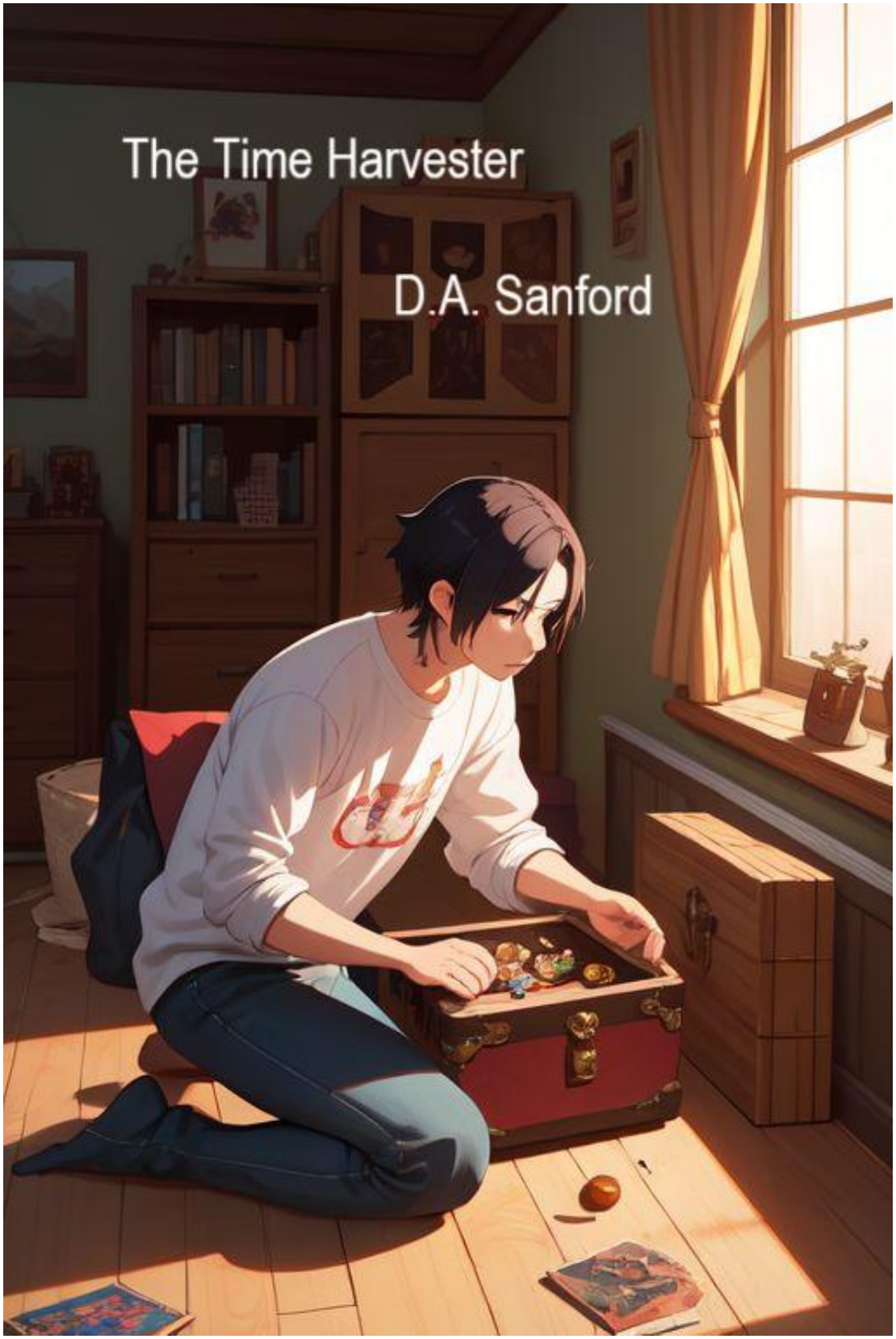
The Time Harvester
D.A. Sanford

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By D.A. Sanford

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Warning: Contains adult content due to graphic descriptions of any or all of the following:

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Our new home aka a money pit

I'm tired. I just put in a marathon on my project. The customer reviewed it and approved my work.

Finally, I pull into my driveway. I look at the house we bought. I take pride that I can take a concept, an idea, and flesh it out to make a product that people will buy. I, for the life of me, cannot see the beauty my wife saw.

My view from where I stopped my car is a large area that used to be a rich person's Victorian house on a hill. It is old and to say it needed work is an understatement. We got it at a blight town listing so it was mostly the behind taxes. The reason it was not snatched up was that the land alone would not cover the cost of the tree clearing and demolition of the house.

The trees, old growth among the new growth among the saplings, there is not any sunlight getting to the weeds let alone lawn. What would be lawn is leaf litter and briar.

The house itself is not falling down. That is the best I can say. This house once was a stately manor but now, a coat of paint would not stick. Shutters are hanging, windows are cracked or boarded over. I do think that the gingerbread trim is the only thing supporting the wrap around porch.

Going out on a limb, which there a lot of, this is a money pit that my wife is in love with. My only hope in this whole disaster is that it is lock, stock and barrel. Meaning that there is all the accumulated items of the last owner. There may be enough to at least cover the cost of paint.

My wife's car is in front of me. My car is barely off the road. The rest of the drive is covered by saplings to maybe ten year growth. I open my trunk and start my new chain saw. I told her that I was going to clear the drive then I was going to sleep in my back seat. She insists that she will get the bedroom clean.

I won't sleep on a mattress that someone died on.

With those trees gone from the driveway, as I figured, total removal and repave. More money, More money.

"I'm tired honey," I tell Shela, "I'm going to nap in the car and then clear a space. I'm renting a trailer for us to live in while we figure out what we are going to do."

"I do not understand why you cannot see how beautiful this will look when we finish." She tells me. "Steve, you can design a product that stuns the world but you just lack the imagination to see the vision I see. Get that trailer. The electrician said that the

power company refuses to reconnect the house. Something about still being the hazardous knob and tube wiring.”

I throw my hands up and just say, “Figures.”

I get some sleep then tackle the area that I want the trailer parked in. It was the flat area in front of the carriage house. I have not been in it so I sucked it up, unlocked and opened the door. Those hinges gave that classic groan and squeal as they moved .

Inside, putting aside the amount of dust covering everything, in both of the carriage bays were two cars that were from the late 1920’s or early thirties. I can see that they will be able to be sold for a goodly profit. I leave them for later.

On the left side of the building, there is a door. I open it and find a stairway to the upper floor. In true style, the stairs and trim are still in very good condition. Dust only. White walls with a rich brown stained wood that was varnished. Even the stair treads show signs of constant care. No signs of wear.

At the top is a period panel door. I want to go up but I need a flashlight. I find Shela and get one from her. I tell her about the cars and the stairs. She is interested and tags along with me. We both climb the stairs but, due to the dust, we have M95 masks and gloves.

We find that door is also locked. Shela brings tags so we can keep track of the keys when we find out where they go. It took a while but finally I had the one that opened the door. I let her tag that one as carriage upper room.

We each turned on our flash lights and slowly went in. We have found where a lot of the keys go. There before us is a long open room full of what look like steamer trunks. I try to move one but it is heavy. We find the key for that lock and open it.

Let’s just say that our renovation finances have just gotten a boost. We were looking at a trunk full of silver dollars. Checking dates, the newest ones we found in a sample was 1935. The trunk was very large so it had to be many thousands of coins. The collector value had to be over a half a million. This was just the first. We opened a few more.

Clothes, jewelry and such. Collectable but not like the first. I make my way towards the far end and open another. Inside there are an assortment of odd objects. They are obviously not normal items. Each seem to not be from the last known year of occupation. Most could be explained as being passed down from ancestors but there are items that are too modern. Even ahead of our time. This just got interesting

I tell Shela that I am staying home. I called in to work and told them that I needed to take a month’s vacation. I had set it up before I finished the project but after we bought

this place. They agreed with the proviso that the project had to be finished and accepted.

With what we have found so far, I may never need that job.

“Shela, my dear, I don’t think that I will get the trailer. This Is going to be our apartment for a while. We need to do things in the house and yard. Make a visible presence here. We need to go through each of these chests. In more than one of them, I think that we will find things that will allow us never to work again.”

She has seen this and agrees. I find a table and two chairs up here and a bucket. We fill the bucket with the silver and start sorting by date. Much to our shock but not our dismay, we find that there are mixed in with the silver are twenty dollar gold pieces. I need to take a breath.

In the morning, I find a coin dealer on the web. Taking five of the gold and twenty of the older silver, I go to the shop and talk to the clerk.

“I have some gold and silver coins I would like to sell. I have collected them for a hedge for economic times but now I’m not that paranoid.”

The clerk is actually the owner. He lays down a cloth on the counter. I hand him my box with the tissue wrapped coins. One look as he unwraps each, I can see that he is trying hard not to look excited but he is losing.

I find that he is honest. “When did you get these? Each of these are rare, especially the silver. That is saying something because the gold is rare also.”

The reason I say he is honest is because he opens his tablet and pulls up what each sells for. Now I had to lean against the counter. Just these coins amounted to a quarter of a million. I told him that I had them for quite a while.

“My work is such that I make a very large salary. They were bought as a hedge but over the years I paid no attention to their worth. I do have more that I may sell in the future. So what are you offering?”

He offers two hundred thousand and then pulls out the government paperwork. I have to ask,.

”What’s with the paperwork?”

He tells me that this is the standard. The government wants their cut.

“I have to ask, is there any way around that. They already take too much from me. I want to sell more but if the government gets involved, I’ll go broke.”

He walks to the door, locks it and now we go into the back.

“I have contacts, I don’t think I need to say more. I can act as the go between on this. I also recommend that you go to an accountant that I know. She knows her way around the paperwork you are going to need to cover you and will advise you about your public conduct. If I read you, I feel that you have more than a few more. Fifteen percent of what I can get for you for each transaction.

If you accept this, I will set up the accountant today. She will set up an account for you. Again her fee is a cut.”

I think about it. With what we found in only a few of those chests.

“Make the calls.” I put out my hand. “With what you just told me, it shows that I can trust you. You gave me enough information to know that I could mess with you if you mess with me.”

He tells me that was his intention. “I don’t buy that you did not pay attention to the market after buying these.”

“You got me. I will just say that these are not stolen. I had an old relative that left me their property.”

He makes the call and gives me the directions. We shake and he gives me his private card.

Martha the accountant

I go over and meet the accountant. She is a no nonsense person. I walk in and she greets me. “Hello Steve, I’m Martha. You need to answer me one thing. Entering in to this you become in jeopardy of being on the wrong side of the law. Are you aware of this?”

“Yes I am.”

“Good, sit down. What business are you starting?”

I’m slow but not that slow. “I invent things and I want to start a business. These inventions will be big sellers.”

Martha stops me there. “You will have ten failures for every successful one. Each failure can be written off. Now , I will set up your business along with the bank account. Your contact will have the ability to deposit. Just notify me to watch for it. Those will be contracts, advance payments for product.”

Then she says, “As with your contact, I get fifteen percent. That is my retainer for full service. I can see concern on your face. That idiot did not tell you, the more he sells your gold and silver for, the more we all make. Don’t worry, Carmine will get you the best price.”

We sign some paperwork and part ways. I go home and tell Shela about all, then as the last information,

“Those twenty five coins, we should walk away with around one hundred grand after the two cuts”

In just a few days we hear from Carmine that the deal went through and the total sold for over two hundred thousand. That amounts to, after fees to a little over one hundred seventy six thousand being deposited in your account today. Please let your accountant know that I am depositing her portion to her account.

I immediately called Martha and she thanked me. She informed me that my company is now official and has received a contract for developing a product of confidential nature described in a secret courier package. Your account reads one hundred seventy six thousand one hundred seventy six.

She says I should look into home improvements. “Most are tax deductible.”

I told her that we are doing only modest renovations but now I need to rent a building for those inventions. She tells me that she knows of one vacant that could be bought at under seventy thousand. I ask her if she, as my accountant, would handle the purchase.

“That’s what you pay my retainer for. I’ll have it within a week.”

After I hung up, I told Shela that I was quitting my job and now I am in business for myself. I also suggested that she come to work for me.”

She is looking puzzled so I tell her of the deposit and the fact that I needed a building to start my inventing. “We have a research and development order already.” Then I explained that this was to cover the deposit into the business account.

I asked Martha to set up modest salaries for the both of us. She told me that it has already been set up.

What a morning. Time to start cutting down those trees. I cut down most of the trees on the lot. A local firewood dealer came and made me an offer for the fallen ones. He also said that for a modest fee, he would take all the ones closest to the house. I bargained with him and he agreed that he would take the house ones down in exchange for the already downed ones. I in turn would hire him to grind all the stumps at his going rate.

I informed Martha of the bartered end of our deal and that he would only be sending her the bill for stump grinding. She told me that it was a good deal but we needed a landscaper who would replant bushes and some fruit trees. Those would be deductible as “Green” improvements.

In the area that was going to be for the trailer, I had a number of those moving portable storage boxes and Shela and I emptied the house. The good stuff we put in storage. The rest was going to go into a dumpster but as we were bringing the first load out to dispose of it, Martha stopped by to give me the deed to the building. She saw what we were going to throw out and stopped us. She wanted to go through the stuff.

We showed her through the place and the things we packed. She is almost drooling. She nearly passed out when I told her that she could have all that was inside the storage units and anything we really had no use for, she could have as a courtesy.

“We just need to sort through the place to make sure that there isn’t something that we absolutely needed.”

She asks about the carriage house. I told her that we cleared the top floor for our living space. I take her to the two cars. She is frantically taking pictures and asks if these are for sale. I tell her at a fair price. She speed dials someone and sends the pictures.

“The person is coming down as we speak. He says that if they are as pictured he will bring cash. Don’t worry he talks big cash.” Martha waved any fees. She will pay for the storage units and whatever is left in the house that we do not want.

Shela shakes her hand and I tell her that we should declare the sale. She looks at me as if I was insane. “Private sales of automobiles are just that private. It does not have to be declared.”

As we are talking a car pulls up and behind the car is a pickup towing a very large covered trailer.

The man and what turns out to be his personal mechanic come up and wants to see the cars. I open the doors and he is delighted. The mechanic opens the cars looks through them and pronounces them to be completely original.

I don’t know cars. Stick the fob into your pocket and push the button on the dash. I am told that they are both Duesenberg’s on of them is a SJ model but the other is a 1929 model J Torpedo with the disappearing top. That one is extremely rare.

The man opens his case. There inside is a large gold bar and what he said was a hundred thousand in cash. The hundred thousand had me sold but he told me the bar was also mine. My accountant looked at me and could see that I was having trouble.

“You do know that this size bar is approximately 27 pounds. At today’s price for gold that’s a little over a million dollars in gold. I will liquidate it for you. Again without a fee.”

I take his hand and they back the trailer up. The mechanic loads them. As they drive off, she looks at me and said that I could have milked him for another bar. “Fully restored he will get ten times what he paid for them.”

Looking at her, “I don’t care, we are going to hire professionals to restore this wonderful home. I’ll finish tomorrow with looking through the house and the next day we will help pack it for you.”

“No need I have some boys that will do it for me. This lot will make me more than my fee would have been.”

We laugh as I tell her “One man’s trash. You are doing so much for us. Now I can set up that building and start inventing. I should, in a few month’s time get a very large contract. I’ll let you know but this first invention may not be what the client wants.”

With the cars sold, we had moved a few things into where the cars were but the rest of the house was cleaned out, the storage containers were picked up and delivered to the

address my accountant gave them. I found out that she has a large warehouse and she told me that she made more than she figured.

Things in the business are going well. We have many coin folios filled now. Maybe the old jewelry could be auctioned off a little at a time and we have only gone through a few boxes. The biggest find was in a small trunk. It almost went unnoticed.

I opened it and found a weird looking device that can only be described as a not of this world lap top. There is also an old journal. I open and read.

A letter from Aurora Texas

I am the daughter of Judge J.S. Proctor. Father owned a ranch in Aurora Texas. I was fifteen when, at 6AM April 19, 1897, we heard a weird sound then felt the ground shake. We went out to see our windmill totally demolished. Just tangled up in a twisted pile of extra metal. Father went to see what it was. He cautioned us to stay away but this was too tempting to stay back. All of us went with him but our mother was yelling at us to come back.

We saw as he moved some of the shiny metal, there was a little being. It was injured and barely living. You could tell that it was not going to live much longer.

By this time half of our village came. They started moving the metal and it was strange. The twisted metal that was thrown out of the way, untwisted in the air before it hit the ground. They finally got the being out and father tried talking to it.

Most of the men were calling it a Martian. It could not understand father.

As they were trying to talk, I saw this box and snatched is up. I wanted something to remember this by. My siblings did the same along with everyone there. The being died and it was buried in our cemetery with only a rock to mark where it was buried.

The men threw the wreckage down the well. We never used it because it went dry.

In my room, I looked at my prize. I lifted the hinged lid and found a few buttons. Nothing happened when I pushed them. I just left it open on my desk . I had the desk in front of my window because I loved the afternoon sun streaming through.

Even in April, it can be cold, so that sun warms me to my bones. I loved it.

After supper, I went to my room and was greeted by lights on this device. I discovered that the lid charges this when it is disconnected from that ships power.

I looked at it and started to talk to myself out loud. After a while of me talking, this started to speak. The first thing it said was “New language acquired. Press the flashing button for the operating instructions.”

Doing just that, it told me that this is a history item salvager. Any point of past or future history, you can read about things that happened and this device will salvage any item you tell it. I remembered a tale of a lesser known bandit from this area and told it I wanted to see the location of his demise.

It seems that he broke his leg and died in a ravine. I was shown his body. I noticed his gun belt and revolvers. I remarked that I would love to have them and in a flash the holsters and revolvers were on the desk.

If you are reading this, you must be Steve and Shela. I asked it who was going to find my horde and it showed me the both of you. The only advice I can give you is only take what is lost to history. You have better access to knowledge of lost ships and other things. If something is traceable, as in a car with serial numbers, if you take it, it will disappear from those who own it. When you try to sell it, you will be accused of stealing.

Coins and jewelry are the safest. Cars lost in fires, raw ore. After a few tries you will get the hang of this. Both of you will enjoy this and thank you for fixing up my house. Just a final note. You made powerful friends in your coin dealer and the accountant. Both will make a fortune for you and off of you. Their trust in you has been cemented by your giving the accountant my home furnishings. The next load of coins, give the dealer the four coins in this box.

Best wishes,

Emmily Proctor.

I am very interested. I opened the lid and put it on our table in the sunlight. I went to help Shela. I told her what I found and that I was going to try something after it recharges.

A sunken surprise

We are now in our empty building. Before we start demolition, we need to thoroughly search the building for hidden rooms, passages, anywhere a secret treasure could be hidden.

We start in the attic. Right off the bat, I see that the wall of the attic on the roof slope side is just not right. These attic level rooms were for the servants. There would be a drawer or two for them to put some things in rather than a chest of drawers. There is none. The other room is the same. Instead there is a small closet in each room.

I open the closet and see a built in shoe rack on the roof wall. Using my fist I hit the wood. It does not sound hollow like you would find in these period homes. Now I start pushing on each board. One moves a little and the whole shelf moved.

I opened the wall and find more trunks stuffed in there. I step out and call out

“Shela, Could you please come up here.”

“This better be good. You know that attics freak me out. Too many horror movies as a kid.”

She enters the room and the only thing I do is point to the closet.

“I’ll kill you if there is spiders or bodies”

She steps in but almost immediately steps back out. Pointing to the closet, while looking at me she asks, “Am I right? The sticker on the luggage tag on it says Titanic?”

We pull out a few and find that there are more. One had the address name of J J Astor and another had Benjamin Guggenheim. As we were looking at those trunks, I get on the phone and now have a very large dumpster delivered here in the morning.

“My dear it is time for us to start gutting this place.”

“You were thinking the same thing that I was.”

I pull out the Astor trunk and find that it had mainly clothes but some shoes and such. The bottom of the inside is not even with the bottom of the chest. I am able to find the latch and the bottom comes up. There are documents, cut loose gems and paper money. There is also some jewelry along with an engraved pocket watch and chain..

I return almost everything to its proper location and put it back.

“I need to go to the dealer. This time with a box of coins, some of these gems and this Astor watch.”

I have the four coins that Emmily Proctor told me to give Carmine. I have Shela stay out of these meetings just in case. She can say that she never knew.

The store is open and there are a few customers. I deliberately left the box in the trunk. I walk around as he is explaining the finer points of the coin he is showing. He makes a sale and as they leave he makes it a point to say to me so those leaving here.

“Now what can I show you today?”

The door closes and I tell him that I have a heavy box for his review. He tells me deliveries are in the rear. I drive around to the back and he is there. I open the trunk and he grabs the box . Carmine closes the trunk and I follow him in. He assures me that the front door is locked and the out to lunch sign is hanging.

“Before you open this, I need you to not say a thing, just look. Then I think that we should get in contact with the accountant. I want to see what your opinion is.”

He opened the box and swallowed hard. Gold silver and gems. Now I set the watch in front of him. He looks at it then at me. “We definitely do not contact her. She would not like to get tangled up in this. I will not ask but I can say that this watch should be at the bottom of the Atlantic.”

I figure for his sake, “I never wanted to say anything but my late relative was a consort of the highest kind. She was given more of these mementos. She left me a note telling me to sell what she collected. She also said that if that person needed incentive, give him this gift.”

Setting the small velvet pouch in front of him, I motion him to open the pouch. Four coins and he almost passes out. “That is a bonus for you. Above your fee. The accountant got hers with things I gave her. Can you find buyers for these?”

He opens his safe and puts everything in there.

“I’ll sell the coins off in two lots. The gems and the watch, my store will be closed for a few days. I will talk to two different people who collect rare items. You have made the three of us rich. I’ll let you know how much each went for.”

We part company and go over to the accountant.

“Do you have a minute?”

“For you, always. Please have a seat. What can I help you with?”

I explain in general terms what transpired with the coin dealer. I included the story of my relative being a high end consort. I fumble in my pocket and pull out a ring.

“This was in a secret place in her house. Shela does not want it and suggested that you would like to keep it or dispose of it as you see fit. Now I just gave the coin dealer some coins as a gift. This is the same.”

Martha is looking at it and tells me that she thanks me for paying her retainer for the next few years. Now I let it slip.

“I found that in a hidden space in the attic. Shela and I are going to be gutting the place to the bare studs over the next few weeks. I’m quite sure there will be more things found. We did find some clothes from the 1912 era. I find that she horded.”

The accountant told me that most needs to go through the dealer but she has a costumer that would be interested in the clothes. She said the she would set up a meeting at my business for a showing. She is discrete. She has clients that like rare items.

It is agreed and we part and wait for the dealer’s call.

We are gutting the place

Now Shela and I get to work gutting the place from top to bottom. The attic was the biggest find. Those trunks joined the ones in the carriage house. We figured that we would cover the Titanic tags on the luggage but the remainder of the stickers added character.

The second floor had only a few hidden items. Same with the first. I put the odd things in a box. There will be a built in safe when the house is finished. One of the things on the first floor was what looked like a garage door remote. In the box.

The cellar had only one surprise. It is a dirt floor with stone cellar walls. Over in the corner was a stone lying loose on the ground. I picked it up and there was a small tin box. I opened it. There is a note to me.

Steve, this was his marker. The town people knew that one day people would try to dig it up so the town put his bones in a box and had someone come to this house. He is in a cement encased box deep below. Please do not disturb him until the time that your box contacts you that they have come for him. The box told me that it would be in your time. They have the contact frequency. I am told that you will know them.

Emmily Proctor

I have shown Shela the journal from Emmily. She knows about the alien. I figure that she needs to know. I ask her if she remembered the journal. She says that she can't thank her enough. I hand her the note I found. She reads it. Walks out the door and yells "DAMN YOU EMMILY, but we will abide by your wishes".

"If it is in cement then when those little green men come for it. They will have to get through that cement so, cementing the cellar floor is an option. I knew this house had to have a skeleton somewhere. Go figure, the basement. No imagination."

She later says that we will put in that cement floor after they come. She did us right so we will honor her wishes.

I now tell her that I need to go to my business and see what I need to start because I really do want to invent. Also there are those things that are from the future that I need to look into.

"I need to pick up some clothes racks and hangers. We have all those in the second floor and on the ground floor. We have double locks on every door. Why don't we talk to Martha. See if she knows someone that will be the general contractor."

As I am talking, Carmine is calling. He just says that we need to go to the accountant right now. All he would say is that we are not in trouble. He says that we will meet there.

I tell Shela that we have a meeting with the accountant.

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