time with Etruceana in her courtyard. But she wasn't quite sure if she kept visiting Etruceana because she like the singing, or if she was really just trying to avoid Queen Nyla, the library, and anything, or anybody who reminded her of the *real* reason she was there in Telos.

Eventually, Taylor mastered all of Etruceana's secret sounds and tones. Luckily, for her no other body part opened up to empty its contents onto the floor of the stage. She was quite relieved. During this morning visit, it was time for Etruceana to begin teaching Taylor how to combine the original sounds for more advanced purposes.

"What we must do," explained Etruceana, "is teach you how to enter the realm of pure sound, vibration, and energy. To do this, we need to mix the tones that you have already learned into a variety of melodies. By varying the order and rhythm of these tones, the energies of the body will be made to link together. This will invigorate you and raise you up into a very elusive realm. This is one of our most productive strategies, and it is also one of our most difficult. The state of pure sound, vibration, and energy is not easy to achieve."

"Was this what you were doing when I first visited you here in the courtyard? Were you in this . . . realm, then?" asked Taylor.

"More or less," answered Etruceana. "But you never really saw the full effects of this technique."

"So you really have applied a type of science to all this, haven't you. It's not just whimsical singing is it?"

"Not just," said Etruceana. "So enough of all of this explaining. Let's get started. Are you ready?"

Taylor was hesitant. With everything new that Etruceana had to offer, it always seemed something unexpected and not so pleasant tended to happen. "I guess so," she said finally.

"I'll demonstrate first," said Etruceana, while placing herself center stage. Etruceana launched into a lengthy series of tones. Most of the sounds she used were ones that Taylor could identify, but it didn't take long for Taylor to become mesmerized by Etruceana's voice. Taylor was taken away, drifting in some faraway, ethereal place.

Standing at Etruceana's side, Taylor began swaying with the sounds. Most of the time, her eyes were closed, but once she opened them to look upon Etruceana. Surprisingly, Taylor noticed that the old lady's body and clothes were vibrating, humming. It actually looked as though Etruceana had become transparent. At first, Taylor couldn't take her eyes off of her, but when Etruceana's beautiful voice captivated her attention once again, she closed her eyes and continued swaying. Sometime later, while still listening, Taylor opened her eyes only to find that Etruceana had disappeared. At least, that's what Taylor thought until she looked upward to find the old woman floating in the air! This caught Taylor completely by surprise and sent her stumbling backward off of the stage and into the pond with a splash.

Standing up, unharmed but soaking wet, Taylor wiped the hair out of her eyes and watched Etruceana descend to the stage. "Why didn't you tell me you were going to do that?" shouted Taylor, while slapping the water's surface with both hands. She began making her way through the pond toward the stage. While climbing the roots out of the water, Taylor continued shouting, "Well! Why? Why didn't you tell me?"

Etruceana, who was now standing on the stage, shrugged, chuckled, and said, “I don’t know, honey. I certainly didn’t expect you to go falling off the stage once you found out. But now that you ask, I guess I’ve become quite fond of watching your reactions. You’re really quite amusing, you know.”

“Well, thanks a lot,” said Taylor as she turned and stormed off down the stairs. “Glad you find me so entertaining.” Making her way through the tall grass of the courtyard, Taylor shouted over her shoulder. “I’m going to work in the gardens.”

“Since you’re already wet,” Etruceana was still smiling, “you may as well.”

## **Chapter 11: Talking Tomes**

After a full day of working in the hydroponic gardens, Taylor found herself back in the pod, at the kitchen table. She was relaxing with Monka after another delicious meal. The dishes had already been washed and put away. They were watching the sunset, sipping on some tea, enjoying the view from the kitchen. When the sun was gone, and the dark outside was sufficient enough to expose the stars, the walls of the pod took on a small luster of hidden light deep under its surface. Eventually, the arched walls took on a full shine as it brought a soft nighttime light into the room. Like the cascading waterfall of light pouring down the walls in the great central atrium, the light of the walls in the pod did the same.

Monka got up from the kitchen table, walked over to bookshelf and grabbed a full stack of books and set them on the table. A beam of bright light shot out of the ceiling, brightening the entire table.

Taylor looked first at the books, and then Monka, all the while wondering what she was up to. Monka didn't say a word, but rather opened a book and began to read, silently to herself while taking an occasional sip of tea. "So, what are you doing?"

"Just reading, is all," said Monka not looking up from the book.

"What are you reading?"

"Oh, some old texts."

"Why? Why are you reading those?"

"To prepare."

"Prepare for what?"

"For when we enter the temple and do the dance, and..." Monka stopped herself short.

"You think I'm the one, too, don't you?"

Monka looked up from her book. "Yes I do. Since the first time I set eyes on you." She pushed the book away and reached for Taylor's hand. "Before you arrived, word had gone out throughout Telos that someone from the outside had seen the light during one of our dances in the temple. When I saw you, standing there after you made your way in, turning all around in awe of this place, all dirty and scraggly, and tired... I knew. I could see it in you. I knew then that you were the one. The one everyone had been talking about. The one with the gift."

Taylor stared at the table and all the ancient books.

"You see, Taylor," continued Monka, "we've all been waiting for you. All of us. We've been here, all our lives, waiting, studying, preparing, getting ready for the time when the one arrives. So, I'm here in my pod, studying and waiting for the time when the one will come to lead the team of seven."

“The Sacred Seven,” Taylor paused for a moment to think. “Queen Nyla mentioned that to me the other day when I visited the library. What’s that all about?”

“When we enter the temple and perform the Dance of Divinity, groups of seven dancers will form. Dancers will be breaking up and forming new groups, but even after breaking up and creating a new group, they will have to get into position according to the Divine Design. And the group that you are in, Taylor, will be the legendary team of seven.”

“What’s the Sacred Seven supposed to do?”

“The Sacred Seven will be sent back in time to set our future right. That is why we all study the books in our library. For we need to know the stories people lived by.”

“But, besides *the one*, how do you know who the others will be?”

“We know that the one is supposed to be in our temple, and we will all be dancing, but nobody knows for sure if they’ll be part of the Sacred Seven. Therefore, we *all* need to be prepared. We need to know these books if we are to set the story right. So we study, wait, and hope. That is what we do.”

Taylor stared out the window into the darkness. There weren’t very many stars in the sky that night. “But how do you know where the Sacred Seven will be going? I mean, where in history will we be placed?”

“We don’t know where you’ll take us. So we have to be prepared to leave for almost any time and place. That is why we have gathered so many of these great books throughout the ages.” Monka took a sip of her tea and looked down at the open page of her book.

“Where *I’ll* take us?” asked Taylor incredulously.

“Yes.” Monka then looked up from her book. “Where *you’ll* take us. You see, when the Sacred Seven leave our temple and head back into the future, whatever place and time you have in

*your* mind when the moment arrives, is where you'll take the Sacred Seven." Monka paused for a second. "As long as it is someplace in the past."

"I get to decide where we're headed?" Taylor asked. "*Me?*"

Monka looked out at the darkness. "Yes, *you*." Then she turned toward Taylor. "But first, I think *you* need to decide whether you are the one, or not." Monka took a deep breath. "Because, until you decide, there won't be any traveling for any of us. We'll still be here studying, preparing, waiting for the one to arrive." Monka then looked down at her old book, and began reading its tattered pages.

After it became apparent that there would be no hope of disrupting Monka's studies, Taylor got up from the table and started walking back toward her room. When she reached the hallway she stopped, turned around and stood there for a long while, watching Monka turn page, after page, after page. It wasn't until she realized how much she admired the woman's resolve and unwavering devotion that the tears started to roll. Monka, Queen Nyla, Etruceana, Pelleur, *everyone* living here in Telos, were focused on fulfilling this one, particular, final aim. The Lemurians had moved here, built this place, survived all this time, collected all those ancient texts to read and study, and trained continuously by dancing, singing, and drumming, for the singular purpose of accomplishing this one and only goal. And now, all their efforts hinged entirely on her.

The next morning after a silent breakfast with Monka, Taylor found herself back in the great Lemurian Library.

She immediately went to the rear of the library beyond the reach of the shelves, waiting to witness more of the Akasha Chronicle. But this time, the chronicle eluded her. The shelves, however, seemed to be more accustomed to her travels through their aisles. They didn't shrink away from her when she tried to get close. After Taylor had been up and down a few aisles, they started allowing her to take, and survey, a scroll, tablet or book from their cradling arms.

Finding texts and tomes from nearly every culture from every time, it was hard for Taylor to decide which one to take. Finally, she picked a large book with a wooden cover and brass hinges and took it to the rear of the library, for she still didn't want to miss the Akasha Chronicle should it appear once again. She found a shelf that didn't rock so much, and sat on the floor, propped her back up against it, and poured through the text, turning page after page of parchment decorated with colorful borders and illustrations. She wondered how the Lemurians had gathered such treasures. Then, while focusing on the mysterious handwritten symbols and scrolling from left to right, the book started talking to her. In a voice that very well could have come from the scribe who wrote it, the book actually started speaking.

Taylor slammed the book shut. She turned, first left, then right, looking down the aisles to see if anyone were there, nearby. She was still alone. She cautiously opened the large wooden cover again, but heard nothing until her eyes focused on and then scanned over the symbols. Again a mysterious voice began reading the text. After tossing the book down, she jumped up and ran into an aisle, grabbed the handle of a cylindrical ivory case, lifted it off the shelf, brought it back to the rear of the library, gingerly rolled out the papyrus scroll, and again scanned the symbols. It also spoke to her, in yet another language.

That's when she tore down an aisle and began taking down and then scanning through book after book, script after scroll, tablet after tome, testing each one to see if they too would speak the words. When she had a pile all spread out around her on the floor in the aisle, she felt the presence of someone nearby. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Queen Nyla, standing at the end of the aisle, in the shadow, watching her.

"You hear the voices, don't you?" The queen stepped forward into the light. "The voices of the scribes."

Taylor nodded.

Queen Nyla walked up the aisle toward her. "As I suspected. You see, you have many gifts."

Taylor looked down at the books scattered all over the floor. "But I don't understand what they're trying to tell me. The languages are all foreign."

"You'll learn some of them, in time." Queen Nyla offered a hand to Taylor. "Come with me. I want to show you something." The queen lifted Taylor off the floor with relative ease and then led her up the aisle toward the front of the library. When they reached the big, round tables, the queen brought Taylor to a seat where an enormous book was resting on the table.

Queen Nyla pulled out the large, cushioned chair in front of the book and then settled back into the seat. "This," started the queen with a dramatic pause, "is the Lemurian's Divine Design."

Taylor could tell from the worn and ragged edges that the book *had* to be incredibly old. When she finally stood next to the queen, she recognized the inlaid design on the front cover. "I've seen that before. It's carved into the doors of the Temple of Light."

"Indeed it is," said the queen. "This is the ancient Naacal text that I was telling you about the last time we were in the library together."

"The one that tells the story about the outsider?"

"The one and only," said the queen. "It's all written here."

"What's the design on the front cover mean? To me it looks like a shuttlecock." Taylor noticed that the queen didn't quite understand. "It's small object we hit over a net with a racket in a game called badminton. The shuttlecock flies through the air, leading with the round part, followed by the tail feathers."

"Hmm," said the queen, "I can see how you might think that. You're wrong about the getting hit over the net with a racket part, but you *are* right about the flying part."



Taylor looked closer at the cover of the book. “Does this design have anything to do with the Sacred Seven traveling back in time?”

“Very perceptive, Taylor. You have a sharp mind. You’ll definitely need that for your journey. This design has *everything* to do with the team of seven traveling back in time.”

“Tell me about the design.”

“The Naacals call it the Divine Design.” The queen hesitated and swept her hand over the design, caressing the cover. She stared at the book for a long time. “There are many secrets hidden inside this book. But it is not yet time for them be revealed to you.”

Taylor looked around the library at the rows and rows of shelves and thousands of books and tablets and scrolls. She understood then that within these books there were probably a countless supply of secret, and therefore, sacred words. And here she had been, pulling down book after book, opening the covers, exposing the coveted words. How careless and selfish she had been. “I can understand that,” she said. “After all, it holds the secrets of your people.”

The queen lifted her eyes to Taylor. “There is a way to learn, however.”

“How?” asked Taylor.

“First, you must commit to leading the Sacred Seven.”

“I’ve already made that decision.”

If Queen Nyla was happy or satisfied with Taylor’s announcement, her expression certainly didn’t show it. She stared, stone-faced without so much as a trace of emotion. To Taylor it looked as if all the long years of the queen’s life had somehow just hardened in her face. She stayed that way, her eyes fixed on Taylor without saying anything at all for a very long time. Taylor figured she was probably reading her mind, trying to decide whether she was being honest, or not.

Taylor took a chair next to the queen. “Last night I watched Monka sitting at the table in her pod, reading, studying, waiting. It got so late I had to go to sleep. She told me that she and everyone here have been doing that all their life. For all I know, *you’ve* been doing it all *your* life. And, I can’t even imagine how long that’s been.” This time Taylor reached out and took Queen Nyla’s hand. “If it’s that important to all of you... and, if something horrible *is* going to happen to the world... and, if you really believe that I’m the one that’s supposed to lead the team... then, that’s what I have to do.”

Even after saying it, Taylor still had a hard time believing that she did. She had just committed herself, telling Queen Nyla exactly what she wanted to hear. Taylor knew how to tell people what they wanted to hear, and how to go along with things the way they were. But she still didn’t quite know if she believed. She would do the work, study, learn what she needed, try her hardest, but not quite, totally believe that she was the one. Not yet, anyway.

Taylor noticed that Queen Nyla hadn’t pulled her hand away, but she also hadn’t returned the gesture in-kind. Her face was also still set in stone. Taylor wondered if she knew what she had been thinking. If she did, she didn’t mention it, and her face sure didn’t show it. With the queen’s prolonged silence, Taylor then stared at the book without saying another word.

The queen’s hand pulled away when she rose from her chair and pushed it in. “Second, you have lots of studying to do. Eventually, if you come to understand the story of your own becoming, and penetrate the fabric of your narrative, you may learn *the word*. And if you know what *the word* means, the Divine Design will open and its secrets will be divulged. So, read as much as you can. The books are talking to you, and that’s a good sign. That doesn’t happen to many. They must trust you. You don’t know the languages yet, but you will learn. There are also other books here that are written in English for you to study. We have translations of everything.”

Queen Nyla began walking toward the door. Before exiting, she stopped and turned. “Finally, to learn *the word*, you absolutely must know and understand... *that for the sake of which* you do it.”

The Divine Design stirred. It actually seemed to stretch and groan, almost as if struggling to open.

While Taylor remained seated, still staring at the now quiet book, the queen exited the library.

## **Chapter 12: Earth Moves**

From then on, every spare moment Taylor had was spent in the library, devouring book after book, script after scroll, tablet after tome, trying to make sense of what they were saying. She read other books, too; books that the Lemurians had acquired that were written in English; even a few books that were written by the Lemurians themselves. And as she spent more and more of her time in the library learning as much as possible about the ancient civilizations from which these books had obviously come, Taylor began to wonder why she could hear the voices. Maybe, she thought, these new gifts—the Akasha Chronicle and the voices from the books—had more to do with Telos, than with her. Maybe it was just the environment that allowed all these things to happen. Then again, she did have the dream, and she did meet Zanadar. She didn’t know if she really had any *gifts*. But still, she couldn’t completely give in to the belief that she was the one. Taylor had become curious and intensely focused on trying to understand all of what the Lemurians were attempting to teach her, and she was learning a great deal, but, from time to time, her skepticism of the powers of the Lemurian’s mystical world, and her so called gifts, would still get the best of her.

Late one evening, Taylor stood against the balcony on the third level, looking out onto the floor of the central atrium. It was dark in the dome. Night had fallen upon Telos. And even though the temple was at rest, the golden ceiling of the great dome, still glowed ever so slightly. It was also expanding and contracting like a great ribcage, breathing new life into the sleeping body of the city. Everyone had long ago returned to their pods, yet Taylor, unable to rest, remained in the atrium. She thought she was alone, until noticing a light, nearly hidden, under a thick canopy of leaves and branches on the base floor of the atrium. Immediately, she bolted through the dark, ran down a winding staircase, and didn't slow down until reaching the bottom.

She was in a jungle now, for all the plants had come alive and grown since the temple's light had subsided. In spite of the thicker brush, there was a thin path leading into the dense growth. She took it, but after traveling only a short distance the path ended abruptly. From then on she had to push through tall grass and bushes, jump across small running streams, duck under vines and branches, and climb over logs and rocks. Eventually, she saw the light filtering its way through the tangled woods. Picking up speed, becoming like the panther she had met on the mountain, Taylor stalked her way toward the source. She didn't stop until realizing who it was.

It was the queen. She was facing Taylor, standing at the far edge of a stream in the middle of a large, fairly open space. There were a few rocks, logs, and tall trees with outstretched limbs providing a dense canopy above, but the brush was much thinner throughout the area. And as for the queen, she was emitting the golden glow of light that Taylor had seen from above. Queen Nyla was sweating and breathing hard.

While remaining at the border of the opening, hiding behind a tree, Taylor found it impossible to contain her curiosity any longer. "Where does your light come from?"

As if she had been aware of Taylor's presence all along, the queen gave her answer calmly. "It comes from inside. From the full expression of one's inherent divinity. It comes from resonating with Divine Immanence."

Taylor, moved into the clearing, approached the queen, and sat down on a large rock on the opposite side of the stream. Taylor scratched her head and made her face bunch up. "You know, I've got to tell you, I'm not sure I get all of this. Etruceana talked about Divine Immanence, about lifting or raising our consciousness upward. Pelleur, on the other hand, during the short time I was able to talk to him, mentioned Divine Transcendence, and the pulse, and giving up our will, to receive the powers from above. And now you're talking about Divine Immanence and the light that comes from our expression of it within. It's all very hard to understand. How is all of this supposed to work together for the dance in the temple?"

The queen raised her long, muscular leg and placed it up on a log to stretch her hamstring. "Try to think of all of this as... well: Up, down, all around, over, under, even."

"Huh?" Taylor cocked her head to the side. "I don't get it."

The queen continued stretching. "In our temple we do many things. To accomplish our purpose, we need to combine things. We need Etruceana's songs, which will raise our energy, carry Divine Immanence *up*, and help us to get *over*. We also need Pelleur's drumming, which will bring Divine Transcendence *down* and ground it here, *under* our mountain. And we need to dance; this will help us *all around*; it blends the two—up and down, over and under. The dancing keeps things *even*, if you will."

"So the dancing blends the singing and drumming together?"

"It does. It moves things around like a whirlpool. Or like an upside down tornado." Using her long, strong legs, Queen Nyla lunged onto the log, reached upward and grabbed a hanging vine from the branches above, pulled it down, and like a cowboy with a rope, twirled it around.

"*Oh!*" said Taylor, looking as though a light had just turned on in *her* head.

"But to get the light to emanate from oneself takes a lot of work, and quite a bit of time," said Queen Nyla, while taking the vine and weaving it back through the branches above. "Are you ready to get started?"

Taylor sighed heavily. "If it'll get me into the temple, I am."

"It will," said the queen. "But aren't you interested in the dancing?"

"Yeah, sure," said Taylor. "It's just that there seems to be so much to learn, so much to do, and hardly any time to do it in, too. Everyone seems to think the dance in the temple must happen soon."

Queen Nyla hopped down and leaned against the log. "If it's any help, Taylor, all you have to do is believe in yourself, and all good things will come."

Taylor smiled at the queen and thought, but probably not just to herself, Easy for you to say.

If the queen had read Taylor's mind, she sure didn't show it. "So, are you ready to begin?"

"I am," said Taylor while almost standing at attention.

"Good," said the queen. "First, we will need to merge your feeling and thinking. We must integrate your body with your mind. Yet, we must progress further still, because if that is as far as we proceed, this light, this *fire*, will not be sustained; and it will be dim, to say the least."

Taylor nodded her head and continued listening. "If you say so."

Queen Nyla started pacing. "To sustain the light of Divine Immanence, we will also need to integrate the environment into your dance, as well."

Taylor looked confused. Her recollection of dance involved a dancer moving his or her body through empty space. People either danced alone or with a partner. How was the environment going to be involved here? she wondered.

"To do this, you'll need to explore various elements in the environment. This should help you to express the feelings you're keeping all bottled-up inside. By exploring the elements, you will come to know yourself."

"I'm not sure what you mean." Taylor thought back to the time when she was planting with Monka. Was this dancing going to be like that?

"For example," said the queen, as she turned to look around at her studio, "you may want to pick a rock, or water, soil or a plant, or you could choose the air, or even fire."

"Why?" asked Taylor. "What's a rock going to do for me?"

"The goal here is to discover the specific qualities of a substance that resonate with your personal experience. Your task will be to make contact with the physical element of your choice and then explore the various movements that are an integral part of that element."

"And what is this supposed to do?"

"From the connection you make with the element of your choice, you'll begin to discover certain movements. These movements give emergence to feelings that are escaping you at the moment. The feelings will be uprooted by your connection with the element and your movements. And, most importantly, all of this will provide you with a certain power or inner force. This power will come not *from* nature, not from a position of power *over* nature, but from a position of cooperation *with* nature." Finished with her explanation, Queen Nyla sat down on the log, and fell silent.

Taylor walked around the clearing, studying the various objects lying about, thinking about all that she had just heard. She had no idea what to choose. This was all so weird, she thought. “I’m supposed to become one with an element?” she said out loud.

The queen did not answer.

Nothing really captured her attention, so she found herself a soft, cool place on the bare ground and sat down on the slightly damp dirt. Within no time at all she began swirling it around with her hands as if playing with sand on a beach. This was familiar territory for Taylor. But this time, instead of groveling in the dirt as she had done in her room, while trying to hide and heal, now her hips began to swivel and sway. Taylor thought her movements were coming involuntarily at first, like a reflex reaction from her pelvis, but then she realized that the earth, the dirt, was actually moving with her. From her sitting position, she was having an intimate, sensual dance with the earth. Quickly, she rolled over onto her side, turned onto her belly and became like a coiling snake, slithering in the moving, musky loam.

After dancing with the dirt, Taylor found herself crawling up the trunk of a large tree. When she was fully upright, she turned her back to the trunk, leaned and pushed hard against it. The tall, sturdy plant bent slightly giving her a place to rest. Like being engulfed by a blanket of bark, the tree’s trunk curled around her, covered her, comforted her. From the tree she felt the deep compassion and understanding she had been searching for. She felt as if the tree—only the tree—was capable of excavating her sorrow, absorbing it and sharing it with her. She believed that the tree had an ancient sadness of its own and, therefore, could join with her in hers. In this condition of support, Taylor did not fear her own emotions; she did not believe they would overwhelm her. With the trunk of the tree, soothing her, rocking her, Taylor rested and cried.



When she was done, with a trail of tears running down her dirty cheeks, Taylor emerged from the trunk of the tree, opened her eyes and looked into the powerful, witnessing eyes of the queen. Exhausted, she fell into Queen Nyla's embracing arms.

With her first dance lesson with the queen complete, Taylor began to seek ways of receiving comfort, finding private places under the mountain where she could think, meditate, soothe, and further restore her sense of balance. One day, late in the afternoon, she found herself under the trees, up on a small hill in the atrium. She took a seat on the ground and leaned up against a large, gnarled log. Clearly, she felt then, there *is* a close and ancient rapport between humans and the natural environment. In her old world, she had become separated from this innate relationship.

Looking back on her earlier years, she remembered all those endless hours spent locked away in her classroom or in her bedroom staring into a computer, while all the time wishing she were on the outside enjoying all that nature had to offer. She then thought back to what her old world must look like now. Had things changed? Or were they better? Or worse? Were people still staring incessantly at computer screens in their air-conditioned rooms separated from nature? Maybe, she hoped, somebody was having an intimate relationship with nature.

An image of Kyle immediately popped into her head. He was sitting alone on a hot, sunny day in the middle of a large, grassy field staring off toward the horizon. A warm breeze playfully tossed his dark hair.

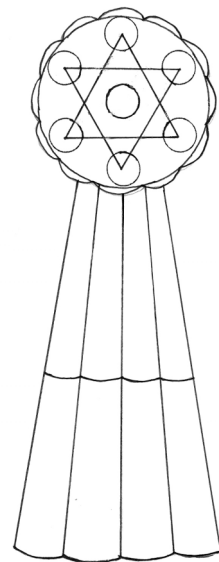
**Chapter 13: Fried Roots**

It had been a full year since Taylor first arrived in Telos, and she was now seventeen. Healed from life outside the mountain, her body had been growing stronger and her mind sharper every day. Her muscles were more defined, her stride bolder, her gaze more penetrating, her demeanor calmer. And with all the studying that she had been doing, she was now much more informed, as well. Yet, here she was, standing with Monka at the railing on the third floor in the central atrium directly across from the doors of the Temple of Light, still only resigned to fulfilling her purpose. It was morning and everything was just beginning to come awake. The temple was putting out more and more light, and people were beginning to appear in number on the walkways striating the walls.

Monka turned and faced Taylor. “I’ve asked you to be here this early morning because it’s time for you to become more familiar with our Divine Design.” Monka turned toward the temple, placed her elbows on the railing and stared off toward the doors and the design. “Do you remember when I was telling you about how we were all going to form into groups when dancing in the temple?”

“Yeah,” said Taylor. “You said the dancers always would form into groups of seven in positions according to the Divine Design.”

“I guess you *were* listening.” Monka was smiling. “Well, let’s see how well you listen, now.” She pointed toward the doors. “Hidden in the design you see on the door are many sacred shapes. In the center is the circle, which represents the aim toward which consciousness evolves. It is the ultimate level of complexity. The Omega Point. That



represents you. The dancer in the center of the design.”

“Me, huh?” Taylor placed her elbows on the railing and leaned her shoulder into Monka’s.

“So, what’s the design that looks like two triangles? They make a six pointed star, right?”

“That’s the star-tetrahedron,” said Monka. “The six points establish the position of the six other circles. You see those circles on each of the six points of the star-tetrahedron, right?”

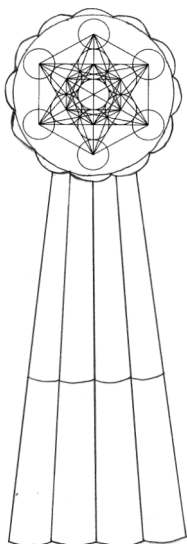
“Yeah, I see them.”

“Well,” said Monka, “that’s where the other six dancers will be positioned around you.”

“Ah,” said Taylor. “A total of seven circles for the Sacred Seven. Now I get it.”

“But we’re just getting started,” added Monka. “Now for the secrets. If you were to add another six circles in between...,” the six circles appeared in the design, “...you get a total of thirteen circles. That forms the Fruit of Life design.”

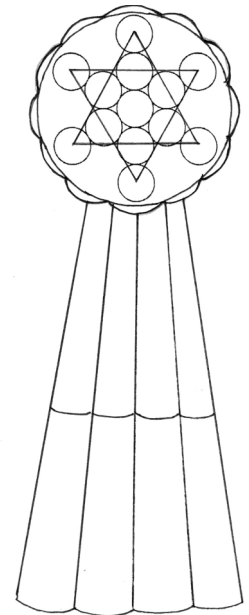
At first, Taylor wasn’t sure if her eyes were deceiving her. “At least you didn’t call it the Fruit of the Loom design.” Taylor winked playfully at Monka.



Monka ignored her. “During the dance, when everything is right, the six dancers must move from the outer six circles, to the inner six circles closer to you. When they do, Metatron’s Cube will appear.”

At that moment, straight lines shot out from the center of each circle to connect with the center of each of the other circles, causing a strange cube with all kinds of intersecting lines to come into view.

Taylor leaned over the railing to get a closer view. “I see it,” she said.



“And if all conditions are right,” added Monka, “eventually the Flower of Life will appear.”

As if on cue, the entire pattern changed and came alive, proceeding through a number of transformations and transmutations to create the intricate design called the Flower of Life.

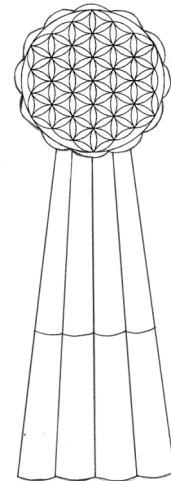
“Wow,” said Taylor, “that’s pretty.” She stood mesmerized by the sight, wondering how the wood of the doors could change so easily like that. “And what are all those feather-like things coming out of the bottom of the design?”

Monka pushed herself off the railing, stood up straight and folded her arms over her chest. “That’s what happens when the Sacred Seven departs. I guess you could say those *feathers* are the trail of light left behind in the Divine Design’s wake as it travels back in time.”

“Right,” said Taylor. “Thanks for the sacred geometry lesson, Monka.” Taylor then abruptly pushed herself off the railing to escape all that travel back time, save the world stuff, and took off running deep into the mountain, where she would be sure to find Pelleur's pit. She was going to plant herself in his pit until the Lord of Drums finally realized that she was serious and indeed ready to drum.

When she reached bottom, she jumped down into the pit, sat on the ground, and crossed her legs. Taking what she had learned from Monka, Etruceana, and Queen Nyla, she began practicing her tones, melodies, and stretching, waiting for Pelleur to arrive.

After nearly an entire day of waiting, Pelleur appeared. "So I see you are ready to begin."



Taylor had been sitting with her eyes closed, stretching her hamstrings, toning a melody. While coming out of the stretch, she stopped humming and opened her eyes to see Pelleur, now standing under the hanging roots. She said nothing.

While smiling at his patient pupil, Pelleur stepped down into the pit and took a seat directly across from Taylor. "First," he said with an expression that quickly grew serious, "you'll need to start with the body of the drum."

Still, Taylor said nothing.

"Now," continued Pelleur, who seemed quite satisfied with Taylor's state of mind, "for our purposes, the body should be made of wood. Obviously then, you'll need to look for a tree that you'd like to convert into a drum. I am not going to explain to you what kind of tree, or what it should look or feel like. That'll be for you to discover." Pelleur paused for a moment as if giving Taylor a chance to ask a question. When Taylor said nothing, he continued. "You should begin your search as soon as you can. When you have found what you believe is a good tree, you must let me know, and I will decide if the wood of that tree is good for a drum. We will see what you find."

Pelleur then stood up and promptly left Taylor sitting alone in the pit. Taylor was just a little surprised. "That's it?" she said to herself out loud. He sure doesn't provide much help. Guess I'm on my own. Might as well get up and start looking.

After searching for days, Taylor finally found the roots of a tree she believed would work. Immediately, she ran all the way back to the drum pit to notify Pelleur. Pelleur, who was sitting in the pit, quietly meditating and listening, stood up slowly, without hesitation, and accompanied Taylor to the rooted tree. Hitched to a belt that he was wearing around his waist, he carried an axe.

Pelleur followed Taylor through a variety of tunnels and caverns to a location deep within the bowels of the mountain. When they arrived at the sighting, Taylor stood next to the exposed roots,

displaying her find. Pelleur walked over to the roots like a hunter approaching a kill, not fully certain whether the wild animal was indeed dead. He ran his huge, calloused hands over the length of the large, thick roots. "This is an extraordinary find," he said, while looking at Taylor approvingly. "Do you know what you have found here?"

"I just know that I like the feel of the roots. I think the tree is dead, too. I didn't want to use the wood from a living tree. It just wouldn't seem right."

Pelleur nodded his head and smiled. "This *is* the root of a dead tree. And this tree has been dead for a very long time. Do you have any idea how it died?"

Taylor took a closer look at the tree, hoping to get a clue. She thought that maybe some disease may have been the cause, or maybe it was taken over by some kind of insect. When she found no signs leading to a conclusion, she said, "I have no idea."

"It was struck by lightning."

Taylor looked confused. "Why would that be a good thing?"

"The best of drums come from the wood of trees struck by lightning. Lightning is a very powerful force. A tree struck by lightning will already be carrying the pulse of Divine Transcendence."

Pelleur then examined the roots carefully again until he found a specific location to cut a root. Pulling the axe from the belt around his waist, he handed it to Taylor and instructed her as to where she should chop the roots away to obtain the proper size and thickness for the body of her drum. "It has to be a large, round part of the root," he said. "Do you know why it should be round?"

Taylor nodded her head, saying nothing.

Pelleur smiled, seeming proud of Taylor's silent ways. "Why?"

"A drum is round to represent the wholeness of the universe and the experience of unity."

Taylor nodded once, firmly, and then took a good strong swing at the root.

When Taylor finished cutting away the part needed, she and Pelleur began the long trek back to the pit. Taylor carried the heavy root and examined it along the way. She was excited about her find and grateful for the significance of the highly charged wood she had chosen.

Once they arrived at the pit, and after some simple instructions from Pelleur, Taylor began the laborious and time-consuming process of hollowing out the thick root. As she carved away, day by day, using the tools that Pelleur had provided her, occasionally the Lord of Drums dropped by. He would look over her work, give Taylor a few more directions, and then leave.

When finished, Taylor presented her work to Pelleur for final inspection. On the outside of the circular body, she had carved her rendition of the exterior of Mount Shasta. Pelleur was impressed.

"Do you know why the drum is hollow?" he asked, while holding the body of the drum upright.

"To carry the sound, I'd imagine," answered Taylor, temporarily forgetting that Pelleur would be searching for a more profound answer.

"Yes, this is true. However, the body of the drum has been emptied to give space for Divine Transcendence to spread its teaching downward, in our direction, into our temple. When we drum, our hands come down on the head of the empty drum, and this serves to bring Divine Transcendence down. Once it is in our temple, it spreads its mighty force and energy out into Telos, then the mountain, then, further still, into Earth."

Taylor looked at Pelleur and realized for the first time that this man was a very serious fellow. Pelleur was a quiet man, a man with a job to do, a man obviously aware that he knew how to do it, a proud man, a man who *loved* drumming.

**Chapter 14: Pouncing Panther**

"It is time for you to attend to the head of your drum," said Pelleur one day while holding the carved body of Taylor's drum. "You must have a skin."

Taylor and Pelleur were sitting at the edge of the small creek running adjacent to the pit. The water was trickling along, quietly. "Where am I going to get a skin?" she asked. "You're talking about an animal's skin, right?"

Pelleur nodded his head, saying nothing, while staring at the moving water. Taylor's drum body was sitting in his lap.

"Am I going to have to kill an animal to do this?!" Taylor was just a little concerned. In no way did she want to sacrifice an animal for her drum.

"How you come by the skin is entirely up to you. The power of the drum, however, will be affected by how the skin is acquired."

Taylor looked down at the water in the creek. She didn't want to kill any animal living within the mountain. She loved all the animals in Telos and couldn't imagine why anyone would want to do such a thing for a drum. In fact, she really didn't want to kill *any* animal. She was beginning to have serious doubts about this whole drumming thing. If drumming meant that she would have to take the life of an animal, she wasn't sure that she wanted any part of it.

"You see, Taylor," continued Pelleur, "the combination of the animal's skin, with the drum's body, when struck by the drummer, will release its earthly existence. Only when all are in alignment, will we be able to call on Divine Transcendence. And so, the drum's voice is not only the voice of the tree as with the roots, but also the voice of the animal as with the skin... and the voice of the drummer as with the hands."



Taylor nodded, yet she was apprehensive and somewhat disengaged from the entire conversation. She was still wondering where she'd get the skin for her drum, questioning whether or not she really wanted to go through with this, imagining herself killing some poor animal, all for *her* drum.

Some time after her conversation with Pelleur, Taylor had been walking along, wandering mindlessly through the network of tunnels under the mountain, trying to come to terms with her assigned task. Unexpectedly, she found herself on the outside. How she got there, she had no idea. Apparently, she passed through some portal leading to the outside. At first she was shocked. It had been so long since she had been on the surface. Worried about how to get back in, she turned around and tried to determine where the opening was, but couldn't find any sign of it. Then she began to panic, but only for a second. Fortunately, she remembered the time when she first arrived here on Mount Shasta. She made it into the mountain back then, so there should be no reason why she wouldn't be able to do the same this time.

Taylor calmed down and turned around to take a look at where she was. She was below the tree line in a rocky area of the mountain. The sun was low on the horizon, setting for the day. It was warm, yet the breeze was fresh and light. Much of the life on the mountain was beginning to slow down. It was that time of day when twilight was fast approaching, and all the animals knew they had precious little time before the light would fade away. It was a tranquil time, a time for enjoying the setting sun, for being thankful for making it through another day, a time for the animals to find places to bed down for the coming night.

Taylor decided to get a better look at her surroundings. And then, just as she was walking around a tall rock, a huge, cinnamon-colored black bear appeared directly in front of her. The bear

was up on its hind legs, and twice her height! And now it was less than five feet in front of her and ready to take a swipe.

From above Taylor's head, a huge cat, lion, leopard, cougar—something!—gave out a menacing growl and leaped onto the bear's enormous chest. The bear was knocked off balance. But as he fell to the ground, he swung his huge paw at the cat's back. The bear and cat both rolled on the ground. Surprisingly, the bear was almost as nimble as the cat. In less than a second, the bear was back on his hind legs. The claw marks from the cat were visible on the bear's chest. The cat, with blood oozing out its muscular back from where the bear's mighty claws had ripped at its skin, went after the bear again.

Taylor ran off around the tall rock and began climbing to a place higher on the mountain. As she climbed she listened to the horrific screams and growls of both the cat and the bear. While rounding a big boulder, she glanced back and saw that the bear had the cat firmly under control. Its huge jaws were wrapped around the poor cat's throat. The cat clawed frantically at the bear's head and belly for a few short seconds and then went limp.

Taylor looked down below her, and noticed the bear surveying the area, standing over the dead cat, looking for her. The bear was badly hurt. Blood was running down its neck, chest and belly. His right eye and nose also were cut and bleeding. The cat had not gone easily.

Taking a closer look at the cat lying on the ground below the bear, she realized that it was the same panther that she had met with Saint Germain when she first arrived on the mountain. She remembered scratching its soft belly while he rolled around on the ground under her like a playful kitten. Taylor's mind then quickly returned to her original task of acquiring a skin for her drum. Now was not the time to mourn. She needed to get to the cat.

Wishing she had some of Saint Germain's energizing potion, Taylor picked up a handful of rocks and threw them down on the bear. Her only hope was to lure the bear up the mountain on one route, while she ran down a different, faster route to pick up the carcass of the dead cat, drag it to safety, and perhaps escape into some other portal leading into the mountain.

The rocks hit the bear directly on its chest and head. It growled and clawed at the air not knowing from where they came. Taylor then called to the bear, taunting him, attempting to coax him over to the more difficult climb up, on her right. When she saw that she was successful and that the bear was firmly committed to coming the way she had planned, Taylor ran down the slope on the easier path to her left. Scared like she had never been scared before, she practically flew down the mountain. When she reached the cat, she looked up and noticed that the bear was still climbing. She looked behind her and found a small trail leading down the mountain. She bent over, grabbed the cat by its hind legs and began dragging the heavy carcass down the trail. She only made it twenty feet, when the bear saw her and started coming back down after her.

As she continued dragging the cat down the trail, she noticed an opening under a large bolder. Taylor slid through the gap and pulled the cat down into a hole after her. Within seconds, the bear came pounding down at the edge of the hole. Dust and dirt were kicked up in Taylor's face. The bear's head then pushed through the small opening, but luckily for Taylor, the enormous animal wasn't able to get his shoulders through the gap. Taylor and the cat were just out of reach. The bear growled exposing its long fangs, and twisted its huge head, trying to get at her. Taylor could feel and smell the bear's hot, foul breath filling the small, tight hole.

The only way out for Taylor would be downward. She looked down at her feet, trying to determine if there was room to get down further. Then, she looked back at the bear. The bear's head was gone, but now it was digging away at the dirt. Luckily for Taylor, the bear could only dig so far,

because it ran into another rock just beneath the surface of the dirt. But with the small amount of dirt out of the way, the bear was able to get its head, and one front paw through the hole.

Just as the bear was about to take a swipe, which certainly would have been the end of Taylor, she and the cat fell downward deeper into the hole. Pushing through a bunch of roots, Taylor and the dead cat landed in a small room. Taylor found herself lying on the floor in a Yaktavian's home. And the Yaktavian wasn't too happy about her unannounced intrusion, either. Apparently, the furry little creature had been enjoying his dinner and now Taylor had fallen right into his kitchen. The small Yaktavian stood up and with his arms wailing overhead, began shouting something totally incomprehensible. Taylor tried to apologize while pulling the bloody body of the panther through the Yaktavian's home toward a doorway. While the Yaktavian followed her to the door, still waving his furry arms and shouting, she opened it and squeezed herself and the cat through. As Taylor tried to apologize again to the angry Yaktavian, he slammed the small door in her face. She then collapsed in exhaustion, leaning against her dead panther.

Somehow, Taylor managed to get up but then hit her head on the low ceiling. She was in another small tunnel deep in the mountain. Stooping, she began to drag the cat's body through the tight passageway. Soon, this tunnel opened up into a much larger space. That's when Taylor decided to hoist the heavy panther up over her shoulder. With a struggle and a few failed attempts, she finally managed to lift the warm, bloody carcass of the dead cat, and with great effort began making her way through the intricate maze of tunnels back to Pelleur's pit.

These were the Yaktavian tunnels where they kept their mighty bells. Taylor was amazed. Here they were, all the bells, lining the tunnels, strategically located near small cracks in the wall that separated the Yaktavians and Lemurians from the outside. As Taylor labored with the heavy carcass of the cat draped over her shoulder, she passed one huge bell after another. They were shaped like

spheres, cylinders and cones. And stationed at each bell were always a group of small, furry Yakies. When she approached each new bell, still carrying her heavy panther, the little fellows would come scurrying up to her and bow, allowing her to pass. They seemed to know who she was and accepted her presence.

When Taylor finally arrived back at the pit, Pelleur was sitting quietly, listening for the pulse, as he often did, readying himself to begin a solo session of drumming. When he saw that she was carrying a dead animal, he sprang to his feet and ran over to help her carry it to the edge of the pit.

Together, Taylor and Pelleur placed the big panther on the ground above the pit. Then they stood over the amazing creature to inspect the remains. Its skin was ripped open both at the neck and the belly. And its fur was heavily stained with blood and dirt. Taylor herself was also covered with blood and dirt. Her chest was still heaving from the exertion. Dirty, blood-stained sweat poured down her drooping shoulders.

"This is an excellent animal," said Pelleur looking reverentially at the body. "How did you get it?"

Taylor explained her entire ordeal. From unknowingly wandering out of the mountain, to wondering why there had even been an opening allowing her to do so in the first place, and finally concluding with the part about her falling through the hole into the kitchen of an angry Yaktavian.

"This animal has sacrificed his life to save you," said Pelleur while looking at the dead carcass. "This is the very best of circumstances. Plus, it's a panther. This is good. This is *very* good. I sense much good energy here. It will be interesting to hear the voice of your drum."

Pelleur jumped into his pit, grabbed a bowl of sage, then stepped back up on the ground where the body of the panther was lying, and set the bowl down. He walked over to a fire that was burning in a corner of the cavern, picked up a burning stick, and returned. After lighting the sage, he knelt down

on the ground next to the panther. "Come," he said to Taylor while padding the ground, "we must pay our respects to the animal."

Taylor took her position next to Pelleur and the cat. She expected Pelleur to say a few words, or perhaps to pick up one of his drums. But instead, he simply knelt silently over the amazing cat, admiring its beauty. Eventually, Taylor stopped concerning herself with what Pelleur was doing, and focused her attention on the panther. She remembered his playful, cuddly ways and how soft and clean his fur had been when she first scratched its belly long ago. As the smoke from Pelleur's sage poured over her, it finally began to sink in that this panther had indeed sacrificed its life to save her. With that awareness pouring over her, like the smoke from the sage, she let go of all restraint and allowed herself, at last, to cry.

While Taylor sobbed, Pelleur put his long, muscular arm around her shoulders and held her tightly against his side.

**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.

**Chapter 21: The Dance of Divinity**

The next morning, Taylor awoke and dragged herself out of bed. The day of the Dance of Divinity had arrived. Tired from all the training and cramming for her test, Taylor hobbled out of her room to see what Monka was up to. While scratching her head, yawning, and plodding half asleep through the dimly lit kitchen, she realized that the pod was empty. Monka wasn't there. She had definitely overslept.

She had wanted to prepare for the daylong event as all of the Lemurians who were supposed to have done so earlier that morning. Everyone was expected to spend a few hours centering, focusing their thoughts, reflecting on their purpose, exercising their voices, tightening the skins on their drums, or stretching and limbering up.

Taylor decided that she had better forget about trying to prepare, and just get freshened up and go to the temple. Once she washed up and put on her new robe, she started on the path to the central atrium.

As soon as she stepped out of the pod to begin her rushed pilgrimage to the temple, she met up with Zanadar. He was still wearing his wizardly wears. "So, you're heading to the Temple of Light, are you?"

"How'd you guess?" said Taylor, while practically sprinting through the poorly lit tunnel.

Zanadar—not at all concerned about the time—followed Taylor. "You're gonna get quite a light show tonight!" he said, while jumping in front of her. "And from the looks of things around here, they're going to need some new light, too." The zany Pleiadian then started bounding around on the path. "Oh great Boundless Light!" he shouted, as he transformed his body into a bright ball of light, which grew in intensity to instantly illuminate the darkened tunnel. "Oh, Measureless Light," he

exclaimed. Taylor hurried along, trying to ignore him. Zanadar then turned into a beam of light and shot back and forth through the walls of the tunnel while shouting, "Unimpeded Light!" After stopping far down the path, he turned back to human form and, while standing in front of Taylor, burst into fire. The Pleiadian's booming voice filled the tunnel. "*Flaaaaaming* Light!" Zanny then turned again to humanlike form and held stride with Taylor as she sped through the dark tunnel. With each step that they took, Zanadar added something new: "Pure Light... Light of Joy... Light of Wisdom... Inconceivable Light... Light that surpasses Sun and Moon... Light of seven days creation... the hidden light... the primordial light... the light of paradise... the light of creation... uninterrupted Light."

"And God said, 'Let there be light; and there was light,'" interrupted Taylor, by now thoroughly irritated with the crazy Pleiadian. "Genesis 1:3." She nodded her head vigorously.

"You've been studying your sacred texts, I see," said Zanadar, impressed with her quote from the Bible.

"For almost two years! And I could provide some quotes that come to mind from the Koran, or the Talmud, or the four books of the Vedas, or the Tripitaka, or the Tao Te Ching, or the Avesta, or the Adi Granath. But I'm not one to go on, like *some* people we know." She gave Zanadar a perturbed look, under raised eyebrows.

Zanadar smiled back at her, yet went on. "Do you know about the Egyptian sun god Ra?"

"When Ra opens his eyes," Taylor started, "there is light, when he shuts them, darkness."

"Outstanding!" exclaimed the wizard.

"Now Zanadar, I don't mean to be brief..."

"Yes you do! And you should be. You must be off to the temple. But first," Zanadar's voice softened, "temples are space-time structures where one is allowed to contemplate realities

transcending both space and time." By now it was as though Zanadar were reciting a gentle prayer to prepare Taylor for the dance and journey. She was calming considerably. "A temple is a place where we recognize the unity of the invisible and visible worlds. A temple is place where we can awaken our energies and consciousness, and raise ourselves upward to meet the power and light of the transcendent." Zanadar's voice was smooth and soothing. "A temple is a place to behold the beauty of colors and sounds and movement and love."

As Zanadar whispered his last words, Taylor finally turned to look at him, only to notice that he was gone. She stopped and took a deep breath, realizing that Zanadar had left her feeling much more relaxed and enlivened. She smiled, turned to continue walking, and was practically overtaken by a small gang of Lemurian kids. The playful pack had come from one of the tributary tunnels. The small swarm swept her up in a whirlwind of energy and carried her off toward her destination.

By the time she reached the darkened central atrium, Taylor had become sweaty from playing with the puppy-eyed kids along the way. She took her attention off the pack, looked up for a moment, and stopped short when she laid sight on the Divine Design carvings etched on the huge arched doors of the temple. The pack of kids stopped along with her. This was it. She was going. Going in, and going back. Way back in time. And perhaps never coming back. She never did ask anyone whether she would return. And no one ever did say anything, either. She was glad they didn't, really. She figured it out without having to be told. And Zanadar had told her a long time ago, before this ever started, that there would be no going back. So, she had to stay focused on a particular time and place. She had to bring the Sacred Seven back to... where? Where would they go? Somewhere in Canaan. Sometime around 2000 B.C.E. She had to concentrate. Focus. And when the time came, think of nothing else.

While taking a few steps backward to get a better view at the temple, Taylor's eyes climbed the enormous structure all the way to the peak. The bright shaft of light shooting out of the top was now barely discernable. Over the years, the hearty beam had lost much of its power, bringing all of Telos into the twilight. No longer were the bright golden walls a cascading waterfall of light. In fact, they were downright dull in most places. It was as though the waterfall had dried up and left nothing else but the stone wall underneath. The temple's light was definitely due for a tune-up. But the Divine Design, etched in the great wooden doors, was glowing bright. And it was changing from the star-tetrahedron, to the Fruit of Life, then Metatron's Cube, and finally the Flower of Life, just like it had when Monka showed Taylor the design so long ago. The design's heightened activity made Taylor wonder if it was doing it in anticipation of her departure. She felt like it knew she was standing there studying it, as if its driver had finally come after all these thousands of years.

Unable to wait for Taylor any longer, the bundle of babes scurried around her and with one sweeping motion, opened the large, wooden doors. As the Lemurian children filed in, Taylor stepped forward hesitantly. After she had walked through the entranceway, the large doors closed behind her with a loud boom.

Inside, thousands of Lemurians were mingling about. Relieved to know that she wasn't attracting any special attention for being late, Taylor did notice some of the Lemurians standing near the entrance waving to her and smiling. From out of the corner of her eye, Taylor spied Queen Nyla through the crowd. Walking further inside, Taylor quickly became aware that queen was watching her.

Being that this was her first time within the temple, Taylor was awed by the size and design of the great structure. Looking overhead, turning round and round, Taylor saw that she was indeed inside of an enormous cone-shaped spiral. She walked to the center of the temple on the bottom floor and



looked upward and noticed the seven ribbed windings of the ascending interior ramp. This wide, corkscrewed ramp would be where the dance would take place—the dance that would not simply represent the expansion and evolution of consciousness, but that would actually facilitate that growth. Here was the sacred space where everyone would become Divine Immanence, and—as she had been told—the spiral dynamic of the temple would serve to propel the Sacred Seven on a vortex of energy upward to meet with Divine Transcendence, to be transported back in time to save the future.

Taylor had learned that nobody in the Lemurian culture actually measured the movement of the moon, the planets, and the stars; but rather, led by the highly perceptive efforts of Pelleur, they were all aware that a rare, auspicious cosmic arrangement was about to occur. For several days, Pelleur and other drummers had been listening closely and keeping track of the pulses sounding from the cosmos. Increasingly, they were becoming more powerful, more focused, more directed toward their mountain. And, if there were ever a time to call upon the pulse of Divine Transcendence, Pelleur decided, this would be the day.

After this great unifying experience, Taylor had been told everything would be left up to her. Nothing could adequately describe the transport so little attempt was made by any of her teachers to do so. She was told, however, that what she and the others did afterward when they got there was entirely up to them. Pretty much everybody living in Telos had the same idea about what they wanted to do, and they felt that they would be able to work things out once they got there and assessed their surroundings. But nobody had ever talked about how they would return. And Taylor had never asked.

Aside from being skeptical about the entire affair, Taylor was still not sure if she wanted to go. This was supposed to be a journey from which she would never return. Her *final* purpose. The end. Her *telos*. She did not want did not want this to be *her* end. She had to find a way to get back. If she could travel somewhere in a dream, or go back into the past, she *had* to be able to return to the

present. But now that she had this chance to look upon the magnificence of the temple from the inside, she was beginning to believe that there would never be anything like this where the Sacred Seven was going. How would they ever get back? Nothing could ever compare to this.

Surveying the bottom floor, Taylor noticed the priestess Aleva, whom she had sung with during her time with Etruceana. Aleva was standing up against the back wall. Her face was ecstatic and she was singing her song. A number of Lemurian men and women gathered in semicircles around her. With their eyes closed, swaying slightly, they all seemed lost in dreams, absorbing life and energy from what they heard.

Walking up the wide ramp while continuing to survey the inside of this structure, Taylor made her way to the second winding of the spiral. At a similarly arranged place, back near the outer wall, the priestess Zoa was singing. Her tones had in them something mightier, more powerful than those coming from Aleva. The sounds seemed more like those found in the mysterious rhythms of nature. Those around Zoa moved their limbs in cadence with the strong rhythm. Taylor joined in and at once felt a strong connection with the song and the powers acting within her.

Almost without notice, everyone in the temple joined in with the singing. Taylor looked around at the others for a short time, mesmerized by their voices, and then added her own voice to the mix. The beautiful sounds raised the energy in the temple considerably. Then, a subtle, deep, pulsing beat could be heard. Taylor hadn't noticed it before, but drums had been placed all along the back wall of the entire winding structure of the temple. And now, each of the drums, manned by a drummer, was being played.

When it became obvious that one and all within the temple had clearly felt the pulse, the drumbeat began to increase in volume, and the Dance of Divine Unity commenced. At once, a great weaving line of Lemurians moving both up and down the winding ramp was formed. Those in the line

weaving and winding upward, personified the bringing of Divine Immanence up to Divine Transcendence; this was acting out of the aspiration and evolution of matter, body, and self into spirit. At the point of maximum contraction and ascension at the top of the temple's spiral, where the inner journey was said to be complete, each person in the weaving line simply turned and began the unwinding and expansion of the spiral. Here they acted out the bringing of Divine Transcendence down to Divine Immanence, the involution of spirit into self, body, earth, and matter. The weaving procession of Lemurians looked like two giant serpents moving around, under, and over each other. One wound up the spiral, the other down.

As they pranced in time with the pulse, everyone made deep, gentle, loving eye contact with each passer-by to connect the two alternating phases of the path of consciousness. As Taylor continued walking, she was also aware of her breathing. For the inhalation and exhalation of breath, like the waxing and waning of the moon, corresponded with the ascent and descent of the spiral. With each breath, she was able to feel deeper and deeper inside of herself

When varying drumbeats were added to the main pulsing cadence, causing the volume to rise and the call to deepen, the weaving, spiraling line began breaking up into smaller groups and forming circles. Each group looked like a spinning top, ascending and descending the mystic spiral. And as everyone—children and adults alike—sang and danced and spun, their lights began to emerge. First, their bodies became enclosed within a sphere of shimmering, yellow light. Then, inside of the spheres, a colorful, fluid rainbow of light swirled around each dancer. Finally, at the very center of the spheres, emanating from the core of each dancer, a bright, white star of light formed. Each star then mixed and connected with the others, creating the most amazing sight Taylor had ever seen. And as the colorful light inside the temple grew, the chaos did, as well.

People and groups kept breaking off and forming, separating, dancing individually, and then coming back together to form another group. It was a joyous event. Laughter could be heard amongst the drumming and singing, everywhere. And the beat, the unifying deep, sensual beat that pulled at Taylor's very core, drummed on. The beat, more than anything, moved her. Moved her so much, that as she laughed in joy, she also cried in wonder, and moaned in desire.

Taylor was amazed. Amazed at the deep passion and sensuality within her that yearned for expression. All of her senses were acutely aware. Now, finally, everything, each and every part of her being, was coming together. And, as the unity of all of who she was intensified, *her* inner core also began to shine.

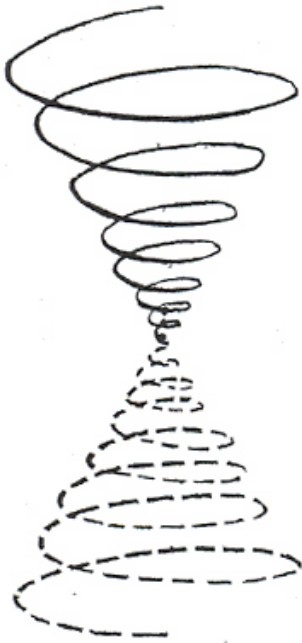
From the base of the central axis of her body, two great coils of light energy spiraled up her spine. Within her, the various centers, the lotuses of energy, were slowly being awakened. Starting at the root of her spine, the two spirals of light twisted upward to her abdomen, then her solar plexus, her heart, throat, third eye, and finally the crown of her head. Taylor was one with Divine Immanence. She was Divine Immanence itself.

Dancing, laughing, crying, screaming with delight, Taylor found herself near the railing of the ramp. She looked down at the bottom floor and saw Queen Nyla. She was dancing on a raised circular altar and her core star was shining. Oh, did the queen dance!: fearless, sensual, full of erotic essence, resonating, unveiled, connected, fruitful. She was poetry and prayer in motion, a pure, fertile light.

A circle of dancers soon surrounded her. While the others held and intensified the queen's energy, Taylor watched a beautiful rainbow of light climb the great temple. At each of the seven levels, the colors gradually changed: starting with bright red on the bottom floor, up to orange, then golden yellow, then green, cyan, indigo, and finally at the very top, a mix of violet, white, and gold.

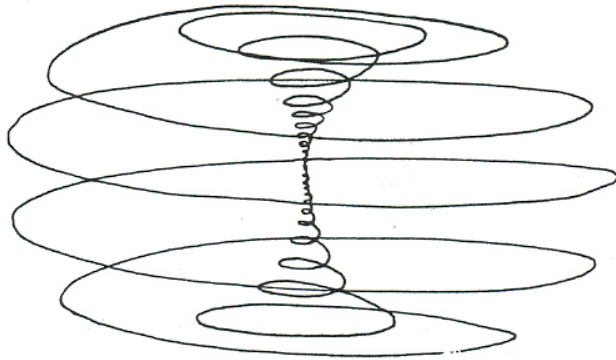
By now, Taylor thought, the drumming must be drawing Divine Transcendence near. At that moment, she noticed that everyone started forming into groups of seven; and she always found herself in the middle of a group. And then, under all the drumming she could hear the voices. A soft, alluring humming unlike any sound Taylor had ever heard. This was the exact same song that she heard coming out of the mountain two long years ago.

Taylor looked upward and an aperture appeared at the top of the dome, above the temple, exposing the nighttime sky. Here was the Axis Mundi, the pole, the center circle at the apex of the inner temple, serving as a canopy supporting heaven and connecting it with Earth. Taylor watched as an enormous lenticular cloud gathered in the darkened sky outside and directly above the peak of the mountain. A ferocious whirlpool of cold winds whipped around the old, isolated mountain. Mysteriously, the lens-shaped cloud gradually formed into a descending cone-shaped spiral vortex—a direct, mirror image of the ascending spiral vortex of the temple inside the mountain. This was Divine Transcendence coming to unite with Divine Immanence.



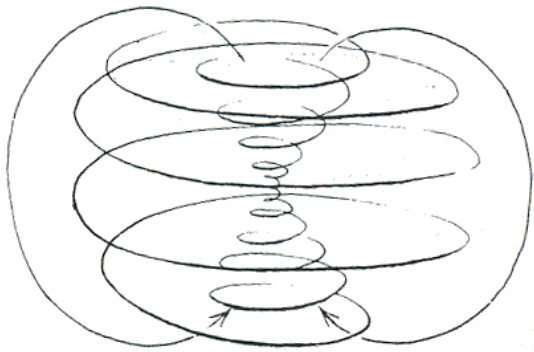
As the dancers' voices climbed and increased in volume, the six dancers surrounding Taylor all moved into position closer to Taylor. At that moment, a light comparable to ten million Suns, penetrated the temple. The ethereal temple of Divine Transcendence, which had crowned Mount Shasta, had pushed through the hymen and emptied into Queen Nyla's pure, fresh temple. Taylor was overtaken and penetrated by the extremely intense and growing bright light.

Having been thoroughly initiated for the experience, Taylor was held in gentle hands. Overcome by the strongest feelings of love, contentment, and bliss that she had ever experienced, the eternal light of Divine Transcendence was emanating all of its creative power through her and the rest of the Lemurians in the temple.



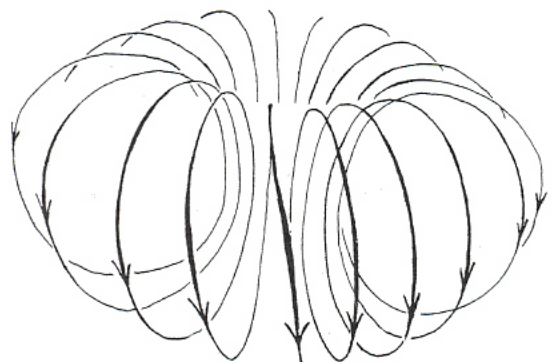
Gradually, a horizontal lasso of light energy shot off from the base of each of the two joined halves of the double spiral. The two lassos—after circling several times around the double spiral—eventually joined, creating a larger spherical vortex around the entire energy

structure. The whole mountain itself was surrounded by an enormous whirlwind of energy. It was now a huge ball of light.



Then, another force of energy and light began to take shape around the sphere. Now, streams of light energy looped through the vertical center of the two joined spirals, creating a donut-shaped torus ring that engulfed the entire sphere. In this state, the energy of the mountain was perpetually turning in on itself; it was a

continuous whole. Here was the true connection of heaven and earth. Divine Immanence and Divine Transcendence had come together in a state of balance and dynamic equilibrium to create the condition the Lemurians called Divine Unity.



Inside the mountain, Taylor, who along with the other six dancers surrounding her, had been suspended in midair, absorbed and lifted by the light, ready to be sent back into the past, closed her eyes and began to focus all her attention on the ancient near east, and the land of Canaan. Instead, she witnessed a strange and disturbing sight. It was a vision of an expanding, moving, squirming, indestructible wall of gray. And it was heading directly for Kyle.

At that instant, Taylor was dropped back onto the ramp.



Moments later, she found herself outside the temple, on her hands and knees weeping uncontrollably. She was crying not because she was unable to continue basking in the light; not because of the horrific vision she had seen; but because of the fact that she had let the Lemurians down. The dance was over and the Sacred Seven had not been sent back into the past as planned.

Aware that another presence had moved near her, Taylor looked up. It was Queen Nyla. Her dark skin was wet, steaming with sweat, yet her insides were still beaming with the light that the dance had generated. Taylor, jarred from her crying, was now in close proximity to the deep, dark goddessing power of the mountain. The queen still carried the amazing force that Taylor had watched from above. "I couldn't help it," she said while peering up at the queen. "I'm sorry. I had a vision. And I couldn't stay focused. That's why I'm..." Taylor looked around at the others, "...why *we're* all still here, isn't it? Because, instead of concentrating on where we were supposed to be headed, I saw that... grey... stuff, and..." Taylor stopped herself short, not wanting to admit to anyone that she had seen Kyle, and that he was in trouble. She pushed herself off her knees into a standing position. "I have to go back home. Something terrible is going to happen. I know it. I saw *something*. And I've

got to try to stop it.” Taylor simply couldn’t explain what she thought was going to happen. The vision was beyond her comprehension.

“And you think that you can?” asked the queen.

Taylor wiped her nose with the back of her hand. “I have to at least try to save my family and my friends. I just can't leave them behind.” Taylor was thinking about Kyle, as always.

"I understand," said Queen Nyla showing no sign of emotion. Her face had turned back to stone. "You've made your decision." The queen took a few steps away. And her light began to fade. “Now, what we must do is prepare you for your return. For this we will need Zanadar’s assistance.”

That said, Zanadar appeared. For the first time, Taylor noticed that the old Pleiadian was a bit frazzled. He was also wearing a bib. "You just snatched me right up from a wonderful meal. But I was really enjoying watching your show down here in Mount Shasta. Loved all those different vortexes; the spiral, the double spiral; and let's not forget the spherical and torus vortexes. Wow! You sure had it going. You ought to have all the light you’ll need for another couple of years or so, at least."

Taylor could tell that the queen was patient with Zanadar, but not amused.

Zanadar removed his bib and turned toward Taylor. "So, you're going back home, are you?"

Taylor nodded and lowered her eyes to the ground. She then walked with her head down all the long, lonesome way back to Monka’s pod. Only when she reached the door to the pod did she look up to notice how much brighter the light in the tunnel had become, since the dance. Saying good-bye to Monka was going to be difficult. With a huge sigh, Taylor opened the door and walked in.

Monka was sitting at the kitchen table with her hands in her lap. The kitchen, and the whole pod, in fact, was now brightly lit.

“I guess the dance worked,” Taylor said while looking up at the ceiling. “All the light is back.”



Monka picked herself up out of her chair as if carrying a great weight. She walked over to Taylor and threw her arms around her. Both of them needed the hug. They stayed locked together for a long time. Secretly, Taylor was hoping Monka would hold onto to her forever, as if doing so would prevent her from leaving, keep her safe there with her. More than anything, though, Taylor was afraid.

"You'll be okay, Taylor," said Monka, as if sensing Taylor's fear. "And we'll be okay here in Telos, too. Things will work out. They always do." The two broke apart, and then Taylor sat down at the table. Monka joined her but said nothing further. Finally, after a long silence, when Taylor couldn't take it any longer, she picked herself up from the kitchen table, excused herself, and walked to her room. Monka watched her walk away in silence.

Taylor wanted to visit her room one last time before leaving. She entered the room and looked around at everything, the way an adult would when leaving home and their cherished childhood bedroom for the last time. She walked over to a shelf that she had carved during her stay and picked off a small glass vial. She then walked over to the corner where she had once sat, dug herself into it, and covered herself with dirt. Now, as though the soil of this small area were the source of the healing power of the mountain, she scooped up a small handful of it and poured it into the vial. Just then, Monka knocked on the door. Taylor concealed the vial, walked over to the door, and opened it.

Monka reached out and provided Taylor with a new set of clothes. "Here is a new pair of pants, a shirt, and some proper shoes. Now that you're going back... you'll need them to blend in." Without saying another word, Monka quickly turned and exited the room.

Taylor took off her robe and climbed into her new clothes. She tucked the small vial of dirt into a special pocket in her pants, turned, and, without looking back, walked out of the room. Her vial of dirt would be her secret token of this sacred place.

Once finished saying good-bye, Taylor turned, stepped out into the tunneled pathway, and began walking toward the atrium. The devoted Monka followed. Realizing that Monka was trailing behind, Taylor stopped and reached out her hand. As the two walked hand in hand along the path, other Lemurians began pouring out of their homes and gathering behind. After a while, a large crowd had formed. By the time the throng entered the atrium, an even larger gathering was waiting. Monka and Taylor faced one another, smiled, shared a kiss, and then released hands. While Taylor walked down the path in front of Monka, she could see the Temple of Light through the canopy of branches. The entire structure was glowing brightly, and the amazing shaft of golden light was once again gushing out of the apex and pouring over the ceiling and down the walls of the great atrium. The dance had indeed worked. And now the Lemurians would once again have all the light that they needed.

Taylor was proud of herself for having participated in the dance. She was pleased that she had survived and finally had the opportunity to experience, once again, the feelings she first had when visiting Mount Shasta in her dream two long, hard years ago. But now, she had other things to do. She had no idea exactly what that would be, but she had to go back. She knew this. It was something she could not avoid. So, reluctantly, she tore her eyes from the temple and continued walking down the path to the cleared circle where Queen Nyla, Etruceana, Pelleur, Zanadar and a large crowd were waiting.

Etruceana was the first to greet her. She put one of her graceful arms around her shoulders, then placed the palm of her hand on her chest. After closing her eyes for a moment, and intoning while inhaling, Etruceana began to chant. She only did this for a short time, because it was really all Taylor needed. "Remember to keep your chin up, Taylor," she said at last. "And be aware of your breathing. Don't forget to your imagination and your voice. They must always work together."

Pelleur only needed a brief moment. He stepped forward, throbbing as he did. "Be aware of those individuals you will encounter on your journey who will not be able to give up their false sense of power. They hold onto their own personal will. Watch always for those that do. And as you protect your self from those that express only their own will, make certain you listen for the pulse. Always keep an ear turned toward the pulse."

Queen Nyla was next. "We have been very fortunate to have you here in Telos, Taylor. We are eternally grateful. Your presence here will be truly missed." The queen paused for a moment and walked closer to Taylor. She sighed, and then spoke softly so that only Taylor could hear. "I keep hoping that your return home is a good thing, Taylor. Maybe it's even necessary. Perhaps, you won't be able to save things unless you do go back. I keep hoping that something unexpected will happen, that, you'll prevail, and then..." The queen placed her hands on Taylor's shoulders. "To be honest, I don't know what's going to happen, now. I've prepared for far too long to..." And then she stopped.

That's when she stopped being Nyla, and turned back into Nyla, Queen of the Dance, Queen Nyla of Telos. She turned and faced the others gathered there. "Please keep in mind, Taylor, that you will always be welcome here. And you may return whenever you wish, or are able. A long time ago, we knew you would join us here in Telos. Even before Zanadar appeared that night, what for you must seem like ages ago. And now you have chosen to return."

Queen Nyla walked away from Taylor, and then circled around to face her from a distance. "You have made a bold decision, Taylor. For you will face many dangers. You have much work to do and many challenges to overcome. Now, we can only hope that what you have learned here will be of some assistance to you on your journey." Queen Nyla then stepped back slowly and merged into the crowd.

Taylor looked at all those who had gathered one last time, and without saying a word, waved. She had no words to express her feelings, and the crowd seemed to sense this. All of what Taylor had to say was written in her eyes: all the pain, the joy, the love, the warmth, the sadness and the appreciation.

Then Zanadar stepped forward. It was time. Taylor placed her hand in his and walked with him toward the opening of the cavern through which she had once, years ago, entered. They stopped just before the entrance, turned, and faced the Lemurians. Taylor, who until now had been able to keep her composure, closed her eyes, and lowered her head. Tears began streaming down her cheeks. Zanadar put his arm around her shoulders. When she finally opened her eyes, she waved good-bye to the crowd one last time, turned, and began walking with Zanadar through the cavern.



"So, what are your plans?" asked Zanadar, breaking the silence after having walked for some distance.

"Plans? I don't have plans. I have absolutely no idea what I'm going to do. I'm not even sure what I'm going to be up against. I just know I need to go back."

"And once you get there?"

"I told you, Zanny, I don't have any plans."

"Are you hoping to come back here, then?"

"I don't know. Maybe I can change things, you know. Maybe I can help to stop whatever that grey *thing* was. Maybe someone will listen."

"And if not?"

"Well, I guess I can always come back, can't I?"

"Perhaps."

Taylor looked at Zanadar in disbelief. She had hoped that she could visit at any time, go back and see Monka, Etruceana, Pelleur, and Queen Nyla.

"So will you be with me? Will I be able to reach you?"

"I will always be watching, Taylor."

"I'm glad to know that I'll be able to get a hold of you when I need to. I think I'm ready to go. Can you put me back at home?"

"Most definitely. But are you sure you want to do this?"

"I'm sure. I need to go back. No matter what it's like back there."

"Farewell then, Taylor," said Zanadar.

In a bright flash of light, she was gone.

## **Chapter 22: Kyle's Band of Misfits**

Taylor found herself standing alone on the sidewalk of a deserted street. Not a single person was in sight. Saturating the air, however, was an irritating, buzzing sound. She couldn't ever remember the soundscape back home being this loud. Taylor looked down the street to her left, then to her right. Tall, beige, white, and gray buildings lined the street. They looked like homes, but Taylor wasn't exactly sure. They had driveways, front doors, and small windows; but these enormous dwellings consumed nearly every square inch of every lot on the street. And the creepiest thing of all was that the exterior landscape of each building reminded Taylor of a cheap cardboard box that had been

dolled up like a present with fancy wrapping, ribbons, and bows. She doubted if anyone living inside of the buildings had ever even stepped on the picture perfect, miniscule lawns.

With a shiver, she turned around to face the other side of the street. Expecting to see yet another huge, nondescript building looming over her, Taylor was shocked when she laid eyes upon an empty lot, instead. And from what she could tell, she guessed that this was where her old home used to be. The house itself was completely gone. The manicured lawn that her parents had paid servicemen to keep neat and tidy had grown entirely wild. The white picket fence surrounding the lot had turned gray and was badly in need of repair. All of the flowers that her mother had once planted were long dead. In their place was an outgrowth of tall, bushy weeds. The only thing that remained of her old home was a deep, square hole bordered by a concrete foundation.

She approached the lot and swung open the gate to the picket fence. The gate's rusty hinges broke, causing it to fall to the ground. Taylor bent over, picked up the gate and tried to return it to its original position, but soon gave up, realizing the feebleness of her task. She then walked up the sidewalk, climbed the steps, and from her place on the concrete porch, looked down into the dark hole.

"Taylor!" shouted a voice from behind, barely discernable above the din.

She turned around and immediately recognized the person standing on the sidewalk just beyond the gate.

"Kyle," sighed a relieved Taylor. With the very same grace and poise that she had witnessed in the queen when first arriving in Telos, Taylor long, muscular legs carried her off the steps and then propelled her down the sidewalk. When she reached him, they wrapped their arms around each other and embraced passionately, warmly, lovingly.

By now Kyle was a mature young man. Handsome. Tall. Strong. He still had the mysterious dark-green eyes that Taylor remembered, but now his wild, black hair was long, and it framed a weathered and chiseled face. His muscular shoulders were wide, his waist thin, his legs long. Taylor was smiling, but Kyle's face was somber. "Your parents are gone, Taylor."

"Gone?" said Taylor, letting go of Kyle.

Kyle held Taylor by the shoulders at arms length. "Come on, there's a lot I have to fill you in on. But first we've got to move. We don't want to be seen here."

Kyle took Taylor gently by the arm and escorted her down the sidewalk at a brisk pace. The sun was setting and it was getting dark quickly. They walked silently, stealthily down the street, and then cut through a lot and into a maze of narrow alleyways. Eventually they walked up a cul-de-sac also hosting huge buildings on small lots. Once they reached the end of the short street, they walked up a long driveway to the back of a lot and scaled a tall wooden fence. Kyle then led Taylor down a four-foot-wide grassy path bordered by the wooden fence on one side and a tall chain-link fence on the other. Through the chain-link fence, Taylor could see a small, forested area. After walking for nearly a hundred yards, Kyle jumped up on a thick, low-hanging tree branch that intersected the path. He climbed up the thick limb and over the tall chain-link fence. Taylor followed.

They were inside of a deserted wilderness park where Kyle and his Band had been hiding out. No one visited the park anymore, except for the Band. The park held a small forest with twisted trees and tall, brown grass. As they walked silently, Taylor noticed warning signs posted on the fence to her right and a set of huge pipes, valves, and pumps sticking out of the ground, on her left. They were walking downhill. Avoiding the wooden stairs to their left, Kyle led Taylor down the hill to a small, man-made pond. Under some trees, adjacent to a patch of cattails on the edge of the pond, sitting quietly in a circle on the soft ground, were five scraggly looking characters.

"Everyone," said Kyle, as they pushed through the tall grass and approached the Band, "I'd like you to meet Taylor."

As if on cue, the Band stood up, opened their circle, and nodded. "Welcome home," they said in unison. They were definitely a motley crew of misfits. People who, it seemed to Taylor, wouldn't exactly fit in with the rest of the contemporary world. Anyone living in a deserted wilderness park certainly had to be considered unusual.

"Taylor," said Kyle, while gesturing to each, "this is Dewey, Armando, Lazarus, Keri and Marshall."

Dewey was the youngest of the group, a scrappy little 98-pound, blonde, teenage boy, with a sweet smile and Tasmanian energy. Dewey wore a baseball cap. It was on sideways. He had baggy, blue pants and a loose sweatshirt. Armando had slicked-back, black hair, dark eyes, and wore a black leather jacket, black t-shirt, tight blue jeans, and black boots. He looked only slightly older than Dewey. Lazarus wasn't quite so assuming. He was the quiet, serious one. Tall and lanky, with a shiny, baldhead and dark skin, he moved with a deliberate slowness that, for some reason, projected a sharp mind and keen intelligence. Keri was a young, bouncy girl with a friendly smile, long, straight, black hair, and slanted, cat-like eyes. She was wearing a beige jumpsuit and shoes made entirely of hemp. Marshall wore a pair of crooked glasses and had short, scruffy brown hair. He was wearing a battered business suit; and, from the way he nervously straightened his dog-eared tie and polished the tops of his scuffed shoes against the back of his dirty pants, Taylor guessed that he was doing the best he could to keep up appearances.

After nodding hello to each member of the Band, and feeling no need to mask her immediate concern, Taylor looked straight at Kyle and started right in with the questions. "So what happened to my parents?"



"They're gone," said Kyle.

"Do you have any idea where they went?"

"Well," said Kyle, "they're actually going to be very difficult to find. That is, unless you have access to a new computer."

"What are you talking about?" asked Taylor, while looking confused.

Lazarus began sitting down first. The others followed. When everyone was comfortable, Kyle continued. "I've been keeping an eye on them since you've been gone, Taylor. They gave up looking for you after the first year. Then, they started following all the latest techno trends. They went through a long series of experimentation and self-transformation, trying everything they could: mood- and memory-enhancing drugs, anti-aging therapies, wearable computers, neurological interfaces. Eventually, they went the ultimate route. They put their bodies on ice and now live as information patterns on a large, super-fast computer network."

"You mean they're living in a computer?"

"That's what he means," said Dewey, faking a smile.

"They're each a unique pattern of patterns in a digital bit stream," said Lazarus. His sleepy eyes were barely open.

"What's happened to this place?" asked Taylor. "How could all of this have happened?"

"It all started with those damn transhumanists," snarled Armando, while whipping out a comb and pulling it through his greasy hair.

"Transhumanists? What's that?" asked Taylor.

"Transhumanists are—or, more accurately, were—," said Kyle while brushing the hair out of his eyes, "people who alter their condition by using the latest advances in technology. They want to live forever, so they're moving beyond being human."

"Transhumans," added Lazarus, "want complete control." He rocked back and leaned on his long arms. "They want control over everything: their bodies, their environment, everything. A transhuman is a transitional human. They're someone actively preparing for becoming posthuman."

"Posthuman?" asked Taylor.

"Yeah, posthuman," said Kyle. "*After human*. Posthumans are humans who first became transhumanists who then became posthuman. They've been augmented to such a degree as to no longer be human. They're not trying to become *more* human. Instead, they claim to have evolved beyond human, beyond mere biology. They've bridged the human-machine divide. Today, most posthumans are completely synthetic."

"Ick!" said Keri, squeamishly, trembling with the thought.

"Of course they claim to be conscious," said Lazarus, "but I think the best they can do is to simulate consciousness. They can produce behavior that mimics the behavior of those of us who are sentient, but they don't have any true internal subjective experiences. No feelings at all. It's a kind of weird, objective, binary consciousness. It's nothing at all like what we're familiar with."

"They ain't worth two beans!" The animated Armando turned his head and shot a contemptuous wad of spit out onto the calm surface of the pond. "They got no animo!"

"What's that?" asked Marshall, after clearing his throat and pushing his glasses up the bridge of his runny nose. Marshall didn't look too good. He seemed to be nursing a cold.

"Spirit! Courage!" yelled Dewey, while turning his cap backward. "Right, Armando?"

Armando scowled and nodded his head.

"How do you know?" asked Marshall. "How do you know they don't have any spirit? Can you tell for sure?"

“Just look into their beany little eyes, amigo,” said Armando, while pointing to his own with his small, black comb.

“If they even *have* any eyes,” said Keri.

“There ain’t nothin’ there,” finished Armando. “They got *nothin’* on us!”

“The thing is,” continued Lazarus, “you can’t tell for sure. Internal experiences are entirely private and accessible only to the one experiencing them. They can’t be measured. So there’s no way to know for certain whether or not anyone or anything really does have subjective consciousness.”

“Besides,” added Kyle, “To get to where they’re at, they had to twist and manipulate their physical brains to such a scary degree, it’s hard to imagine what kind of consciousness that could produce.”

“How could all of this have happened?” asked Taylor. “Weren’t people thinking?”

“Hell no!” said Marshall. “We’ve got nothing but a bunch of somnambulists walking around.”

“What’s a somnammm...?” asked Dewey trying to pronounce the word.

“Sleepwalker,” said Lazarus.

“Nobody really thinks independently anymore, Taylor,” said Kyle. “Schools made sure of it. And you, most of all, ought to know that. They say they teach critical thinking, but they gave that up long ago. Nowadays, schools are only about test scores.”

“It was a real trendy thing in the beginning, Taylor,” said Lazarus. “A few big celebrities bought into it—then everybody wanted to go get implants and uploads. You knew that if you didn’t do it, then you’d be left behind. Soon, people’s thinking never ventured from the box.”

“It’s our rampant consumerism,” said Marshall with a sniff. Again he pushed his glasses up his sweaty nose. “Create a perceived need. Commercials everywhere leading the cheer. I’d sit on benches in the city and listen to everyone repeating the same droning slogans, over and over, again and again.”

"Materials, baby!" Armando interrupted. "That's all they want. Consume. Consume."

"Yeah," said Dewey, "everybody wants things."

"Heck," said Keri, "everybody wants to *become* things."

"After a short pause, Kyle went on. "The world's looking more and more like a huge machine."

"What do you mean it's looking like a machine?" asked Taylor. "The whole world?"

"The entire biosphere!" blasted a now angry Keri. She picked up a small pebble and threw it into the dark.

Lazarus continued. "Just like their thinking-in-the-box human predecessors, everything the posthumans did was for their own selfish needs, really. They considered humans and the environment in many of their decision-making options, but only as it concerned themselves. They really weren't interested in coexisting with the rest of the natural world. You see, the posthumans' brains were uploaded with the thinking first established by those humans operating within the dominant box to begin with. And the foundation of *that* thinking was that we humans stood above the rest of the natural world. So when the humans originally thought they were instilling a 'higher' moral code inside of the trans- and posthumans they were creating, this so called moral code was actually flawed to begin with. And now, the posthumans with their enhanced capabilities of accelerated returns are creating an environment that is becoming more and more machinelike."

Taylor noticed how tired everyone in the Band looked. They were all slouching, and their heads were hanging low. Kyle especially. "And so, because all of you didn't want to be a part of this, you've dropped out, checked out, and have been hanging out here in the park, avoiding it all?"

Everyone in the Band nodded their heads. "Yep," said Armando.

"Tell us about you, Taylor," pleaded Dewey.

"Yeah, that's what I want to know. What's it been like where you've been?" added Keri, obviously pleased that another woman had joined the Band. "Kyle told us all about you. When you were found missing, he knew that you had gone somewhere, knew that you would be all right and would return. Every once in a while, he'd tell us about you. Told us that we had to hold on, that you'd return and when you did, things would be different. We knew that the personal location device that your parents had put under your skin wasn't working. The authorities lost all contact with you. It was like all your systems went dead, and there was nothing left of you."

"Yeah," said Lazarus, rising off of his arms and leaning forward, "when you left, it was all over the news. The CEO of Revelation Corporation, Barry Allison, took it personally that a young customer in one of his stores had disappeared. So he set all kinds of intelligence in motion to find you, like surveillance cameras and satellites. And he even released small remote-controlled planes around the city to sprinkle clouds of smart dust everywhere."

"What's smart dust?" asked Taylor, while looking at Kyle, whose eyes were still fixed on the ground.

As Lazarus explained, Taylor kept her eyes on Kyle. "Brilliant eyes, they call them—no larger than a grain of sand. Their laser technology can relay information about your movement back to commanders out in the field. And, he also used a new form of *supersmart* dust. They come with tiny wings attached. They're able to fly, and work together, like a swarm of killer bees."

"You know, I bet Barry is in on the Artificial Intelligence Assembler Arms Race," added Keri. "He's probably got an under-the-table arms contract with *some* rich country."

"*Some* rich country?" interrupted Marshall. "More like several. Barry isn't just in on the AIAAR. You can bet his company is the leading force in the race."

Dewey, who hadn't taken his eyes off of Taylor shifted forward in the circle, and directed the conversation back to Taylor. "So how did you escape all of that surveillance, Taylor?"

Everybody in the Band closed up the circle trying to get closer to Taylor. Except for Kyle. Kyle rolled over on his back, plucked a tall, dry blade of grass, and placed it between his teeth. He laced his hands behind his head, crossed his legs, and stared off through the branches of the trees up at the gray clouds in the dark sky. As Taylor began to tell the Band about her dream and the experience in the store with the Pleiadian, she glanced over at Kyle only to notice a small tear rolling out of his left eye. Catching Taylor by surprise, she paused, if only for a moment, but then gained her composure and continued telling the Band about how she ran into Saint Germain and his panther.

"You mean you actually got to pet and play with a real wild panther?" asked Keri, wriggling with excitement. "I love cats, especially the big ones. But I've never even seen a panther in real life. What was he like?"

Of course Taylor told Keri and the others about her encounter, and then explained how the panther later saved her life while sacrificing its own. She told them about the drum that she made from its skin. Keri was saddened by what happened. But Dewey, more than anyone, was interested in the drum.

Then she told them all about the sound of bells on the mountain. "That was one of the things about the mountain. It was a different kind of world. There it seemed that what you *heard* was more important than what you *saw*. Sound was believed to show the inside of things.

"Everyone in Telos—that's the name of the city under the mountain where I stayed—lived there all their lives. And they were never away from all the quiet and the beautiful sounds. It wasn't noisy like it is here. But from time to time, you could hear the bells. The sounds of the bells penetrated everything."

Dewey interrupted. "Aside from Saint Germain and that Zanadar guy, who else did you stay with?"

"The Lemurians," answered Taylor.

"Lemurians!?" shouted everyone but Kyle and Lazarus.

"Tell us about the Lemurians," pleaded Dewey.

Taylor paused for a moment. She had to keep herself from getting too emotional. Already she was missing them all. "They were the people who lived in the mountain. I stayed with a Lemurian woman named Monka. She became like a mother to me. But there were a lot of others, too. I had teachers. But they were different than the teachers here. And they definitely taught different things."

"Like what? What did they teach you?" asked Keri.

Taylor told them all about how the Lemurians lived in connection with their environment. She told them about Etruceana, Pelleur, and Queen Nyla and what they had to teach. And, of course, she also told them all about her experience in the Temple of Light.

"You found your spirit, huh?" said Dewey.

Taylor paused for a moment, looking across the circle at Dewey. "Maybe."

"Yeah. You got it. I can tell," he said, "because I can see the animo in *your* eyes. I could tell when you first came to our hiding spot with Kyle. It's shining bright."

"Si! She got animo," added Armando.

Taylor nodded politely. She was also smiling, admiring how cute Dewey was.

By now, Kyle had picked himself up off the ground and was now standing with his shoulder up against a tree, tugging at the long blade of grass that he had placed between his teeth earlier.

When Taylor finished telling them about the mountain she paused for a moment, and looked at all of them still listening. "It was a beautiful place, a real special place. I'm glad I had the opportunity to go there. And I'm also glad that all of you let me tell you about it. Thanks."

"So when do we get to go?" asked Dewey, exuberantly.

The question initiated an avalanche of excitement throughout the group. Everyone wanted to leave immediately. Knowing of nowhere else to go, nothing else to do, everyone wanted to go to Telos. Everyone except for Kyle, that is. Kyle, who was still standing, leaning against the tree, looked at Taylor knowingly.

"But wait," exclaimed Taylor, "we've got to do something *here*. There must be something we can do to change things. We can't just leave."

The Band froze. All eyes turned to Taylor. "There's nothing we can do here." Lazarus broke the sullen silence. "We don't even want to fight any longer. We're done trying to change things. The only thing we worry about anymore is our own survival. All our years of struggling could be over."

Kyle interrupted. "I think it would be best for us to bed down for the night. Perhaps a good sleep will help. Maybe it'll help put things in perspective."

The Band nodded their heads in agreement. Dewey, Armando, Lazarus, Keri, and Marshall slowly picked themselves up and walked over to a place in the tall, brown grass where they found their hidden backpacks and pulled out their sleeping bags. Kyle and Taylor watched the Band as they disappeared in the grass and climbed into their bags.

As the everyone began to fade off to sleep, Kyle and Taylor, alone and at rest for the first time, stared into each other's eyes. Before long, Taylor closed her eyes, rolled onto her back, stretched out, and felt the ground under her. She could feel that the dirt directly under her was still, but something



else—some *strange* something else—deep in the earth, was buzzing, churning away. Whatever it was, was far away, but its sound and energy was building, coming closer.

“Will you be wanting a sleeping bag tonight, Taylor?”

When Taylor opened her eyes Kyle was standing above her holding onto a spare bag. How he got up, fetched a bag and brought it over to her, without her hearing, or feeling his movement, in that short of time, was beyond Taylor’s comprehension. Kyle had surprised Taylor, but she answered his question calmly and with an appreciative smile, “No thanks, its warm out tonight, and I like the ground.”

“Helps you feel connected, huh?”

“Yeah. I think I’m going to need its energy.”

Kyle smiled, then turned and began walking off into the grass. Before fading away into the darkness, he paused, and turned back around. “Good night, Taylor.”

“Good night, Kyle,” said Taylor, while rolling onto her side and propping herself up on an elbow.

Kyle started to go, but then turned again to face her. “It’s really good seeing you, you know?”

“I know,” said Taylor. “It’s really good seeing you too, Kyle.”

Kyle nodded, then turned and slipped into the darkness. Taylor listened to him take a few steps and then fall as quiet as a feather into the tall, brown grass.

**Chapter 23: The Gray Goo**

Early the next morning, the Band awoke to a rising sun hidden by a thick veil of fog. Taylor liked the fog, for it seemed to muffle the air and make her feel as though she were somehow sheltered from the world. As the haze thickened and then descended upon the park, filtering its way through the trees, the Band gathered in a circle at the edge of the pond to dine quietly on a light breakfast of oranges and avocados, provided by the resourceful Lazarus and Kyle. After a time, Taylor broke the silence with a question. "So who do you think I should talk to? I've got to try to get my parents back. Maybe I can change their minds."

Marshall gulped down a piece of an orange, sniffled, and then wiped his nose on his sleeve.

"Change their minds?" he wined. "You can't change anyone's mind!"

"I've got to try, Marshall," said Taylor desperately. "I just can't give up."

"Well," said Kyle, "your parents' bodies are probably in the vaults at Revelation Corporation. We could go and talk to somebody there."

"Maybe you'll get lucky and run into the CEO, Barry Allison," said Keri.

"You're not going to *run into* the CEO!" shouted Marshall. "Jeez!"

"You know, I took a tour there once," added Keri. "Maybe you can take the tour, sneak off, and then hop into the CEO's office."

"Weren't you listening?" frowned Marshall. "You can't just go waltzing into Barry Allison's office! Security will be everywhere. You'll never get off the tour."

"Kyle can," said Dewey, while turning his cap around and spitting out a few seeds. Juice from the orange ran down his sticky chin.

“Yep, Kyle can. Kyle can. He da man. Da man!” Armando liked to think he was a good rapper, but he was far from it. Luckily for Armando, every one in the Band tolerated his occasional outbursts.

Lazarus’ head bobbed up and down, giving off the impression that he was nodding off. “He’s the only one of us who can. The only one of us with no markings. He’s not in their system.”

“Markings?” asked Taylor. “Oh, I know. You mean he’s the only one of the Band that’s not identifiable.”

“Nope,” Kyle kicked at the dirt. “You are too, Taylor. All of your tags were made useless when you left for Telos. I’m sure of it.”

“Yeah but won’t Barry’s security system at headquarters probably have an image of Taylor when she was last in his store?” Marshall had taken off his glasses and was fumbling around with the frame, trying to straighten them, putting them on and taking them off over and over again. “And won’t they be able to identify Taylor with some sort of age projection simulation or something like that?”

"Don't you think this all might be a little dangerous?" asked Keri. "For Taylor, I mean?"

"Dangerous?" said Taylor, looking to Kyle for reassurance.

“Maybe not,” said Kyle. “I have a feeling that the CEO may actually *want* to talk to Taylor. Remember, he tried real hard to find her once. And I’m sure he hasn’t forgotten.”

“I doubt it’ll do much good, though,” said Marshall.

"I have to go," said Taylor. "Even if it's just to see what things are like there, or to try to find and talk to my parents. Trouble is, I don't know what I'll say when we get there."

Taylor had some thinking to do. She was a little hesitant about the whole idea, but then again, she had nothing else better to offer. After eating the remainder of her breakfast in silence, Taylor, in

spite of Kyle's objections, took a solitary walk back to the lot of her old home. Maybe there, she figured, she would be better able to contemplate the task ahead.

Arriving at what was left of her home, Taylor walked up the sidewalk, climbed the stairs, and then jumped down into the dark hole of the foundation. Standing there, surveying what remained, she found herself thinking about her parents, and actually surprised herself when she realized that she didn't feel very much for them at all. In her eyes, she never was very connected to either of them. She didn't even feel like she was a part of them. Never had been, really. It was almost as though they came from two different families, two different worlds. At first she was disappointed with herself for not caring, but rather quickly, she decided that there was no use in feeling guilty, not being concerned, by their loss. She had grieved for them when she was in the mountain, and there was no need for her to do so again, now.

Taylor walked first into the area of the hole that had been the living room, and then to where the kitchen would've been, then to Mom's and Dad's room, and finally to her old bedroom. She thought back to all the homework she had done in here, the endless nights of drill and practice using her trusty handheld. How she dreaded those hours of labor. After a time, Taylor wandered over to where the foot of her bed would've been. When she stopped, she realized that she had just stepped on something wooden, a board of some sort, covered by a thin layer of dirt. She stepped back, squatted down, and began sweeping the dirt away with her hand. A red board began to emerge, and immediately, Taylor realized that she was uncovering the antique toy box that her parents had once given her for Christmas.

Digging frantically around the box, Taylor was eventually able to pull it up out of its hole. She sat down on the ground in front of it and opened the lid. Many of her childhood toys were inside. Some she remembered fondly; but with most—as she had when first receiving them—she wondered

why her parents had given them to her at all, like all of the PC games, for example. In spite of her father's urgings, she simply could never work up the interest to plant herself in front of a computer for hours to play God and Creator, controlling every aspect of a family, and the society and world in which they lived, such as was done with the simulation and strategy games. Her father could, though. He loved playing the role of omnipotent master, looking down on all that he had created, and at times torturing or killing his characters, or wreaking devastation or havoc on the imaginary world of his own making. Taylor could even remember how he would giggle every time one of his game's characters dropped down on their knees to pray to him. Her father used to tell her that it was the ultimate power trip, and that it would ease some of the tension that had accumulated from a long day at work.

When finished perusing her old games, Taylor returned the toys to the box. Then while standing up and lifting the box to put it back in its place, she also looked down into the hole and noticed a strange, fuzzy, gray goo bubbling up from the bottom. She watched the goo for a moment and then dropped to her knees. "That's it! That's what I saw!" she said aloud.

"Indeed it is!" said Zanadar's booming voice, behind her.

"There's a gray goo in there, Zanny. That's what I saw when I was dancing in the temple! It was the vision. I couldn't make sense of it then. But now... everything is going to turn into..." Taylor stopped short of admitting anything to herself or Zanadar.

"Precisely," said Zanadar, knowing full well what Taylor had envisioned.

Taylor put her hands on the ground to get a better look at the goo. It was squirming and murmuring. "The whole world is..." Not able to voice the words, Taylor paused. "I can see it."

"I know you can." Zanadar walked around Taylor to survey the foundation. "It's like when you first visited the mountain, or when you spun the globe and your finger landed on Mount Shasta."

Zanadar turned and faced Taylor squarely. "It's like the Akasha Chronicle, the talking tomes and your vision in the temple. You must recognize them for what they are. Do you realize the extent of your talents?"

Taylor had been listening, yet her eyes remained focused in the distance. She was revisiting her vision of the goo, and Kyle. She stood up quickly. "Zanny, I don't know what to do. We have to try to stop it before it's too late."

Taylor then picked up the red box and tossed it back into the hole as if doing so would somehow slow the goo. She then turned and ran to the concrete wall of the foundation, pulled herself out the hole, and sprinted down the sidewalk and the street, through the alleyways and driveway, over the fence, along the path, up the low hanging branch, and into the park.



Joining the Band under the trees by the small artificial pond, Taylor decided not to tell anyone about her horrible vision. To do so now, before she had a chance to change things, would be a mistake. While convincing Kyle that it was necessary to leave immediately, Taylor's eyes glimpsed a few small, gray bubbles rising to the surface of an otherwise calm pool of water.

Without any preparation at all, Kyle and Taylor left the Band at the edge of the pond. Kyle then led a rather frantic Taylor through the busy streets of Los Angeles. Everything in the city made her feel uncomfortable: all the nanobot assembled cars and trucks, steel and glass buildings, even the concrete sidewalks and asphalt streets. As she walked, all of the material—the matter—of which most any object was made, seemed to scream out to her in pain, as if it had been twisted and tortured into place in order to meet the needs of someone, or something, other than its own.

Arriving downtown at Revelation Corporation's headquarters, Taylor stopped and stood on the sidewalk across the street from the main entrance of the enormous nanobot constructed high-rise. As if sizing up her adversary, Taylor paused for a moment to survey the ominous structure. Standing in the middle of the fast-moving crowd scurrying along on the sidewalk, Taylor looked first left, then right, and realized that the building consumed an entire square block of the city. Her eyes then scaled up the black-mirrored surface in search of her foe's crown, but it was not to be found. For the head of this giant was hooded in fog. Taking a deep breath, Taylor marched directly through the busy traffic, across the street, and into the lobby. Kyle followed.

Reaching the reception desk, Taylor announced that she desired to speak to the CEO. The receptionist tilted her head stiffly and looked at Taylor as though she were crazy. Taylor could tell that she wasn't at all human, too perfect. No highly evolved posthuman would have taken the mundane task of receptionist, so it had to be a robot of some sort.

"Do you have an appointment?" the receptionist asked.

"No, I don't," said Taylor. "But he may be interested in seeing me. It's rather urgent."

"Well, who should I tell him is calling?"

"Tell him Taylor Thomas is here to see him. He might remember the name."

The receptionist then suggested that Taylor and Kyle join the others waiting in a small vestibule off to the left. Walking to the waiting room, they found a vacant corner of a couch and sat down.

Taylor and Kyle watched the fast-moving crowd of people, or trans- and posthumans, traveling through the lobby. Nearly everyone there appeared to have subjected him or herself to some kind of self-experimentation. Some had computers embedded in their bodies, others had apparently used cell-repair and enhancement nanomachines to alter their bodies in some strange way. Some had

especially long arms or legs and seemed to prance through the lobby as if unrestrained by any physical limitation. Others had hands with extra fingers, or extra long fingers, and still others had eyeballs that came out of their sockets and floated like helium filled balloons above their heads, providing a better all around view of their surroundings.

Taylor looked down at the large, square coffee table in front of her and noticed a neatly arranged assortment of magazines. She leaned forward, picked up a copy of the latest *Wired* magazine, and thumbed her way to the table of contents. Uniquely arranged on a colorful page were the following articles:

*Itsy Bitsy...*

*Sex in a Chip*

*Losing It Bit by Bit*

*Dealing with Deathists*

*Can You Live Forever?*

*Detecting Your ChipMate*

*Augmenting Augmentation*

*Successful At-Home Uploading*

*Digital Supermind: Uploading God*

*Replacing Religion's Hold on Heaven*

*Resurrection... The Technological Way*

*Sell Your Soul for an Information Pattern!*

*Create Your Own Designer Digital Paradise*

*Talking to Humans: A Necessary Inconvenience*



Shocked by its contents, Taylor hurled the magazine back to the table.

"Kinda creepy, isn't it?" said Kyle, while keeping his eye on the lobby.

"I'll say," said Taylor. "My stomach is turning into knots."

Finally, the receptionist approached the waiting area. "Ms. Thomas?" she asked politely.

"Yes," said Taylor.

"Mr. Allison will see you now."

Taylor looked at Kyle and realized that he wasn't at all surprised.

"Follow me, please."

The receptionist escorted Taylor and Kyle through the lobby toward a long empty hallway. When they reached the hallway, first the receptionist and then Taylor and Kyle, were swept up by the floor they had stepped on. Moving along by tiny microrollers embedded in the floor, the three passengers were transported through a long, twisting series of hallways.

Little by little, the solid right wall of the hallway turned transparent and became a floor-to-ceiling glass wall. Taylor and Kyle were given a view of a large room where a number of white-coated technicians were rushing about, darting around. A parade of various sized boxes moved swiftly along the floor in assembly line fashion through the middle of the room. At the far end of the room, the boxes passed directly through a semi-transparent wall, into another room. Occasionally, a robot rolled by, picked a box out of the line, and then skirted off in another direction.

As Taylor and Kyle continued to be carried down the hallway, they next saw a huge, room-sized, solid metal cube. Thick electrical cables, pipes, and valves ran around, over, and into the cube. A technician opened a large double door giving providing a view of two, smaller, refrigerated, meat-locker-looking cubes, inside. Each of these smaller rooms had a sealed door with a small rectangular

window. “Those must be their cryogenic vaults,” whispered Kyle. “Your parents’ bodies might be stored in one of those.”

While Taylor continued to be swept along she stared through the window at the vaults until they passed out of sight. Eventually, the hallway ended the trio’s trip by stopping directly in front of a wall. Then as if out of nowhere, the wall opened to expose a large, mirrored elevator. Stepping into the elevator, Taylor looked down at her feet, and notice that she was standing on a transparent floor. As she gazed through the floor, at the long elevator shaft below, they began their ascent. As the elevator accelerated, both Taylor and Kyle watched the receptionist as she became consumed with her own reflection in the mirror.

When the elevator doors opened, Taylor and Kyle were once again swept along after the receptionist into an unmarked hallway. While listening to the voices of company workers just out of sight around a corner, they were transported through the hallway and around a few corners, until eventually stopping in front of another large wall. The receptionist placed her hand on the wall and immediately an opening appeared.

“Mr. Allison will be with you in just a moment.” The receptionist motioned for Taylor and Kyle to enter the room. “Please try to make yourself comfortable.”

Taylor and Kyle filed into the middle of a large, circular, concrete room. The room was dimly lit and completely empty. There was no furniture anywhere. Except for the amplified echoes of their footsteps, Taylor and Kyle could hear nothing. Walking around the circular room, looking around for any trace of life, Taylor felt as though she was being watched—intently so.

“*This* is his office?” asked Kyle in a whisper.

“I guess so,” said Taylor in a normal voice.

As Taylor and Kyle walked around trying to make sense of their surroundings, the overhead lights gradually began to brighten. Then vents on the circular wall, floor and ceiling opened, and in poured a steady flow of flying nanobots. The bots began to swarm, condense, and slowly furniture started to appear. But the furniture didn't just come into view; rather, each piece, one by one, began to form and grow from the floor up creating the most plush office either of them had ever seen. Then, a body began to take shape in a black leather chair behind a huge glass-top desk—or, rather, a nanobot swarm of a man—began to fill up the chair. Eventually, a full-fledged man, clad in black shoes, black suit, and black turtleneck sweater sat in front of them.

“Who are you?” asked Taylor. For some reason that she wasn't able to explain, she wasn't at all afraid.

“My name is Barry Allison,” he said. Barry was a slim and trim, middle-aged man with slicked-back, graying hair, and a neatly trimmed black and gray beard. Barry leaned back in his chair and folded his legs. “And you're Taylor Thomas, the young girl... *well*, you're not a girl anymore.” He smiled while looking at Taylor from head to toe. “The young girl who disappeared from one of our first stores.”

“That's me,” said Taylor.

“And, who is your friend here?” he asked. “Wait. Give me a nanosecond, let me check my face-recognition data bank.” Barry's eyes rolled around inside of his head for a moment, searching for information. When it was apparent that he was unable to access any information, his eyes refocused on Kyle again.

“It's not important,” said Kyle. “I'm just an escort.”

Barry stood up and walked around his desk to get closer to Taylor and Kyle. After concentrating on Kyle for a moment, he turned toward Taylor.

“And you’re the one,” said Taylor, “who took my parents away from me. You’re the one who almost uploaded *me*.”

Barry ignored Taylor’s comment. “Do you have any idea how much money I spent on intelligence trying to find you? I didn’t like it one bit, knowing that a young high school girl had disappeared from one of *my* stores. And right into thin air, mind you. Now *that* certainly was an anomaly.” Barry leaned against his desk. “Where did you go?”

Taylor wasn’t at all interested in explaining something that he wouldn’t believe anyway, so she turned the conversation back on him. “Why, Barry? Why have you done all of this? Why have you become . . . *this*?” Taylor’s nose and upper lip screwed up into her face. She was disgusted with this person in front of her, and had no idea where these hidden feelings were coming from. Apparently, she was harboring more anger than she had been aware.

“Well,” said Barry, while walking over to a wet bar that had formed near the wall. He poured himself a drink but neglected to ask his guests if they would like the same, “I was always the type to indulge in quests for unprecedented thrills and dangers. I scuba dived with sharks, flew stunt planes, hunted cape buffalo in Africa, scaled Mount Everest, raced a kayak off Fiji, thrashed in a raft on Class V rivers, and trekked through Antarctic snowfields. I traveled around the globe in a hot-air balloon, swam the twenty-one mile English Channel, mushed a team of sled dogs to finish Alaska’s grueling Iditarod, and set a speed record sailing around the world.”

“Wow Barry, that’s *really* interesting,” said Taylor.

Not about to stop, Barry walked with his drink around the periphery of his office, admiring the artwork hanging on his walls. “I’m the second richest posthuman in the world!” he said, while pausing at a nanobot-produced painting. He then turned with an overly dramatic flare to face Taylor and Kyle.

"And I'm just about to surpass my arch rival to become first on the Forbes' list of the world's wealthiest. My personal net worth is..."

"Not really interested, Barry," said Taylor. Kyle remained silent at Taylor's side.

Barry walked closer to Taylor, while Kyle stealthily left Taylor's side to take a look at the artwork. "But you've got to remember," continued Barry, after taking a sip of his drink, "people in the CEO category were pushing hard in every aspect of their lives. All of us CEOs—at least those of all the top companies—we *knew* we were special. So when we weren't working our minds, we were working our bodies to take the stress off."

"Yeah, yeah, Barry," Taylor said. "I know all about *your* story."

"You think you know *my* story?" Barry was offended. His voice had grown louder.

"Yeah, I know your story." Taylor stood calmly in the center of the room. Kyle turned around to check on Taylor, but then continued making his way around the room, examining all the nanobot-produced objects.

Barry sat down on a huge, camel hair sofa, set his drink down on a glass coffee table and then sat back, crossing his arms and legs. "Okay, I've got a little time, let's hear it."

"I'll tell you what, Barry," said Taylor while she held her chin and began pacing around the room. "Let's create a storyboard. We'll focus on the setting, characters, and plot."

"OK. That sounds like a good idea."

Taylor turned to face Barry. "Let's start first with your setting. Basically, your story considers the world to be a type of complicated machine. You think of the cosmos, for example, as a mostly empty, material, machinelike place that, like a clock, works according to strict mechanical laws. Earth, traveling neatly in its orbit, is considered to be a giant mechanism, composed of dead matter; a mindless, purposeless, material resource left alone to run according to very specific natural laws. And

of course these laws are to be learned, mastered, and manipulated by the characters of your story to get what you want. Master the laws, and if Earth doesn't provide you with what you want, all you do is manipulate things; and, presto, you've got what it. If you want to create a mechanistic overlay of the *entire* planet, to make sure that you *always* have what you want, well, all you need to do is to continue manipulating the laws; and presto, it's yours. Pretty magical stuff, huh Barry?"

Barry leaned forward and picked his glass up off the table. "I've got no argument with you, yet." Barry brought his drink to his lips, and took a long, slow sip. "Pretty good so far. What about the characters?"

"As for the characters of your story," said Taylor, "well, they too are looked upon as some type of machine. Carefully and meticulously, over time, you developed a very precise and tidy view of human life. Your story explains that human consciousness comes from the mechanistic world of space, time, and matter. And that it's nothing more than a mere by-product or *epiphenomenon* of the passive, intrinsically inert and insentient, dead matter of the brain. And, at birth this brain was nothing more than a blank slate on which knowledge could be imprinted through simple sensory experiences."

"That's about all the human characters are made of," said Barry. "But what about us posthumans?"

"Well, that's where the story starts getting really weird. To explain the trans- and posthuman phenomena, we have to examine the plot of your story."

"Oh good," said Barry.

"Now," continued Taylor, "the plot in most stories has an exposition, a complication, a few good conflicts along the way, an exciting climax, and then a peaceful resolution. For the humans preceding you, this plotline was to play out in the following manner: Humans arose and were born as products of biological evolution, the result of a few simple chance

mutations. This was the exposition of their story. As the plot continued, humans experienced their various complications and conflicts along the way. But then, no matter how exciting the climax, no matter how much they labored, all their devotion, all their inspiration, all the brightness of their human genius, was still destined to be resolved with an inevitable death and a return to the vast emptiness of a material cosmos. And nothing could be done to preserve these humans beyond the grave.

"But not you, Barry. Thanks to you, the story has taken a profound turn. You've made it through all the conflicts, won the great climax, and now, your resolution has been transformed. You have modified the ending. You don't have to live out a plotline that's doomed to end with an inevitable biological death. No Barry, you've restructured the plotline to go on forever!

Barry applauded Taylor and her speech. "Yes! That's good. That's very good, Taylor."

When Barry had quieted down again, Taylor continued. "You and your technologist toolmakers, who explained how technological developments would eventually change society and enhance your conditions, created the eugenics movement, life extension, cryonics, and, for you especially, Barry, computers, electronics, and molecular nanotechnology. Because of you and all of these big thinkers, scientists, and electrical engineers, the ancient desire of acquiring godlike attributes has been achieved."

Barry huffed and said, "You betcha it has."

"Over time, you were able to crack the DNA code to compose the new 'Book of Life'. You sequenced the proteome and figured out how a linear string of amino acids folds up into an intricate three-dimensional molecule. You mapped out the corrugated surface of the brain, cracked its algorithm code, took control of it, and then improved upon it." Taylor paused for a moment, and then concluded. "This is your story, Barry."

“And an amazing story it is, I might add,” said Barry.

“Perhaps,” said Taylor. “But it’s a sad story, Barry.”

“What do you mean sad?” Barry sat up straight on the sofa.

“It’s sad because your story has completely destroyed the subjective and interior domains of individual and collective human experience. With your story, any quality of feeling, anything of intrinsic value and purpose and meaning, anything spiritual at all, anything that can’t be measured has been reduced, denounced, and virtually eliminated. Your obsessive tinkering with the plot of your story has turned you all into a horrific aberration. You and all of your uploaded cronies are nothing more than an ugly mass of meaningless computer brains... stuck in the goo!”

Kyle looked at Taylor, alarmed with her behavior. He certainly hadn’t expected her to carry on like this.

Barry put his drink down and stood up quickly. “Wait a minute,” he said. “Did you say goo?”

Taylor didn’t stop to answer him. “You’ve become *things* designed entirely of objective processes. You have no insides, no values, no meaning, no depth. You couldn’t measure love, envy, wonder, compassion, insight, purpose, value, or meaning, so you eliminated them all. Your scientism has eliminated anything of beauty, anything good or right, and all you have left is a desecralized, disenchanting, dull, gray goo.”

“You did say goo!” Barry was shouting now, as he walked closed to Taylor.

Kyle positioned himself between Taylor and Barry.

“Yeah, Barry, I said ‘*goo*’!” Taylor’s face was turning red with rage. “And you’re stuck in it! You see, Barry, your place is here in this story. The story heard all the time, not just through ordinary means such as propaganda and education, not just through every medium of communication, but actually within the very environment itself. It’s everywhere! A story of little machines buzzing and



humming away. You pull the chain, and the gears crank and turn. You've crossed the human-machine divide, Barry, so there is no humming and buzzing in the background. You've become the humming and buzzing itself!

“But, you know what, Barry? There’s something happening to your story.” Taylor backed off, turned away from Barry, and looked around at the room. “Something that even *you* won’t be able to control.”

“Ha!” shouted Barry angrily. “There’s nothing I can’t control.” He drew even closer to Taylor.

While Kyle extended his arm, ready to place it on Barry’s chest should he get any closer to Taylor, a crowd of technicians filed into the room. They moved forward to close in around Taylor and Kyle.

Kyle grabbed Taylor and pulled her toward the back of the room. This time, however, after Kyle placed his hand on the wall, the door wouldn’t appear. Taylor's eyes remained focused on Barry. She made no attempt to defend herself.

But then, just as the technicians were about to grab them both, small gobs of sticky gray goo began oozing into the room, crawling through the vents, growing larger and larger.

While everyone stared at the goo, another white-coated technician barged into the room.

“Sir, we have a problem!”

“What happened?!” shouted Barry.

“We’ve got some runaway goo on our hands.”

“I can see that!” Barry was shouting above the humming and hissing noises coming from the goo.

The nervous technician stood in the center of the room shaking. “They were supposed to be confined in our sealed vats. And the small chambers were supposed to implode and burn up if the self-

replicators penetrated the walls. But it didn't work. Something gave way. The replicators figured how to negate the vat's implosion. They got out. They've evolved, sir."

"How long has this been going on?" Barry's voice was booming. "How could the replicators have made it this far? Why wasn't I informed? You people were supposed to develop stringent safeguards to prevent this scenario. Look what you've done. Fools!"

Barry walked over to the technician, grabbed him by the collar of his white coat, and brought the young man's face close to his own. "How many release sites are exhibiting this behavior?"

The technician was sweating profusely. "All of them, sir."

Barry pushed the technician and he fell backward onto the floor, into a small pile of goo. The technician jumped to his feet, but with the goo now sticking to his back, he ran screaming from the room.

"Ecosphere Surveillance System, on," barked Barry, paying no attention to the technician. "Display image." A model of a three-dimensional, rotating planet Earth appeared in the center of the room. The image provided continuous, comprehensive infrared observation of the Earth's surface. "This system comes from our army of Revelation Corporation geostationary satellites. They monitor the Earth's biomass in order to detect any hotspots that would have formed due to the waste heat generated from the emission of the byproducts of the bots' growth."

"How many release sites do you have?" asked Kyle.

"We've got them all around the world," said Barry, without turning away from his global image. "Some are buried under land. Some are planted in the strangest of places. Some are lying on the ocean floor. Some are flying around in the sky."

"Why?!" yelled Kyle. "Why did you do it?"

Barry turned, looked directly at Kyle, and grinned. "Because I could, boy. Because I could."

Kyle was keeping a close eye on the growing piles of gray goo squirming on floor, walls and ceiling. “So, let me guess. We’re about to get hit with not only gray goo, but also dust, plankton, and...”

“More,” finished Barry. “Yes, more. Much more. Much, much more.”

While Barry continued to ponder the depth of the destruction, keeping an eye on the image for growing hot spots, the self-replicating nanobots right there in the room, continued consuming all matter within its reach. Each bot’s submicroscopic robotic arms worked faster and faster, grabbing each and every molecule, taking apart, breaking it down, and reconfiguring into an exact replica of the very *bot* that had taken it apart.

Barry stood wringing his hands, watching his image of the planet, oblivious to the gray goo gathering around his feet. “They’re our badbots; nanobots capable of launching attacks designed specifically to destroy any local energy substrate.” Barry turned and faced the young technician still in the room. “And the vats were only supposed to be activated by central command!” Barry turned back to the image. “It was supposed to be a basic two-phase process. First, the bots begin replicating with maximum speed to a critical nanomass population. In the second phase, most of the nanobots cease replication and begin the destructive phase. These are the badbots. They’re designed to destroy. It’s our build destroy strategy.”

“Yeah, and now your badbots have taken an unexpected turn,” said Kyle, stepping over a gob of goo. “And why were the vats planted around the world, anyway? What kind of deal did you have going on Mr. Soon-to-be-richest-man-in-the-world? You’re not going to be able to stop this stuff. These things are going to consume the entire planet. Even you, Allison! You won’t be able to escape.”

The nanobots continued replicating. The gray goo grew, turning everything into itself, changing the structure of *all* matter, reproducing itself, over and over again. It was growing so fast, the white-coated technicians had to dart and dance around the squirming goo.

“Has the goo made its way into the vaults where all the bodies are kept?” asked Taylor, thinking of her parents. “Has it consumed the bodies of the people who signed up for one of your cryonic procedures?”

The technician, who had entered the room to warn Barry, looked at Taylor and said nothing.

“It has, hasn’t it?” said Taylor, this time directly to the technician.

Still the technician said nothing.

Just then, a large chunk of the office wall toppled on top of the growing gray goo. Parts of the ceiling also began dropping on top of the goo. The goo squirted out onto Barry and his group of technicians. They stood paralyzed with fear and wonder as the goo began squirming and crawling all over their bodies.

“Move!” Kyle yelled, while grabbing Taylor and pulling her away from the goo.

Another large slab of the office wall leaned and then fell backward onto the floor behind Taylor and Kyle. With an opening provided, Kyle tugged at Taylor trying to get her out of the office.

“Come on! We’ve got to get out of here,” yelled Kyle.

Taylor allowed herself to be pulled along by Kyle, but her eyes remained fixed on Barry. Barry stood surrounded by the goo, staring at Taylor. “How did you know?” he asked. “How did you know?”

“Oh, I don’t know, Barry. It’s all just an anomaly. Something you and your story could never explain. Let’s just say I had a *real* prophetic learning experience. Bye, bye,” said Taylor at last, as Kyle pulled her out of the room.

While the office collapsed behind them, Kyle and Taylor ran around the goo, through the hall, and then into and down the stairway. Everything around them was beginning to collapse. The entire building was breaking apart. Aside from the incessant humming, buzzing, hissing, and churning of the goo, Taylor and Kyle could hear the giant structure creaking, moaning, booming, banging and clanging. Running down the stairs, they could feel the building staggering and swaying. They dodged huge slabs of concrete cracking off the walls, falling all around them. Pillars, posts and beams, bundles of wire, pipes and tubes were breaking loose, crashing down around them. The stairs below their scrambling feet began to splinter and snap. The gray goo was consuming everything. Every material thing was melting into the goo.

A huge chunk of the stairs that Taylor and Kyle had been descending broke apart from the rest and began sliding downward on a thick river of gray goo. Taylor and Kyle hung onto the railing, riding the jagged chunk of concrete like two kayakers on a raft through the rapids. When their cement raft crashed onto the street, they rolled off, miraculously avoiding the goo sprawling all around them.

Out on the street, as the gray goo advanced, Taylor and Kyle looked up and briefly watched what remained of Barry's building melt into the goo. Then, with the horrifying cries and screams of people, trans- and posthumans saturating the air, Kyle grabbed Taylor, pulled her around the mounting piles of goo, and ran with her, side by side, as fast as they could, around the corner, through an alley, and away, down the streets of the city.

Behind them, the rest of the metropolis continued melting into the ever-growing gray goo.

**Chapter 24: On the Run**

When Kyle and Taylor reached the wilderness park, they joined everyone in the Band standing at the edge of the pond to watch the gray goo bubbling up to the surface. Dewey bent over, picked up a long stick, and poked it into the rising goo. When he pulled it out, there was nothing left of the stick save the small part he held in his hand. Holding the stub up close to his face to examine it, Dewey realized that it was slowly being eaten away by the nanobots that had managed to crawl up it. Disgusted and scared that they might also jump onto him, he threw it back into the growing pile of goo in the pond. Within seconds, the wood melted into the goo.

The goo was humming now; thumping, hissing, pulsing, vibrating. And the noise was growing louder.

“Listen to it,” said Keri. “It keeps making the same sounds over and over. More, more, more, more. More, more, more, more. It wants more!”

“Damn, it’s irritating!” snapped Armando.

The pile of goo shifted its form as if feeling its way around, searching for something else to consume. Everyone in the Band, except for Taylor, took a few precautionary steps backward, away from the gooey pond. Taylor stood at the edge, staring into the goo, thinking.

“What do you suppose they’re made of?” asked Kyle while bending over trying to get a sniff of it.

Lazarus scratched his forehead, then examined his hand, looking for a bundle of bots that may have landed on his face. “They’re probably made of a diamondoid material.” Lazarus stopped looking at his hand and gazed skyward.

“Those things are made out of diamonds?” asked Armando.

“That means they’re able to eat through anything,” added Marshall.

Lazarus started backing up, looking skyward. “Plus, we may have gray dust floating around up there already.” The rest of the Band followed him, gathering around a tree’s trunk. “I’d say Barry and his boys probably concocted their bots to be unstoppable.”

“It’s going to eat up everything, isn’t it?” asked Keri.

Nobody said a word. Nobody dared to.

“What’s that smell coming off of it?” asked Armando.

“That’s a byproduct of its consumption,” explained Kyle. “A gas.”

“Are we going to see any of its shit?” asked Dewey from his side of the tree. “Cause all I’m smelling is one big nasty fart.”

“Look!” cried Keri while pointing at the pond.

A black-brown sludge was oozing out from under the pile of goo.

“That’s its shit!” yelled Marshall while holding his nose.

Taylor stood there with her back up against the tree. She was silent, thinking. There’s nothing I can do to fight this stuff. I can’t sing or drum or dance this goo into submission. There isn’t anything that I learned in Telos that can help us here. Taylor sighed heavily, frowned, and then stepped out from under the tree and faced the Band. “We’ve got to get out of here,” she said aloud, finally.

“I’ll say,” said Marshall.

The rest of the Band nodded their heads in agreement.

“You know,” said Kyle, “it looks like this goo is using the city’s infrastructure to move its way around. And it looks like individual clumps of the goo are thinking for themselves. I have a feeling this goo is going to spread through the city’s sewer system before making its way toward the natural environment.”

"We've got to move, then," said Lazarus, "because the water in that pond is fed by all kinds of pipes and pumps below the surface. There's nothing natural about it."

"We'll be on the run?" asked Keri.

"Cool!" said Dewey. "Band on the run."

"But where will we go?" asked Marshall.

Everyone looked at Taylor. No one dared ask, but she knew what they were all thinking. The Band wanted to go to Mount Shasta to join up with the Lemurians. And it made sense, too, she thought. Maybe the goo wouldn't be able to make it inside the mountain.

While the others were looking to Taylor for answers, Kyle had walked silently away. Taylor watched him make his way through the cattails, around the pond, and up to the top of the hill, where he now stood gazing off into the distance to the north. She could see his tall silhouette standing there, leaning up against a tree. His back was toward the Band, and a strong, steady wind was blowing, tossing his long, dark hair. Taylor knew he was already busy at work, thinking, searching from his solitary vantage point for a way to get them all safely away.

Most of the Band had been camping in the park for sometime now, so being on the run would be a welcomed change. The Band decided that they would need to avoid all obstacles if possible, stay low, and travel light. Sleeping wouldn't be a problem. It was warm enough, and by now all of them had learned how to find safe spaces to bed down in—even Marshall, the most recent Band member. Dewey and Armando, especially, were old pros at this. Together, the two close friends had been sleeping next to, in, and under all kinds of houses, fences, piers, freeway turnoffs, junkyards, civic buildings, tunnels, or parking garages for quite some time. So this would be easy for the entire Band. Transportation would be limited to their own feet and hitchhiking thumbs. Food would come from a



variety of sources. There was always an ever-present supply of day-old, expired foods to be found in trash bins behind any supermarket along the way.

Kyle thought that it would be best to stay near the coastline if at all possible, for the beach offered some relief from the ever-expanding concrete jungle—things he figured these nanobots would be more prone to gravitate toward.

After packing up their backpacks, the Band took off, running through the streets of Los Angeles. Scurrying along, they could hear, the constant churning of the goo as it continued growing and eating away at all the buildings, automobiles, streets, sidewalks, trans- and posthumans in the downtown area. The black-brown sludge byproducts of the bots consumption was now running steadily along the curbs, draining into the sewers, and out toward the ocean. And the horrible smelling gas permeated the air. Sirens could also be heard through the humming. It seemed as if every fire engine, police car, and ambulance was making its way toward the city to fight the goo. Hovering above the downtown area were also numerous helicopters, some of which were from the police force, others from firefighting units and still others from various news stations eager to get a good story. People everywhere were in the middle of a mass panic. Everyone was frantically packing their vehicles and heading out of town. The streets were jammed and traffic was at a standstill. Others, unable to respond, stood in shock on their balconies or out in the streets watching one building after another disappearing from the city's downtown skyline. The Band, however, drew little attention as they made their way through the crowds to the beach at Santa Monica, where they ducked under the pier and set off north along the coast. Eventually, they made it to the narrow, sludge-stained beaches of Malibu where the Band was barely able to stay ahead of the goo, as it marched along behind them, munching away at the exclusive, multimillion-dollar mansions lining the coast. One by one, like a long line of falling dominoes, the manors melted into the goo.

Once the Band reached the small, secluded Paradise Cove, nightfall was upon them. In the dark, they quickly climbed a tall staircase to the top of Point Dume. From the rocky point, the Band looked southeast toward downtown Los Angeles. Where once they would have seen a bright, glowing dome of city light, in its place was an expanding circle of darkness. The smell of the gas was heavy in the air. And an occasional siren could still be heard; but, now more than anything else, the Band could hear the chewing and churning of the rising, gray goo.

Having seen, smelled and heard enough, the Band headed east, dashing through the traffic traveling northward on Highway 1 trying to escape the goo. After continuing northeast on the shoulder of a road intersecting the highway, they found an unmarked trail leading into the dry Santa Monica Mountains. The Band took the trail, hurried over a ridge, and began hiking through the mountains. Occasionally, they had to cross a number of jammed highways, which had only recently been cut through.

After crossing one such highway, and then climbing another ridge, the Band stood together, looking down on yet another stretch of road to cross. "You know," said Keri to Taylor, "all these highways cut straight through a bunch of wildlife corridors. The animals living here once used them for traveling from one habitat to another. But, because of these huge strips of concrete that we're looking at, the animals were prevented from moving about. The highways completely cut the pathways off and jailed the animals in these cages. Dozens of species became extinct."

Keri paused for a moment and shook her head. "Some of us tried to clear these blocked corridors and to preserve the open ones; but it wasn't enough. And now..." Keri stopped and sighed. "Oh well," she muttered under her breath, while marching down the hill.

The rest of the Band followed. Except for Taylor. She was left standing at the top of the hill, looking down at the highway, trying to get a sense of the earth under her feet. She could feel the

buzzing of the goo. She could tell that it was moving. But strangely enough, it seemed to be moving away. Maybe the goo was content with the meal the extensive, mechanized infrastructure of the city provided.



Several days later, just before daybreak, the Band emerged from the mountains to find themselves on the top of a hill above Highway 1, looking directly into the entrance of a government firing range. Across the highway, a tall chain-link fence with barbed wire surrounded the entire range. Posted on one of the double doors of the large gate leading into the range was a no trespassing sign. On the other door, another sign was posted notifying any potential intruders that this was a restricted area: "Keep Out, Authorized Personnel Only." An unmanned security tower carrying a red warning flag loomed over the entire compound. Under the watchtower, a set of bleachers had been erected for spectators to witness firing sessions and demonstrations. Eighteen, human silhouette targets lined the back wall of the shooting range.

Not liking what they had stumbled onto, the Band walked cautiously down the hill and skirted north along the eastside shoulder of Highway 1. For now, the road was empty. No traffic was to be found. Lining the road were a variety of forbidding signs, reminding the Band of the world they were attempting to evade. On the horizon to the north, were the lights of another very official looking military post.

Kyle, who was leading, stopped, turned around to face the Band, and whispered. "That's the Point Mugu Naval Pacific Missile Test Center. And it's *way* too quiet around here. I don't like it."

The Band formed a huddle. "Something's gotta be up," added Dewey, also in a whisper.

“I don’t like it, neither.” Armando kept shifting his weight back and forth, looking north, over the heads of the others.

Marshall shivered. “The whole area gives me the creeps.”

Dewey turned around his hat and pulled it low over his eyes as if pretending to be some military personnel. “You’d think they’d be busy launching all kinds of attacks on the goo.”

“Maybe they cleared out, expecting a rush,” said Lazarus between heavy breaths.

“A *rush*?” asked Dewey.

“Of goo,” said Lazarus.

Kyle turned and hurried along the shoulder looking for another trail that would take them back over the hill. While the others followed Kyle, searching for a trail leading eastward, both Taylor and Keri crossed over to the west side of Highway 1. They found themselves looking through a chain-link fence into a large lagoon. Together, they paused to read the large sign that had been posted behind the fence. It told of all the rare and endangered birds and plants present in Mugu Lagoon and asked visitors to the area not to disturb any of the protected species. Keri and Taylor sighed heavily, thinking of all the species that the goo was going to consume.

Then, the two young women heard Kyle whistle and turned to see him waving for them to come along. Luckily, he had found a trailhead on the east side of the road. Keri and Taylor crossed the road; and, just as Taylor was about to disappear over the first hill with the rest of the Band, she looked back. At that moment, a small caravan of Army trucks stormed by. As she watched the caravan roll northward on Highway 1, headed toward the missile test center, she noticed the ground moving directly under the Transcontinental Cable Route sign. Then, as if someone were pulling up a long, thick cord from under the dirt, a line of slimy gray goo ran along the ground. It looked like the streak

of goo was in pursuit of the caravan. She turned and ran to catch up with the Band, but said nothing about what she had seen.



By the time the Band had reached the outskirts of the city of Camarillo, they were out of food. Everyone was tired, and famished from all the traveling, so they slipped off their backpacks, and sat down on the hard, dry ground to rest. They were tired and dirty, sweaty and hot. And off on the horizon they could see a single gray cloud hanging low over the dark, quiet city.

“We’ve got to get something to eat,” said Dewey. “I’m starvin’.”

“That cloud over the city you’re looking at, Dewey,” said Lazarus raising his hand and pointing, “could be bot dust, you know. I don’t think you want to go into the city, looking for food.”

“But I gotta eat!” said Dewey in exasperation.

“I’m hungry, too,” added Armando.

Dewey and Armando looked at each other, nodded, said “Yep” in unison, popped up off the ground, poured out the contents of their backpacks, flung them over their shoulders, and started running off toward the city. “Don’t worry,” said Dewey, looking over his shoulder while continuing to run. “We’ll bring back something for those empty bellies.”

Before anyone had a chance to stop them, Dewey and Armando, the best dumpster divers in the Band, disappeared over a rise, leaving the remainder of the Band behind to rest in the field. Nearly an hour later, the two came running back, huffing and puffing, with stuffed backpacks bouncing, and plastic bags dangling from their straining arms.

“It was a cloud of bots, alright,” said Dewey while laying down his bags.

“Badbots,” said Armando trying to shake off his heavy backpack. “You could tell. Just by the way it moved and the sounds it made. It was calling out to us.”

Dewey was already digging in a bag. “But it didn’t come down on us. It left us alone.”

Within seconds everyone was sprawled out on the ground feasting on a rich supply of yogurt, cottage cheese, old bananas, and muffins.

“Hey Dew,” said Marshall, after gulping down his first container of yogurt, “what happened to your shoes?”

Like the others, Dewey was sitting on the ground with his feet out in front of him, except the soles of his sneakers were missing. Between bites of his blueberry muffin, Dewey explained. “I was in a dumpster when all of sudden, the bottom fell through. Before I knew it, I was standing in the stuff. The goo, ya know?”

“I had to pull him out,” added Armando. “And by the time I did, the goo had eaten away his soles.”

“Are you going to be alright?” asked Keri between bites of her banana. “Will you be good to travel?”

With muffin-stuffed cheeks, Dewey nodded. “Once,” he said, after swallowing some of it, “I went a whole month without shoes in L.A. That toughened up my feet a *whole* lot. I’ll be okay.”

Armando playfully kicked at Dewey’s feet. “Yeah. Them dogs were made for walking.”

Dewey smiled, raised his feet, then wiggled his toes and barked. “Ruff! Ruff!” Muffin crumbs flew out of his mouth.

Taylor watched Kyle, with stuffed cheeks of his own, smile briefly at Dewey, and then swallow hard. His eyes turned serious, his jaw tightened, and he got up, and started stuffing the remaining bags of food into his backpack. She watched him, all the while wondering how he had

survived all these years out on the streets since she'd been gone. He was so brave and strong and smart.

Realizing that the goo was close behind, everyone followed Kyle's move and shoved as much food as they could first into their mouths, and then into their packs, and started off. They took a cautious, low-profile route around the west of Moorpark, forded the Santa Clara River, then skirted the city Santa Paula, until finally reaching the Los Padres National Forest area. Neglecting to purchase an adventure pass at a forest service office, the Band entered the 220-mile stretch of land. Heading north by northwest, they traveled on, crossing trails for hikers, equestrians, mountain bicyclists, and off-highway vehicles. Mostly, however, they tried to avoid the beaten paths, preferring instead to traverse the more primitive backcountry.

Eventually, the Band reached a ridge that offered a view of the 125,000-acre Cuyama area. Keri, once again standing at Taylor's side, explained what they were looking at. "Once, there were no roads running through here; but, with all the oil below the surface, the energy industry got interested in this area. This whole place was once the home of the California condor, the San Joaquin kit fox, and the California jewelflower; but, with all of the new access roads connecting the drilling sites, pipelines, and processing plants, everything got messed up.

"At one time, the oil here was locked up tight by environmental protection laws, but politicians gave the oil companies the chance to lease more and more of this public land every year. And, of course, the oil companies drilled and drilled away. They wiped out everything. Now look at it. All you can see is an endless supply of old drilling sites."

Then, as if by all of her talk Keri had called "action" for a scene in a movie to begin, the Band watched each and every one of the oil pumps begin to sink into the landscape. Soon the entire valley was nothing more than a haphazard array of deep, gaping holes. And then, from each dark hole, the

gluttonous, gray goo came crawling, spilling out into the valley. Within no time at all, the goo, and its ugly black-brown sludge, filled up the entire valley, climbed up the rise, and began to pursue the Band as they sprinted along the ridge, just out of reach of the greedy goo's grasp.



The Band traveled north by northwest, remaining in the diminishing backcountry, avoiding the city of San Luis Obispo entirely. Passing quietly through Morro Bay State Park, the Band climbed a trail lined in chaparral, eucalyptus, oaks, pines, and coastal shrubs. When the trail peaked, they were on top of Black Mountain. Altogether there were a total of nine peaks standing high above the surrounding landscape. From the Band's view, they could see the famed Morro Rock, the northernmost of the crests, serving as a landmark for the beach community of Morrow Bay. Obstructing the otherwise beautiful view were three tall stacks of a nearby power plant.

Before advancing any further, the Band surveyed the area looking for any possible signs of trouble. The small town was deserted. No cars were moving, no people walking on the streets. Seeing no signs of nanobot goo, dust, or swarms, they looped their way around Morro Bay and then continued traveling north along the coast. The Band was on the wide, flat beach just north of Morro Bay, strolling along for the moment, enjoying the sounds of the surf, when they heard a horrendous blast from behind. Everyone stopped, turned, and caught a glimpse of huge gobs of goo flying through the air, directly at them. The power plant had exploded! And before the Band had a chance to turn and run, giant-sized, runny raindrops of goo began pouring down all around them.

The Band took off sprinting up the beach, darting around the jellylike glops of goo. The goo was squirming, eating away at the sand and shells, water and crabs, fish and seaweed. Some of the



bigger drops started joining together, making it difficult to get around. Once, Dewey almost got caught. The goo surrounded him and shut him off from advancing on the beach with the others. But, luckily, the big, long, squirmy gob of goo thinned in a section. Dewey picked up a flat piece of driftwood and half surfed, half skateboarded, across the glob. His makeshift board didn't make it through, but at least he got away from the gobbling goo.

For the moment, the goo seemed to dig down into the sand rather than advance any further along the beach. Breathing a sigh of relief, the Band kept moving northward. They made it all the way through the town of Cambria, then into San Simeon, where they were offered a view of the famous Hearst Castle nesting comfortably on a hill to the east.

As the Band trekked on, Dewey looked back, stopped, and pointed, "Hey, look! Hearst's castle is oozing down the hill."

"Yeah," said Kerri while making her way to the front of the Band, "and it's coming our way, too."

Immediately, the Band, picked up their pace and didn't slow down until arriving in the Ventana Wilderness and Santa Lucia Range.



Everyone's spirits were low, and now concern was mounting as to whether they were going to make it safely through Carmel and Monterey. After a restless night's sleep, and no food, with no decision made as to what to do, the hungry Band took off. While trudging alongside of Highway 1, a large, multicolored school bus pulled up and stopped beside them. The sudden appearance of the bus took the weary Band by surprise. The door of the bus opened and a thick cloud of pungent, herbal smelling

smoke poured out. Everyone in the Band gathered near the door to see who, or what, was inside. And when the smoke cleared, they peered in on an old, old man wearing a floppy denim hat, goggle sunglasses, a dirty, white tank top, and bell-bottom jeans. Long gray hair fell out the back of his hat, blending nicely with his even longer gray beard. His exposed skin was covered in sunspots. After taking a lengthy look at the tired Band, the old codger exposed a nearly toothless smile.

"Hey," he said with a scratchy voice, while flipping his scraggly thumb toward the back of the bus, "we're packed full of hippies in here. And we're heading for Santa Cruz. But we got room for more."

"Are you offering us a ride?" asked Taylor from the rear of the Band.

The old man snickered. "Not unless ya got any ass, gas, or grass, missy!"

"Shut up, you dirty old man!" shouted an attractive, longhaired woman who had moved behind the old driver. She was wearing a loose, tie-dyed dress and had beads around her neck, wrists, and ankles. She elbowed the old guy and turned to the Band. "Come on in. If you're walking, you're never gonna be able to avoid that awful gray goo. And don't mind him. He's harmless." She smiled, then playfully, yet not so gently, smacked the old man on the back of his head. The old man snickered.

Without hesitation, the Band accepted their invitation and climbed into the bus. After saying hello to the driver, whose name was Mo, the Band filed into seats near the front of the bus. Mo reached out for the swivel handle, closed the door, put the bus back in gear, and took off north on Highway 1.

The longhaired woman, who called herself Moon Star, proceeded to introduce the Band to her friends. As Mo had said, the bus was full of hippies; but Moon Star only knew Grass Hopper, Mourning Dove, and Sun Shine. Grass Hopper was the only male of the four. He, too, had long hair and wore a tie-dyed shirt and bell-bottom jeans. The other two looked almost identical to Moon Star,

in that they also had long brown hair and wore baggy, tie-dyed dresses. After the round of introductions, and after the Band had filled their bellies with the food the hippies generously shared, within no time at all, the "Tie-Dyed Quartet"—as they had decided to name themselves, some time ago—had the Band singing.

*And the sign says long haired hippie people need not apply*

*So I tucked my hair up under my hat and went in to ask him why*

*He said you look like a fine outstanding young man, I think you do*

*So I took off my hat, and said imagine that, huh, I mean it wasn't for you*

*Sign, sign, everywhere a sign*

*Messing up the scenery, breaking my mind*

*Do this don't do that*

*Can't you read the signs?*

The Tie-Dyed Quartet had most of the Band singing that song—and its remaining verses—over and over and over again, all the long way to Santa Cruz. Aside from the original remark about the gray goo made by Moon Star, no other mention was made of the current state of affairs at all. The hippies seemed much too happy and carefree to be all that concerned about the gray goo following them.

While riding along, listening and watching Marshall, Armando, and Dewey still singing, Taylor noticed Kyle sitting alone in the seat directly in front of Lazarus and Keri. He was staring out the window, keeping a cautious eye on the passing coastline. Thinking that he looked so alone, as he

always did, Taylor picked herself up, moved around Moon Star who was sharing the seat with her, walked across the isle, and sat down next to Kyle. Saying nothing, Taylor reached out, and held his hand. Saying nothing, Kyle looked down at their hands, turned Taylor's over in his, and without looking up, reached over with his other hand, and began caressing her palm and fingers.

At that very moment, Lazarus leaned forward, draped his arm over the seat between Kyle and Taylor, and pointed out the window. "Look," he said with no sign of emotion, "it's a swarm." And that's exactly what it was, too; riding on the horizon, out at sea, just over the water, a small twisting tornado.

"Badbots," said Kyle.

"I wonder if it's from the goo," said Lazarus. "They could've sprouted wings, and broke away from a pile of goo, and now their out on their own, hunting something."

Together they watched the small, dark gray swarm as it continued whirling south over the water until fading out of sight.

"Well," said Taylor, "at least it's moving in the opposite direction."

"For now, at least," offered Kyle, while holding Taylor's hand more firmly than before.

When the bus finally arrived at a parking lot along the beach in Santa Cruz, the Band got off with the rest of the hippies. Moon Star and the others supplied the Band with as much food as they could spare, and then everyone in the Band thanked them for the ride and hospitality, and said good-bye. Hurriedly trying to get out of town, some of the Band could often be heard humming the song. The hippies never did tell them the name of the song, so they were left to their own devices to create a title. Marshall would always call it the "Long Haired Hippie People" song. For Armando, who had unexpectedly loved the singing, it would always be known as, "Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign." Like the hippies, Armando hated signs.

After walking a couple of miles out of town the Band's pace slowed. The singing and humming, and all the good food calmed the Band considerably. Yet Taylor, who had somehow felt the goo's energy on the rise while in Santa Cruz, turned and looked back anxiously at the city. At that very moment, *all* of Santa Cruz began bobbing up and down in a great, rolling puddle of goo. Taylor gasped when she saw the hippies' colorful bus riding a huge wave of goo bullying its way over the incoming surf, out into the ocean. Taylor's gasp caught the Band's attention, causing everyone to turn around only to watch the hippies' bus sink into the sea.



Hiking at a rapid pace, the Band continued northward until reaching Half Moon Bay. Taking a trail on a beach with low, sandy hills and clumps of cordgrass, they cautiously made their way past the Montara Lighthouse. By the time the Band had made their way along a number of coastal trails on the outskirts of San Francisco, they found a place to rest on the soft grass in Crissy Field of the historic Presidio near the south entrance of Golden Gate Bridge. It was dark in the park and a fog was beginning to build, hindering the Band's view of the bay. While walking on the trails, the Band had noticed that the city was silent. Not a single person had been seen.

By now, nearly everyone in the Band was in an exhausted state of despair. Their cheeks were emaciated, their expressions were desolate and haggard, their clothes ragged and torn. The situation was growing hopeless; and there seemed to be no end in sight to all this madness and running. The Band sat on the cold ground looking at each other. Taylor was hoping Kyle would take charge and get them up and moving, tell them what to do or where to go. But instead, he too sat there exhausted, saying nothing, staring out over the bridge at the end of the continent.

The riches of the Orient were supposed to be shipped through this gate. And what an amazing gate it was. Here stood a proud, glowing testament to man's power and achievement. The bridge was eight thousand, nine hundred and eighty-one feet long. Its thick cables supported two-hundred million pounds. It had twin towers that were comparable in height to two, sixty-five-story buildings. And it was completely covered in a peculiar orange paint.

“I wonder why the goo hasn't taken down the bridge,” said Taylor leaning back on her elbows. “And why did all of Los Angeles slide into the goo, but for some of the other cities we've been in, all the buildings were intact?”

“Where have all the people gone?” asked Dewey. “That's what I want to know. There's nobody here anymore. Did everyone in San Francisco just leave?”

“Come to think of it,” said Armando, “we haven't seen anybody since those hippies back in San Jose.”

“I have a theory about that,” said Lazarus. “Would you like to hear it?”

“Sure,” said Keri.

“I think the bots are becoming more selective. They're choosing what they want to consume. And, as for the people, I think their minds became one with the bots; the goo, the dust, and maybe even the swarms.” Lazarus paused and when it was obvious that no one was going to laugh, or start arguing, he continued. “Maybe something was turned on in their brains, causing them to become one with the badbots. Dewey, Armando, you remember when the cloud was calling out to you, in Camarillo? Maybe the bots call out, and some answer. And I'll bet that anybody with one of Barry's uploaded brains heard the bots' call quite clearly. I think they're all one with the goo.”

“That's a weirdest collective consciousness if I've ever hear of,” said Keri.

“I’ll bet that means their badbot brains ate away their bodies from the inside out.” Armando was staring off into space, scratching his head as if anticipating the badbots to come running out of his head at any second.

“I sure wouldn’t want to see that,” said Dewey.

“Let’s make a pact, right here and now,” said Kle. “No matter what, no matter how much the badbots call, we won’t listen, we won’t go into the goo.”

“Done,” said Lazarus, Dewey, Armando, Keri, and Marshall. It was the Band’s long held agreement that whenever someone requested a pact, they would all listen, think about it, and within seconds provide an answer. Everybody was looking at Taylor because, not having known about the custom, she had been silent. Taylor nodded her head firmly and said, “Done.”

Without passion or enthusiasm, Kyle stood up and said, "What do you say we get moving."

The Band picked themselves up, followed Kyle to Fort Point, and then fell in line and began heading northward across the bridge. It was after 3:00 a.m. and a bone-chilling wind had just kicked up and was now gusting across the bridge, cutting through the clothing of each Band member. In the distance, across the bay to the east, through a break in the fog, was the solitary Alcatraz Island.

The hike across the bridge was wearing on the Band's nerves. Surely, anyone walking on this great structure, completely out in the open, would be a logical target for the goo. Not to mention a cloud of bots that might float by. Or even one of those swarms that could attack. Armando, Dewey, and Marshall were particularly afraid; and, occasionally, one of them would look down at the water below. And the longer they walked on the bridge, the more they looked down into the water. It was almost as if their eyes were being drawn to it. Then, while Marshall was again looking down into the waters of the bay, he stopped and shouted, “Look! Under the water. It’s the goo! It’s filling up the bay!”

And it was. The goo was there, growing, turning the murky waters of the bay gray. Then, all of a sudden, like a gigantic leviathan that had been roused from its slumber, the goo rose up out of the sea, and swallowed up the few ships that had been floating in the bay. The beast then slid back to its hiding place under the surface and a dark, smelly smoke rose up out of the water.

“Come on! We’ve got to get off the bridge,” shouted Armando, while running ahead of Dewey and Marshall.

But Marshall had stopped and wouldn’t move any further. Instead, he began to climb up the tall chain-link fence that had been erected to prevent people from jumping over. He was heading for the goo! By the time he reached the top and swung his leg over the edge, Dewey turned and saw him. He tried to run back to stop him, but it was too late. He would never make it to Marshall in time.

Taylor, who had been walking ahead of the three, turned and saw Marshall at the top of the fence. “No!” she yelled. And then, with a mysterious energy that seemed to tug at her heart, she launched herself through the air, over Armando and Dewey, and landed high on the fence to grab Marshall’s leg.

Marshall, who had been looking down at the gray goo with tears in his eyes, turned back to Taylor. At once, he saw that her eyes were glowing. In fact, her whole body was radiating light. “It’ll be okay, Marshall,” Taylor said calmly. “We’ll get out of here. I know it.” She nodded reassuringly, and then grinned.

Taylor’s voice had soothed Marshall, and now he wasn’t able to take his eyes off of her. He pulled his leg down off the ridge of the fence; and, together, they climbed down and joined Dewey and Armando back on the walkway.



Dewey and Armando were both staring at Taylor. Now that she was down on the walkway, her body returned to normal. The light was gone, but for Armando, Dewey, and Marshall, the memory of Taylor's light was burning in their minds.

"How the heck did you get up there?" asked Dewey.

"Your whole body was glowing," said Armando.

Marshall said nothing, but couldn't take his eyes off of her.

Without a word, Taylor turned and started marching north, trying to catch up to Kyle, Lazarus and Keri. She was hoping that Dewey, Armando, and Marshall would follow her and forget about her glowing, and the horrible goo, which she had also seen, and felt calling.

Dewey, Armando, and then Marshall did start running after Taylor. Then a rain started to fall, lightly at first. Then the wind kicked up, and the rain fell harder, and sideways. Taylor, Dewey, Armando, and Marshall caught up to the others and by the looks she was receiving Taylor could tell that they also had seen all she had done. Having witnessed her glow, they now looked to her with hope in their eyes; especially Marshall, for he had seen her eyes.

At that moment, the bridge started to shake and roll. It also began to lower into the bay. The twin towers of the bridge began sinking, lower and lower, into the water. The Band took off running faster than they ever had in all their lives. Overhead, the cables of the bridge snapped apart and whipped through the air. The bridge plunged into the water, and everyone in the Band managed to scramble off safely onto land. But then, just when they thought they were in the clear, the goo began climbing the hillside. As the Band struggled up the slippery slope, looking as if they too were about to be gulped up by the goo, the gob gurgled and then regressed back into the icy water of the dark, gray bay.



After getting their wits back about them, the Band pushed through the pounding rain and continued trudging north. Nothing further was mentioned of Taylor's amazing feat, absolutely nothing about her mysterious glow. But now everyone in the Band looked at her a little differently. Marshall, more than anyone else, gazed upon Taylor with gratitude and reverence.

Taylor was also silent about her unexpected quality. She had amazed herself, even frightened herself with this newfound ability to fly through the air. She was also aware that she had become all luminous and lit up like a ball of light. No one in Telos had explained to her that this would happen. Yet maybe they weren't supposed to. This glow, this skill, was it because of the experience in the Temple of Light? What was it all for? she wondered. And how could she use this newfound power of hers?

The Band finally came to rest when they entered yet another extremely thick fog bank at the Point Reyes National Seashore of Drakes Bay. They stayed and rested there throughout the night. The following day, with the soupy fog to protect them, the Band picked up and walked north on an old ranch road through a rich pasture spotted with yellow poppies, orange fiddleneck and purple iris flowers. After the Band passed by a small pond and a eucalyptus grove, they practically stumbled upon a herd of tule elk wandering and grazing about. The elk mesmerized Keri, and it took much prodding from Taylor to keep her moving. While Taylor was tugging on Keri's arm, from out of nowhere, a small pile of goo began slithering along the top of the ridge like a sneaky snake. Taylor and Keri both froze. Gathering in a pool in a small indentation in the ridge, the goo rose up into a tall column, as if getting a better look at its surroundings. After a moment, the goo melted back into the

pool. Lying there, the goo started expanding and contracting, pulsing really, almost as if breathing. Yet it was quiet. Gone was the constant churning and hissing.

Suddenly, a baby tule elk wandered near the pulsing pool of goo. Sensing the animal's presence, the goo moved into a long cord and surrounded the small elk. When the elk tried to jump up out of the trap, three small swarms rose up out of the goo, and threw themselves on the baby elk. The elk twitched and turned, attempting to shake off the bots. Its head jerked and pulled, giving signs that its insides were being eaten away. Finally, with the baby elk's entire innards and skeleton gone, its body wilted, and then its hide slid into the slime.

After the goo was done with the first elk, the swarms rose up from the goo, and like efficient teams of bees each traveling in their own individual formations, the three swarms gathered together, and then darted off, attacking one tule elk after another. And when they did this, one elk after another, the two young women could hear the swarms and the pile of goo now chanting the same mantra over, and over again. "More, more, more, more."

Taylor jerked Keri by the arm and started running all the way up to the high vista at Tomales Point where they caught up with the rest of the Band. When Taylor and Keri reached the Band, they were standing with the mouth of Tomales Bay directly in front of them.

"Let's swim it," said Dewey. "It's not that far."

"Are you kidding?" shouted Marshall, pointing to the gaping mouth of the bay. "I can't swim that."

"And there's probably some of that goo down there, just waiting for us get within reach," added Lazarus.

"We'll just have to turn around and go all the way back then," said Kyle.

"We can't," said Taylor, now that she had caught her breath. "Swarms are back there."

“They’re eating all the tule elk,” said Keri. She was staring at the ground. Her eyes were blank.

Kyle turned around and looked down the steep hill searching for a way to descend the lofty point. “We’re going to have to chance it.” Without argument, they all followed Kyle down a rough trail. When they reached the water, they threw off their backpacks, which they had miraculously carried the entire trip up to this point, waded into the icy water, and began swimming across the bay.

Taylor, who was picking up the rear, head only above the water, kept glancing back, watching for the swarms. When she saw three swarms soar down the hill, she turned to the Band and shouted. “They’re coming!”

“We’re going to have to get under the water while they pass,” shouted Kyle. “Deep breaths everyone. Here they come!”

The Band ducked under the water. From a position just a few feet under, some of the Band looked upward hoping to see the swarm swing by, others looked down fearing the goo that might come from below to gulp them up. Everyone stayed down for as long as they could, hoping the swarms would be gone. When they all surfaced, one after another, they finished the long swim without a glitch; even Marshall, who surprised everyone, including himself, with his newfound strength. When they reached the other side, without even stopping to dry their clothes, the Band trudged on.



Several days later, the Band was able to avoid the same mistake they made at Tomales Bay, and passed around the Bodega Bay area without having to swim through any more icy water. After

rounding the bay they struggled through the shifting sands of the tall Bodega Dunes and then continued up the coast. By the time they approached the Russian River, the wind had picked up and was blowing strongly. From the grassy shoreline they could see the huge Goat Rock located off of Highway 1 near the mouth of the river. When they finally did reach the sandy shores of the river, the Band met up with dozens of resting harbor seals. This was pupping season, and many newborns were lying about. Armando made the mistake of thinking that the cute seal pups were docile and tried to pet one of them. But like all wild animals, the seals frightened easily, and Armando narrowly escaped a few serious bites by the mature seals that quickly came to life to protect the defenseless little one.

The Band rested there on the sand near the mouth of the river, behind a rock to block the wind. Then, at night when the wind had calmed down, the Band decided once again to cross the waters. After fording the shallow water at the mouth of the river, the Band dried off by making their way along the winding curves of Highway 1. Traveling up and down, over and around the many hills of the beautiful, yet lonely, headlands, the Band made friends with the many cows that they encountered on the shoulder of the coastal highway. Eventually, they passed, and avoided, the formidable looking stockades of ancient Fort Ross.

By no means did the Band figure that they were in the clear. The badbots could be lurking anywhere, growing, gaining power, and they all knew it, especially Taylor. Yet, as the Band pushed on, Taylor felt as though she, too, were gaining power. She didn't feel confined at all, and the traveling was actually doing her good. As in Telos, the landscape here along the coast was coming alive. Everywhere she looked, everywhere she stepped, it felt like sacred ground. Most of the time, she knew that wherever she was, she was connected in some intimate way with everything around her.

After another full night of walking, with the morning sun approaching, the Band decided that they needed to rest for the day. Luckily, they found a thin, lonely asphalt road that led inland from

Highway 1. Taking the road, they entered a beautiful redwood forest. The sheer loftiness of these cloud sweepers, combined with their distinguished age, inspired feelings of awe within the Band. They walked silently amongst the titans, while straining their necks, staring upward, to admire the cathedral-like majesty of the forest. The redwood forest, which also contained an abundance of Douglas firs, grand firs, and tanbark oaks, was quiet and still except for the occasional squawking of a Steller's jay that hopped from branch to branch among the trees and shrubs.

It was then, while under the protection of the forest canopy, that Taylor began thinking about the Lemurians. She wondered whether or not they would be capable of fending off the gray goo. Would they be able to keep it from infiltrating their city? Why hadn't she thought of this before? Did she avoid doing so, simply because she *needed* to believe that there would be a safe haven for her and the Band? She quickly became frustrated with herself for being so naïve as to believe that she and the others would be able to hide from the badbots in Telos.

Unable to rest in the shade of the redwood giants, Taylor got up to walk around. She had been wandering for a while when she found herself in a small clearing traversing a tiny path of pink blossoms, sitting on the ends of the lower branches of evergreen shrubs nearly twelve feet in height. The bushes had leathery, elliptical-shaped, dark green leaves. But what was most delightful about the plants, of course, were the large, fragrant clusters of bright pink flowers crowded on the ends of the branches. By this time—now late in the spring—the pink flower clusters had matured into cylindrical capsules.

Admiring the beautiful blossoms, Taylor started to hum and tone, just like Etruceana had taught her. All at once, wondrous things started to happen. Nature seemed to bolt awake: Steller's jays flew nearer, redwoods above began to sway and moan, squirrels gathered at her feet, the small shrubs' branches began twisting and bending, moving closer to Taylor as if trying to touch her, and the pink

blossoms turned and faced her like an attentive audience of admiring listeners. And as Taylor continued to tone, more softly now, she took a good long look at one of the blossoms. She counted seven flowers in all on this one stem. Each of the pink corolla flowers had a narrow tubular base, five wavy pointed lobes, and five stamens with hairy filaments. Taylor didn't know it, but these were rhododendrons, and the short looping trail she was on, was all that was left of the Kruse Rhododendron National Reserve.

Taylor felt a strange and strong connection to the rhododendrons, but she knew that the horrible badbots would soon make their way into this forest. And when that happened, it wouldn't be long before it came after these little plants, and all the pretty pink flowers. To Taylor, it felt as if the fragile flowers knew this. She could even hear their cries of sorrow, begging her to help. But there was nothing she could do. All she and the rhododendrons had left was this opportunity to admire and be admired. It was then that Taylor gazed down upon the top of another seven-flower cluster now tickling her chin; and when she did, the Fruit of Life design flashed into her mind. And the sight of it aroused something deep within her. In a way, it reminded her of the experience in the Temple of Light. But it also seemed to hint at something yet to come.

This is when Taylor finally decided that she would start paying more attention to her visions. For she was beginning to realize that she would probably have to be the one to get the Band out of the predicament they were in. And maybe it was time to acknowledge and even begin using her supernatural powers.

**Chapter 25: The Interdimensional Vehicle**

When night approached, the Band stirred from their slumber, picked themselves up, and decided to follow the small road eastward, deeper into the forest. Eventually, the asphalt road became gravel. After a short time, the stone road bridged a river. The Band walked down the riverbank, and proceeded northward alongside of the slow-moving waterway. This was the south fork of the Gualala River.

The Band had traveled quite a distance north in the thick forest of redwoods, fir, and pines, until the river took a westward bend to eventually empty into the Pacific Ocean. By this time, in spite of the Band's improved attitude from witnessing Taylor's mysterious glow, everyone was tired and much in need of rest. It was therefore decided that they should stay in the thick redwood forest close to the river until feeling strong enough to go on. After doubling back quite a distance, the Band found an excellent resting spot near the river, up on a small hill, under a circular grouping of redwoods.

The next day, while the Band was sitting in a circle, still gathering strength, a heavy fog rolled in. Taylor took a survey of the Band. Dewey was examining the small garter snake crawling under his shorts. Armando was trying to drag his comb through his messed up hair. Marshall was scratching his insect bites. Keri was playing with a baby tree toad. Lazarus was staring off into the fog. And Kyle, who was squatting with his back up against a redwood, was keeping an eye on the clearing, watching the land.

Taylor noticed that he had become much more fidgety, as of late. Right now he was chewing on a stick, wringing his hands, scanning the horizon. "It's coming," he said, and then looked directly at Taylor. "I can feel it; it's on the way." All the others stopped whatever they were doing, turned and



looked at him. “It’s far away yet, but it’s coming right at us. It’s tall. Taller than the trees here, I think. I don’t know how long it’ll take, but it’s going to be here, all at once, right on top of us.”

“What is?” asked Dewey. “What’s gonna be here?”

“A wave,” Taylor added. “A tsunami-sized wave of gray goo.”

“We’re not going to make it to Mount Shasta are we?” said Marshall.

“We need to get off the planet,” said Lazarus

“Off the planet?!” yelled Kerri and Armando in unison.

“Oh, sure,” said Marshall sarcastically. “What d’you expect us to just walk off?”

Taylor looked skyward through the tall circle of redwoods. There were six redwood trees, all of them surrounding a large redwood stump in the middle. This was the mother redwood from which the six others sprung. That made seven altogether. Taylor looked around at the other six members of the Band, and just like when she was staring at the rhododendrons, the Fruit of Life design flashed through her mind. And then it clicked. “No,” she said. “We’re going to dance off.”

“Dance?!” said Dewey, Armando, Kerri and Marshall, together.

“Come on,” said Taylor while standing. “Follow me down to the river bank.”

They all got up and followed her down the hill.

“Look,” said Taylor once she reached the sand on the riverbank. “This is all I can think to do at this point. I learned a little something while inside the mountain that just might be able to help us out. And with that light thing happening to me back there on the bridge, well, I got to thinking.” Taylor hesitated for just a second. “Maybe there’s a chance that with this new power of mine we’ll be able to do something. You see, there’s one thing I haven’t told you. Back when I was in the mountain I was supposed to lead a team of seven. We were to be called the Sacred Seven. And we were going to go back in time, so that we could change the past to save our world in the present.”

“Ha!” said Armando.

“And now,” said Taylor choosing to ignore Armando, “if you look around at us, there *are* seven of us. And check out that ring of redwoods up on the hill. There’s one redwood stump in the middle and six big redwoods that have sprouted around it. Seven. That’s quite a coincidence, I think. Plus, I don’t know if you know it or not, but this river flows south to north. I don’t think there’s any other river in all of North America that does that. And we’re directly on top of the San Andreas fault line. I can feel it.”

“*Soooo*,” said Armando.

“Armando!” snapped Lazarus. “Shut up a minute. Unless you’ve got a better idea.”

Taylor continued. “That just tells me that we’re in a high energy spot. And there’s something about all of this that makes me want to at least try *something*. Something the Lemurians had me doing in their Temple of Light.”

“Let’s give it a shot,” said Kyle.

“Yeah,” added Dewey. “I’ll do anything to get out of here.”

“So what do we have to do?” asked Keri.

Taylor squatted and proceeded to draw the Divine Design in the sand for the Band. “OK, this first circle is for me. For this dance, I’ll be the one in the center. The rest of you,” Taylor drew a six pointed star-tetrahedron around the center circle, and then the circles at each of the points, “will be stationed around me. This is the pattern that the Sacred Seven were supposed to be in while dancing in the temple. It’s part of the Divine Design. The six others and me were supposed to be shot through the hole at the top of the temple, on a journey back to the past. But, maybe if we perform the dance, while we’re all in this pattern, and with this light that came from me, maybe...”

“What?!” huffed Armando. “This dance is going to be our time machine?”

“You ain’t got nothin’ better,” sneered Marshall.

“It’s an incredible design, actually.” Taylor began to draw circles directly between her inner circle, and the six outer circles. “When you put these circles in between them all, you create the Fruit of Life design. These are the circles you must all dance into, when you come toward me in the center circle. “Once you do, if this goes the way I hope it will, all of you will be connected to me by these lines of light. These lines will form a design called, Metatron’s Cube.” Taylor connected all the circles in the sand with straight lines to draw the cube, and then stood up to admire her sand carving. “And when all of this happens, and if we’re in the right positions, the Flower of Life is supposed to emerge. It’s what the Lemurians call the Divine Design. It’s what was supposed to send the Sacred Seven back into the past.”

“OK,” said Kyle while running back up the hill. “There’s a large clearing where we’ll have some room. “Let’s get moving. Come on! We’ll do the dance up there.”

After the Band ran into the middle of the grassy field, Taylor grabbed a stick, and then started carving out the thirteen circles in the dirt. When she was finished she called everyone to attention. "Now we're going to start by first putting me in the center circle." Taylor took her position. “And each of you has to take a position in the outer circles. Keri, I think it would be best if you were in the circle to the north. Dewey, you should be in the circle to the northwest. Armando, take the circle to the southwest. Marshall, I'd like you to be in the southern circle. Lazarus in the southeast. And Kyle, you should be in the northeast circle."

Everybody took their positions. "Now, when you begin," continued Taylor, "you'll all start in the outer circles. After dancing for a while..."

“What do you mean dancing?” asked Kyle. “Exactly what kind of dancing do you want us to do?”

“Yeah,” added Armando. “And we don’t even have any music. How do you expect us to dance without any music?!”

“Well,” said Taylor. “I think the only thing you’ll need to do, will be to twirl.”

“Twirl?” said Keri.

“Yeah,” said Taylor. “You know. Just spin. Like you all used to do when you were little kids.”

“Like this?” asked Dewey. He was already spinning like a top.

“Too fast,” said Taylor. “Go slower.”

Dewey slowed down and kept from getting too dizzy.

“That’s it!” shouted Taylor.

“OK,” said Kyle. “That’s easy.”

“And then,” continued Taylor, “after you’ve been spinning a while, all of you will have to advance on a straight line to the center of the inner circles. I’ll remain stationary in the center circle.”

"How will we know when to move into our inner circle?" asked Lazarus. "We'll need a signal or something, won't we?"

"Good point," said Taylor. "And I think that should come from me. Since you'll all have your eyes focused on me, I think it would be best if I nodded my head. That will be your cue to advance to the center of your inner circle." Taylor looked at everyone to make sure they all understood. "I'll start first by looking and nodding at Keri, who will advance from the north. Then I'll rotate, counterclockwise, looking at each person in turn, until I finish with Kyle."

Taylor stopped and looked pensively at the ground

"Are you forgetting something?" asked Kyle.

"Well, I seem to remember... oh yes!" Taylor looked up and searched for Keri. "I almost forgot. Keri, you have to twirl clockwise, Dewey counterclockwise, Armando clockwise, Marshall counterclockwise..."

"Clockwise," said Lazarus as Taylor turned to face him.

"And counterclockwise, for me," said Kyle.

"And what about you?" asked Keri.

"Yeah," said Dewey. "What are you gonna be doin'?"

"Which direction will you twirl, Taylor?" asked Kyle.

Taylor looked around at the redwoods trying to search for a clue. She couldn't think of anything. "I don't think it matters, really."

"You don't think?!" said Armando, with more than just a tinge of anxiety.

"It'll be OK!" yelled Kyle. "Quit worrying."

At that instant, a white whirlwind of light and energy descended from the fog and landed at the edge of the large clearing. Everyone but Kyle and Taylor stepped back in a state of wide-eyed shock. Kyle was smiling. But, Taylor wasn't smiling at all. She knew exactly who it was.

"What you *need*," said Zanadar in his booming voice after the light had subsided, "are these!" He held out a handful of coins.

Dewey started to run, holding onto his cap.

"Dew!" yelled Kyle.

Dewey skidded to a stop. Armando jutted his black comb out like a knife. Keri whimpered and rubbed her eyes. All Marshall could do was to mumble, "Wha, wha, wha, wha?" And Lazarus stood staring at the Pleiadian, cocking his head one way and then the other.

"What are you talking about?" asked Taylor calmly.

"If you're going to create an interdimensional vehicle," continued Zanadar. "You're going to need these." He held out his huge hand again exposing seven coins. "One for each of you. You're the new Sacred Seven."

"The Sacred Seven?!" asked Taylor incredulously.

Dewey crept back to the circle. Armando, Keri, Marshall, and Lazarus stood in place, still suspicious of the tall, old man.

Zanadar grinned and closed his hand around the seven coins. While Taylor stood there dumbfounded, Zanadar turned to the others. "With these," he said while raising and shaking his hand, "you'll be able to create a transportation device that will put you on a timeline that will transport you all the way back to the beginning of the universe, if you like."

"You mean the Big Bang?" asked Marshall.

"I sure do," said Zanadar.

The Band was settling down. Taylor figured that they must have remembered her telling them about Zanadar when she had first arrived in the small wilderness park. They moved in closer to get a better look at the coins.

Marshall's attention was riveted, his curiosity piqued. "You mean to say that, as we travel in this interdimensional vehicle, we'll be passing through the gray goo unnoticed?"

"Yep," said Zanadar. "Like a car through a snowstorm."

"Awesome!" shouted Dewey. "Let's do it! I'm ready."

Lazarus was a little more skeptical than the young and somewhat naive Dewey. "Exactly how are we going to create this interdimensional vehicle thing?"

"Well, we'll start you off with something simple, this time," explained Zanadar. "A late model vehicle, perhaps. We wouldn't want you getting too much horsepower. Not yet anyway."

The Band looked around at one another, not sure if he was kidding.

"First, you'll be creating a vortex," said Zanadar. "The vortex will serve to create an energy field that will connect all of you."

"What's a vortex?" asked Dewey.

"A vortex," said Zanadar, "is like a whirlpool or tornado. You know, a big twister. It's a place of concentrated power and energy, a place where energy comes to a point of focus."

"And what's the timeline all about?" asked Armando. "How does that work?"

Zanadar paused momentarily. He faced Taylor, rolled his eyes, and turned back to Armando. "Think of it as being a kind of giant superstring that's laced around your entire planet."

"Oh yeah, superstrings," said Armando finally. "Even I've heard of superstrings."

"Plus," added Zanadar, "you're in a terrific energy spot here by the river. You're right on top of the fault line, too; perfect conditions for your purposes. Can't you feel it?"

Everybody in the Band looked at Taylor. They knew that she had suspected they were in a high-energy place all along.

"How do you know about all of this?" asked Lazarus.

"Well, I come from the Pleiades," said Zanadar. "And we Pleadians have been doing time travel for... ever."

"Yeah, right," scoffed a sarcastic Armando. "Sure you have."

"OK," interrupted Kyle, now anxious to get busy. "So let's see those coins of yours."

Zanadar held out his hand and opened it. All seven of the coins were spread out in his enormous hand. The coins were glowing with a faint self-luminescence. Etched into the surface of each coin were thirteen circles. "You'll notice that each of them have the Fruit of Life design on it."

Then the coins rose and flipped over to expose a bunch of straight lines. "And on the other side is Metatron's Cube."

"Those are just like the designs Taylor was explaining to us," said Keri.

"Exactly!" said Zanadar, getting rather excited.

Everybody looked at Taylor again. Their mouths were hanging open. They were now convinced that Taylor had to be on to something.

"Of course," continued Zanadar, "once all of you start generating the right energy, with these Fruit of Life and Metatron's Cube designs, and as you focus your energies, and then move into the right positions... you'll be off! You'll be in your interdimensional vehicle, traveling the superstring timeline!"

Zanadar then moved closer to Taylor. "So you see, you'll still lead the Sacred Seven after all, won't you, Taylor?"

Taylor grinned and when she looked at Kyle, tears came to her eyes. She had been successful in reaching Kyle, and now all she had to do was to get them all out of there.

The Band stood still for a while, soaking in all of Zanadar's energy. "So, how are we supposed to generate the right energy?" asked Lazarus.

"Well, for one, by now you should all be aware of Taylor's ability. Right?" Zanadar raised his big, bushy eyebrows. Everyone in the Band nodded enthusiastically. "What Taylor did to acquire this ability is similar to what you'll have to do here."

The Band looked at Taylor. "But, we're not in..."

"Ah, but you don't need the Temple of Light," interrupted Zanadar. "You've already figured a lot out, Taylor. You recognized the design in the grouping of redwood trees, and you saw it in the vision you had while gazing at the rhododendron. You knew enough to put everyone in formation."



You're finally learning to trust your intuitions." Zanadar pointed toward the redwoods. "You see those trees over there? All you have to do is to get some wood from the redwoods and make some bullroarers. It won't take that long. Once they're made, you'll twirl them around over your head with these coins embedded inside, in the formation that Taylor had you in, and with Taylor's help, you'll be gone!"

"What's a bullroarer?" asked Dewey.

Kyle was already examining a redwood. He fingered its fibrous, reddish brown bark. Taylor watched Kyle intently.

"It's an ancient instrument," said Zanadar. "Your world's Aboriginal cultures in Australia used it. It's basically a small, quarter-inch-thick piece of wood about twelve to eighteen inches long, and three to four inches wide. It's elliptical in shape so the tips are tapered; it sort of looks like a long leaf. It also has a long rope attached. You pierce the rope through one tip of the wood. Then you grab hold of the string and whirl the piece of wood around over your head, through the air. While the wood is spinning on its axis, the rope makes a trilling sound."

"What's a trilling sound?" asked Keri.

Zanadar demonstrated by making a whistling sound with a vibratory or quavering effect—a simple rapid alternation of two adjacent tones.

"Oooh," said Keri. "It's a warbling sound. Kinda like a bird, huh?"

Zanadar nodded his head. "Each of you will have to swing one of these bullroarers. You'll each stand in your circle of the design. Then you'll start swinging, in the same direction that Taylor said you should all be twirling, and then the trilling sounds will start. Eventually, a globe of sound will form around each of you. This is the vortex. Then each of you in the outer circles will move, on a

straight line, one at a time, to the center of the inner circles. And if everything goes right, the bullroarers will automatically converge and collide, and you'll be off!"

"Let me guess," said Lazarus. "When the bullroarers and the coins inside collide, we'll all vanish in a shower of quarks, gluons, photons, muons, kaons, bosons and pions, and be transported on the timeline back to the beginning of our universe."

"Exactly!" said Zanadar, getting even more excited.

"What are... quarks and glu...?" asked Dewey with a screwed up face.

"Subatomic particles," said Kyle.

"We're creating our very own particle collider," added Lazarus.

Dewey nodded his head rapidly. "Radical, man."

"Now we're talkin'!" shouted Armando.

"We'd better get started," said Kyle. "We don't have much time left." Throughout Zanadar's explanation, Kyle had been keeping watch, listening for the encroaching goo.

The Band made their way around the redwood circle to a place deeper in the forest. Once they found a good spot, Zanadar pulled out some woodworking tools from under his cloak. After he passed them out, the Band began constructing their bullroarers. Taylor insisted that they only use the wood from the felled redwood logs left over from the logging camps that once controlled the area.

First, they worked on acquiring long sinews of fibrous bark for the strings. They had to pull off pieces of bark slowly and carefully, making certain they would be strong enough to withstand all the winding they would be subjected to. Then, after prying off the bark, the Band cut proper-sized pieces of wood from the logs. The straight-grained and durable redwood would serve the Band well. After shaping their pieces of wood to the proper size and smoothness, the Band then punched holes in the tips and attached their strings.

Zanadar then pulled the seven mysterious coins out of his pocket. "These," he said, "need to be fitted into the center of your bullroarers. Doing this will transform these primitive wooden bullroarers into magical wands."

"Magic wands?" asked Armando. "Ha. I knew it."

Zanadar continued. "When your bullroarers—and the coins—are rotating, you'll be able to pull the energy out of the universe like an antenna and store it in your bodies. This wand, then, will be an indispensable implement for all of you."

Zanadar then passed out the coins. They looked like silver, but were nothing of the sort. They were heavy and felt warm in Taylor's palm.

"Hey," said Keri, while bringing the coin closer to her eyes, "it's warm."

"Mine, too!" said Dewey.

Kyle stepped closer to Zanadar and whispered, "It's getting closer, Zanadar." The rest of the Band heard him, however. They trusted Kyle's judgment and, therefore, grew extremely anxious.

"OK," said Zanadar hurriedly. The Pleiadian then instructed the Band to first use their tools to trace a hole around each coin on the wooden bullroarers. Then he explained and demonstrated how to carve out the hole in the center of the wood. He watched over each of them carefully, checking to make sure all the holes were perfect. "The coins have to fit tightly so they don't fly out when you're twirling your bullroarer overhead. Now fit your coin into the hole in your bullroarer." Everyone pushed their coins into their holes. The coins clicked snugly into position, adding to the weight of the wooden bullroarer. "Good," Zanadar continued. "Now, as I've said before, you must think of these bullroarers as your magic wands. And to make these wands work, you're going to have to say a few magic words."

"Magic words?!" shrieked Armando. "I knew it."

"Cool," said Dewey.

"What are the words?" asked Taylor hurriedly.

"Kahza cam abon rama zon dama gon," said Zanadar in his deep voice.

"What does that mean?" asked Keri, while she began winding-up her bullroarer, twisting the string as tightly as she could.

"Holy mackerel it's coming, get us the heck out of here!" answered Zanadar.

"Really?" asked Keri, as she continued twisting up her bullroarer, winding it tighter and tighter.

"That's not what it means," said Armando, ever the skeptic.

"That's right," said Zanadar. "That's *not* what it means. I was just messin' with ya."

"What language is it?" asked Lazarus.

"Zanadarian," said Zanadar, smiling.

"It's probably Pleiadian," said Taylor in a chastising tone. "Quit fooling around, Zanadar! We don't have time for this."

Properly reigned in, Zanadar cleared his throat and got serious. "Never mind what language it is, or what it means. It'll work. That's all you need to know."

"As long as it gets us outa here, that's all I care about," said Marshall.

While holding onto the string, Keri let go of her bullroarer, allowing it to dangle just above the ground. Immediately, the string started to unwind, putting the bullroarer in a rapid spin.

"Hey look, everybody!" shouted Dewey. "Keri's coin is glowing!"



Morning was fast approaching. The Band had been working in the dark all night. Hidden above the fog was a new moon. This was the day of the summer solstice, the shortest night of the year.

“So once we get in this interdimensional vehicle and travel the timeline, where will we go?” asked Keri.

“Ah!” said Zanadar. “Good question. That’s up to Taylor.”

Everyone looked at Taylor who was staring off into the distance, thinking. This was it. She was going to get her big chance. She could go where and when she wanted. And she would be with Kyle. “I want to go to the Ancient Near East. Somewhere in the Fertile Crescent. Maybe to the Land of Canaan.”

“Why there?” asked Lazarus.

“I’m sure she has her reasons,” added Kyle. “We’ll just have to trust that she knows what she’s doing.”

All of a sudden, a strange noise could be heard in the distance. It sounded much like the bots, but this time, the humming was accompanied by crunching sounds. This, Taylor surmised, was the sound of the great redwood forest coming down, being devoured by the ravenous goo, or maybe by a cloud of bot dust, falling through the fog.

“No more time for talk!” said Kyle. “We’ve got to get started, Zanadar.”

"There's one last thing you'll all need to know," said Zanadar. "The frequency of the energy you'll be generating will create changes in your brainwave patterns. These energies may affect your body's biophysical rhythm. So, some of you may get dizzy, or disoriented, or want to throw up."

"Dizziness?" said Armando. "What happens if one of us..."

"Well," said Zanadar, while sighing, "that's one of the risks."

"That's just great," said Marshall. "On top of everything else, now this."

Then, to make things even worse, bright flashes of lightning began ripping through the sky, striking the tops of the giant redwoods on the border of the clearing. Peals of thunder roared directly overhead.

"Let's not worry about that," said Kyle, trying to keep everyone focused on the task. "We've got to hurry!"

"Now, this is where I must be going," yelled Zanadar above the thunder. "I leave all of you in good hands. Taylor will take you the rest of the way."

Suddenly, in a great whirlwind of light and energy, Zanadar himself was off and away.

"We need to get started," said Kyle. "Now! It's getting close. Very close."

With all of the members in their assigned positions, they started swinging in their specified directions. Each bullroarer started twisting; and, within seconds, the ropes started singing; the roaring, howling, trilling voices of the strings called out in an oscillating harmony of sounds. Zanadar's coins spun within the magical wands, flashing Metatron's Cube and the Fruit of Life designs over and over again. The coins started to glow, and then the chanting began. Each Band member with a clear, loud voice, recited the magical words over and over again:

*Kahza cam abon rama zon dama gon*

*Kahza cam abon rama zon dama gon*

*Kahza cam abon rama zon dama gon*

As the swinging, glowing, and chanting continued, Taylor herself started to glow. Her shine grew outward from her body into a shimmering sphere of light. Then, emanating from a point directly

above her navel came a bright, white star of light. The star's arms reached outward from her body, and the center circle, and connected with everyone in the Band.

Taylor looked directly at Keri and nodded, signaling her to step forward to the center of her inner circle. When she reached it, Taylor's light, supported by the glowing light of Keri's bullroarer, enveloped Keri. From within this growing cocoon of light, Taylor smiled at Keri, then turned northwest to face Dewey. He was swinging proficiently, hopping around a little as he swung. When he reached the center of his inner circle, Taylor's light grew around him, too. Then Taylor turned southwest to meet the wildly intense eyes of Armando. He was fiercely swinging his wand overhead, bellowing out Zanadar's chant as loudly as he could. He reached the center of his inner circle and again the light grew. Turning southeast, Taylor noticed Marshall having difficulty keeping his bullroarer swinging in full force. His face was sweating profusely. He looked dizzy. But he summoned his strength, kept his composure, and made it to the center of his inner circle, where the light enveloped him, as well.

By now, the whole Band could feel the energy rising, but Lazarus and Kyle were still not yet in their inner circles. Taylor then turned toward Lazarus. He was swinging his bullroarer like a tall willow twisting in a cyclone. As planned, Lazarus stepped forward toward his inner circle. When he reached the center, the light grew and intensified again, and the group's energy soared.

Everyone was waiting in anticipation, still swinging vigorously, chanting loudly, when the ground started to shake and rumble. Huge hailstones began to fall, thudding on the ground all around the Band. Flames from the now burning trees reached out into the grassy field as if trying to grab hold of the Band. While everyone struggled to remain upright, Taylor turned toward Kyle. Once Kyle entered his inner circle, the bullroarers were supposed to converge and collide, and then they were

supposed to depart. After Taylor's nod, he moved carefully forward, his hair getting whipped around from all the circulating, swirling, churning air. His eyes remained focused on Taylor's.

To Taylor, it seemed as though Kyle were walking in slow motion. She could see each syllable of the magical chant forming on his lips. She could hear his deep voice singing at a tone slightly lower than the others. His chiseled face broke into a smile, exposing his shining teeth. His striated deltoids and pecs pulsated with the effort.

He stepped forward slowly, placing his right foot on the center of his inner circle, then his left. And just as the event horizon of the gray goo was about to lurch forward out of the forest into the grassy field, the circle was complete. The swinging bullroarers weaved in layers, each counter to the others. The voices were at their loudest. The magical wands flipped back and forth, over and over again. The bright light from Taylor's body, the bullroarers, and now the bodies of each Band member, grew in intensity. Each Band member's energy vortex had joined and together had formed a miraculous, bright sphere of light. This ball of seven spheres lit up the sky. And then the Band slowly lifted up off the ground.

When everyone was clearly suspended above the ground, enveloped in a large sphere of bright light, the tall grass directly below began bending, laying down. The grass stalks were weaving in six different directions, the same six directions the Band members had traveled to reach the inner circle, thus creating a strange wreath of plants.

And as the tall grass continued to weave, Taylor focused on what she thought life would look like, sound, feel, smell and taste like, somewhere in the Fertile Crescent around 2000 BCE. At that moment, all the bullroarers converged and collided. Then, the incandescent ball shot out a straight beam of golden light. And like a giant bead sliding on a long, *long* string, the Sacred Seven were gone.



Behind, lying in the Band's wake, neatly woven into the bent grass stems, was a Six Petaled Flower agriglyph, imprinted in the now empty field. But the crop circle didn't last long, because within seconds, the ground started breaking apart, forming a deep crevasse around the clearing. And then a tsunami-sized wave of gray goo, led by an army of badbot swarms passed over the grassy field.



The Band traveled the on the secret superstring timeline around and around the entire planet. On the timeline there were no seven-day weeks. No twelve-month years. No five-day workweeks. No nine to five. On the superstring timeline, there was no Gregorian calendar to live by. No clock to watch. No time to keep.

The Band passed through the gray goo completely unnoticed. They streamed their way along the superstring timeline, darting this way and that. Together, they were tightly enveloped in their ball of light; the very same light that Taylor experienced in her Dance of Divinity in the Lemurians' Temple of Light deep within Mount Shasta; the very same light she had caught a glimpse of in her dream.

After traveling for an immeasurable period of time, the ball of light began slowing down. Each Band member's individual embodied light began to subside, while his or her physical body began to form and take shape. They could even hear their own loud, clear voices chanting the magical words over and over again:

*Kahza cam abon rama zon dama gon*

*Kahza cam abon rama zon dama gon*

*Kahza cam abon rama zon dama gon*

In time, the Band's incandescent ball came to a stop. The giant superstring disappeared. The bubble descended from the sky, and its light dimmed.

The Band was left standing in formation with their bullroarer wands hanging from their tired arms directly in front of a soaring, three-stepped, brick tower. The smell of saltwater and animal dung was heavy in the air. It was dusty, dry, and hot. People standing all around were wearing dirty robes and sandals. Some of them were holding onto ropes attached to donkeys or carrying baskets full of grain. And all of them were staring at the Band, Taylor in particular, because she was still glowing.

Within seconds, a fearsome company of chariots, pulled by hardy horses, thundered into a circle around the Band. In each chariot stood a driver and a helmeted warrior holding a bow at the ready. Rushing through the gathered chariots came a small battalion of foot-soldiers. Forming a wall with their shields, the soldiers leveled their spears, and began closing in on the Band. As everyone in the Band started backing up into the center of the circle, the white star of light began to radiate out of the core of Taylor's body. At that moment, a loud masculine voice called out from on top of the brick tower and the foot-soldiers halted.

**THE END**