

Maeya

Written by Kent R. Burke

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This book is dedicated to the tribes of humanity, past or present, which have lived their lives in the spirit of, and held deep within their being, the Principles of Life.

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Kent R. Burke

Preface

Maeya is about... well, I think I'd rather have you tell me after you've read it! Your perception of your world will color your thoughts as you read this book. I would think that others would describe it as science fiction, but I think you'll find it really won't fit easily under any label. I am hoping that this book will make you laugh a little, maybe shed a tear or so, but most of all prompt you to give some thought to what takes place, and what has taken place in the world around you... before you and I arrived. I'm talking about the "big picture" of things... things that maybe you've never thought about before.

I've written this book gleaned from the many lessons learned in life. When I was young there was no way to get the big picture of life as I now see it. With decades behind me of observing the world, it's that picture that I am trying to convey to you in this book. I know all of the above comes across as being very cryptic. I just don't want to give the story line away before you read it! I'm hoping that something in the book will resonate with your consciousness. I would like to think that, after reading this short story, you would have come away with something you consider of value. Maybe it will be just a smile; a few hours of entertainment... then again, maybe you'll never look at this present world in the same way that you do now... who knows?

By the way, PLEASE resist the temptation to skip ahead of the first few chapters in reading. That WILL spoil the plot for you! The first few chapters are a bit "technical". PLEASE bear with it and just consider it part of the experience. Don't think that the rest of the book will be the same... it won't. The rest of the book is mostly "easy reading", but don't let that fool you into reading through it fast. Take your time and absorb the story. If you read quickly, you'll miss some "hidden" treasures and truths. Trust me, the first few chapters will give you NO CLUE to where this book is going! Hang in there... don't give up on it... I'm confident you'll feel rewarded!

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Chapter 1

Well, this is just great. Ninety-three degrees of humid blistering heat, and I'm stuck on this stinking patch of asphalt! Got the air conditioning on, but the digital bar display indicating engine temperature is climbing. If this backup lasts much longer, I'll have to shut the air conditioning off, lower the windows, and get a good dose of urban smog and fumes from the car ahead of me. I've had allergies since I was a kid and a few minutes of concentrated car exhaust is guaranteed to give me a days' worth of sneezing and a stuffed up nose.

Growing weary of listening to the latest news about the upcoming political elections, I change channels to the radio station giving traffic "on the eights." They're reporting that this stretch of interstate has a three-car pileup about a mile ahead of me. Just what I was looking forward to on a Friday afternoon drive home! After about ten more minutes of yelling to myself and striking the steering wheel with my fist, the line ahead starts to move slowly.

Finally getting to the site of the crash, there is little left to see, just a few pieces of trim and some broken glass off to the side of the road. Rolling my eyes, I just appreciate that at least I'm finally moving. The engine temperature indicator is falling slowly to normal levels as I breathe a sigh of relief.

I've been meaning to trade this car in for a newer model, but I've shelled out a bunch of cash on the new home a couple years back... landscaping, swimming pool, and such and thought I'd just cut corners. One way to do that was just to put off getting a newer model until next year. It's just the drive to work car, right? Well, unless I feel like getting stuck in traffic with an overheated car in an urban rush hour, I'd better start looking for another ride soon.

Oh, I forgot to mention a few of the details as they say. My names' Jim ... Jim Bosworth. I'm twenty six years old with short blond hair, standing six foot four in my stocking feet, weighing in at about one hundred and eighty pounds... (I'm on the thin side). Not trying to brag, but if I may say so, I've got a pretty good head on my shoulders. I excelled in science and math in high school... good enough to go on with a full scholarship to a well-known college in the area. As a kid, I was always involved with science related

pastimes, things like backyard telescopes and electronic circuits. Astronomy became quite a passion with me. The locations of the stars in the night skies became as familiar to me as the city streets.

Once I graduated from high school, the pressure of college studies and working part time at the research facility where I'm now employed took its toll on my hobbies. The 'scope was put away after high school, tucked back in closets ever since. Once in college, I met the girl who would become my wife... her name was Amy. We shared one class together in my sophomore year. She was quite popular at school, having involved herself in a number of the extracurricular activities on campus. Amy was "the life of the party" type, and I was surprised that she took an interest in me in the class we shared. I guess it was a case of "opposites attract", or so they say. She brought me out of the nerdy shell I acquired as a kid. It's rather difficult to develop social skills when you spend so much time in books and peering through a telescope at the night sky. She was quite attractive and outgoing, I found myself wanting to be around her during what free time I had. I found myself attending a good number of parties and other social events with her. At first, my new lifestyle was a bit uncomfortable and awkward feeling, but I gradually fit in. I made acquaintances with a few of the women at the college from time to time, but always made sure most of my free time was spent with Amy.

One thing led to another and we were married the following year. We finished college, (my major was in physics with a strong math background) and were kept quite busy with our jobs. Amy worked for a major life insurance company, in the record keeping division. I had mentioned my part time job with the research facility. That part time job was basically my foot in the door... looking forward to obtaining the required degree needed for the full time position I was going to fill. Our marriage was quite the typical dual income, no kids' lifestyle. We were going to wait to have a couple of kids a few years down the road, after Amy's job promotion came through and we had a few vacations in Mexico together. We had the money to do what we wanted, but had little time to actually plan anything that involved more than a day at a time. Her job involved a couple of "I have to work late" days during the week, and my job seemed to demand an increasing amount of time on the weekends. We had some good times together but the marriage just seemed to be fighting a losing battle. We were just too busy with our careers to make the marriage

work. Eventually, Amy got tired of too many weekends alone at the house, the weekends that I spent at the research facility. She was used to the weekend party scene and got fed up just sitting home alone.

She started going out with other lady friends in similar situations. One thing led to another and she listened to the advice of the friends from her job that persuaded her to "just dump the guy"... like they did. They also gave her the name of a couple of lawyers who would be glad to help her out... help like setting up the case in front of the right judge to relieve the other party of the maximum amount of worldly possessions. Soon afterwards, Amy filed for divorce. I went through a really rough time after hearing the news. I became introverted again, withdrawing from the social scene, even at work. Before long, we were in court and told to sell the house and divide the bank accounts. She got the majority of the household items, and the Lexus, I got a few tools and the older Chevy... the typical American divorce. Even so, I really don't have any hard feelings toward Amy. The divorce was for all the usual reasons... not having really enough in common, and spending too little time together to make for a lasting relationship.

Chapter 2

That's life they say, and life goes on. So, I'm alone again. My commute is between the research facility in the sprawling suburban area southwest of Chicago and my small apartment in Orland Park. Since the divorce, I've pretty much just wrapped up my life in my job. My job at the research facility consists of unlocking the relationship between gravity, magnetism, and electric fields. We have a pretty good budget to work with... most of it comes from "black" sources that hide behind the mantra of "National Security". I'm not privy to the greater goal of the work. These goals are on a need to know, highly compartmentalized basis. Most of the research in our department generally seems to be investigating effects that would harness sub-atomic forces to generate power on a self-sustaining basis. I'm really not at liberty to discuss the details, but I think you get the idea of what we're doing here. This job is one I actually enjoy, and one that could make some big changes in the way we do things. A breakthrough in this area of technology would be a

real benefit to the entire human race. I am of the firm belief that science has the answers to solve all the problems of mankind. If the finest minds from every discipline of science can work side-by-side, one only wonders what good could be accomplished.

Some of the practical day-to-day work in my department involves the upkeep and calibration of some physically large, high power electronic devices. Because of my electronics background, I've also been tagged with the responsibility of the care of the equipment. These devices are on the cutting edge of technology. Some of components used have not as yet been released to general industry. Most of the maintenance work is scheduled on the weekend, so that this valuable equipment can be available full time during the week. It was on this schedule that I missed so many weekends with Amy.

Actually, there is a silver lining with this weekend schedule. I'm nearly always alone in the department on weekends; the only other personnel out this way are security and the janitorial staff. Security is only concerned that the doors are locked from the outside so that no one but myself can enter. The janitorial staff arrives early in the morning and is gone by 8:00 a.m. The silver lining is the fact that I am free to spend a certain amount of time to tinker with this equipment while I calibrate and maintain it. By tinkering, I mean putting the equipment through its paces performing some of the exotic experiments I plan on my own. Nearly always, the equipment is processing experiments during the week that are devised by the small group of scientists, including myself, that make up our division. These experiments are generally the result of many months of careful and painstaking theoretical calculations. The equipment is too valuable to allow just one researcher to freelance on a whim, but like everything thing else in this physical world; the equipment needs some downtime.

To help relieve the loneliness of my single lifestyle, I spend some time most evenings after work thinking of experiments with the equipment when the weekend comes. My experiments are not necessarily along the energy agenda that the team works on at the facility. Sometimes my mind needs a break from traveling along the same line of thought that I need for the day-to-day research at the facility.

My latest diversion is a good example of breaking away from the usual experimentation at work and provides the alternate path my mind requires from time to time. The past few evenings I've been running a simulation in my mind that will consist of

combining high power radio frequency pulses with a strong rotating magnetic field. I have a hunch I can produce some very interesting phenomena! The advantage of performing this experiment at the facility is two-fold. First, there's no way I could ever hope to build or afford the sort of equipment the lab has. Second, the power levels the equipment needs to operate are far in excess of anything a backyard experimenter could muster. Someone like myself can really appreciate this sort of situation. I guess you could call it one of the perks of the job... and a good reason for me to stay with this facility.

Chapter 3

Saturday, June 17th already... the alarm clock is buzzing in my ears... reaching over, I shut it off. I'm experiencing my usual coughing, and clearing my throat routine... allergies... none of the medicines I've taken ever seem to help! The alarm clock had been set for 7:00 a.m. It would have been nice to sleep in this morning but it's the weekend to pull maintenance on the lab's equipment. Usually, this is evening work, but I was notified earlier that the lab was off-limits this weekend in the evenings. That means I'll have to get my work done in the morning this time. I'll arrive at the facility at 9:00 a.m., so that will leave time to get cleaned up, read the paper, and have a good breakfast before hitting the road. Scanning the newspaper at the breakfast table, there's the usual local articles describing the various types of violence and mayhem that we humans inflict on each other... nothing new there. The business section trumpets more mergers, consolidations, falling dollar... rising gas and home energy prices. It's the same old story... we must pay more and get less. On the world scene... endless wars in every corner of the world and chunks of glaciers breaking off from polar ice from global warming, toxic levels of mercury found in ever increasing amounts in the ocean's sea life, the loss of more species of mammals world-wide. Oh, almost forgot to mention this story... not all bad news! A study says that coffee counters cirrhosis of the liver. See, not everything is wrong in the world! ... Oh, brother...

Well ok. ... Feeling better after the typical eggs, toast, and bacon breakfast, it's time to hit the road. I grab my pc's removable drive for today's experimentation along with a

sack lunch and I'm on my way. Nice thing about going to work on a Saturday morning is that the traffic usually moves pretty well. Most folk aren't even up this early... they're still sleeping in. It's another nice morning, temperatures in the lower 60's; and it's fairly sunny outside. If it weren't for all the hazy white streaks in the sky from the aircraft, it would be a bright sunny day. Doesn't get much better than this in the Midwest this time of year! Turning on the radio just for some noise, my mind drifts to the itinerary for today... arrive at the facility about 9:00 a.m.; go through security and get locked in the lab by around 9:20. Start about 9:30 and work till I take a break for lunch at noon.

After lunch, I'll commence work again and finish up around 2:00 o' clock. Then it's... my time! I'll run my experiment, and finish up around 3:30 p.m., sounds like a plan! I'm just now turning off the main highway onto the service road toward the facility. After a stop at the guard shack to flash my ID and let the camera see my face, I proceed to the set of buildings on the southern side of the complex. Pulling into the appropriate parking space reserved for the Lab Two team, I swipe the card reader to enter the building. The building has another set of doors about ten feet after the first set, and the card must again be presented to the reader. A camera is mounted to observe anyone passing through; the image is recorded and stored at the main security office. Passing through the second set of doors, I proceed to the right down a long hallway. The hallway is brightly lit and spotless. The janitorial service here is second to none! Finally, I'm at my destination. In front of me, is a heavy steel door with no windows. Recessed in the wall immediately to the right of the door is a heavy glass panel that is backlit with a soft glowing light. Placing my palm on the glass, a bright horizontal white line emerges from the bottom of the pane and quickly proceeds upward toward the top of the pane. As the beam extinguishes into the top of the pane, a soft beep can be heard from below the pane. A latch in the heavy door clicks and the door silently slides to the left leaving about three feet of entry to proceed through. Passing through, the door closes behind me as I hear the snapping of latch locks. Now in an elevator, I must again provide a palm print to the reader. Glancing upward, I notice another camera directly above my head. After the scan, the elevator descends a couple of levels. Fortunately, security hasn't installed any cameras in the lab itself. They figured additional equipment would just be overkill at this point. At its stop, the heavy door opens and I'm finally in the lab. Heading for the refrigerator, I set my lunch inside. Well, time to

get the manuals out. They're kept in a keyed filing cabinet. I remove the manuals necessary for all the units I'll be calibrating/testing today.

My work will consist of calibrating all the units to exacting specifications. The specifications concern three areas... power, frequency, and phase shifting. All the units must meet stringent requirements to produce the sort of results that can be counted on in our experimentation. If the units can't be counted on to act exactly the same way in controlled situations, the results obtained would be meaningless. After the units are calibrated, I'll bring each one of them on-line, one at a time, and ramp them up to full power. The units will be tested at full power for the specified time... usually about a half hour. All parameters of operation previously mentioned should hold their tolerances within certain specifications listed in the manual for the half hour of full output testing.

Later ...

I've run all five units through their paces by 11:30 a.m. The only unit needing re-calibration was the REF (Rotating Electromagnetic Field) unit. Fortunately, it wasn't a hardware failure; just a simple adjustment of the unit was all that was needed. Finishing up, I put all the manuals and test equipment away. I'm getting hungry! Proceeding to the refrigerator, I take out my sack lunch. Today's cuisine is a ham and cheese sandwich on rye, some potato chips, and a coke and candy bar. Spreading out the contents of the sack on the table in front of me, it's time to pull up a chair and grab the television remote. The facility was kind enough to supply satellite television in the break room... nice large screen too! Kicking back in the chair, I place my feet up on the table with sandwich in hand. O.K., let's see what's on! Surfing through the channels provides the usual shopping networks and inane reality shows. Stopping on one of the "surviving nature" type reality shows, I watch the hapless contestants endure silly physical challenges while attempting to lie and stab each other in the back to win the big prize. Yea, that's how I want to spend my time! Since the show is the last in the series, I watch the winners eyes bulge out as his prize is announced. One million dollars they say, as he feigns humility in front of the losers. I'll bet after the IRS gets a hold of those earnings, he won't be quite as overjoyed! Don't quit your day job, I chuckle to myself!

Well, back to work. Having finished the maintenance on the equipment as well as lunch, it is time to put the equipment through its paces on my own experiments. I proceed

to power up three of the five main units, and let them come up to operating temperature. One piece of equipment I haven't mentioned before was the super computer that actually interfaced all the units. The team affectionately named the computer Ginger. To say Ginger is quite a machine is an understatement. There are only a few of these in the U.S., all of them in facilities similar to this.

The five power units are actually unable to do any real experimentation without the computer. Ginger has several dozens of miles of fiber-optic and copper wiring tied to a wide variety of sensors and power terminals in the units. Every operating parameter, every change must be precisely measured and recorded. Ginger keeps track of everything flawlessly... not only coordinating the activities of all five units simultaneously, but also providing a digital accounting of every phase of the experiment. From the moment that the start button is pushed, until we power the whole system down... every fluctuation of energy and timing in atomic clock precision is faithfully recorded. This massive amount of data is saved to a storage device in Ginger's memory.

It's time for the experiment! The program for the experiment is on my personal removable drive. I pretty much guard this drive with my life. I'm quite paranoid about the thought of having it stolen, and used by some dangerous operatives or someone who wishes to profit from my work... I guess the paranoia comes with the territory of working in such a secretive place! I'll insert my drive into a port wired directly into Ginger's temporary RAM, not into her main storage. Once she runs and completes the experiment, another program will execute to dump the temporary ram... the results will be gone forever. Another built in safeguard for the equipment is that Ginger will power everything down if the time allotted for the experimentation is exceeded. My experiment is timed for shutdown after only a fifteen minute duration. It's better to be safe than sorry with millions of dollars of equipment at stake... and I really don't want anyone to steal my experiment!

For my purposes today, I need to use only two of the five units in this lab. The first will be the RF pulse generator; the second is the REF generator. I'm planning to have the RF unit generate very high amplitude radio pulses to pass through the center of the magnetic power coils of the REF unit. The combined field output of the two units will be directed by waveguide to a special chamber. In this chamber I'm going to place crystals

doped with rare-earth compounds that will resonate with the REF and RF output in the chamber. I had grown these crystals in another part of the facility while I was working part-time in anticipation for using them in just this sort of experiment. In this experiment, I'll be looking for any anomalous effects around the crystals such as re-radiation of quantum energies or some rather interesting time-space displacements. In plain English, this means that the crystals may start "winking" in and out of our present time-space, and disappear from our present physical existence. Or possibly, the intense energy into these crystals might create what is commonly referred to as time warps for short periods of time.

I have the experiment planned to vary every component of the two units independently as the power levels ramp up to maximum. Ginger will continuously vary these levels while watching for anything anomalous. If there is anything taking place in the way of time-space warping, Ginger will zero in on that effect to maximize and enhance it.

All right! Ginger has given me the go ahead. Placing the removable drive in the port previously mentioned, Ginger speaks audibly... "Upload complete." Removing the small drive from Ginger, I place it in my pocket and tell her to proceed by voice command... (Ginger knows and recognizes all the members of the team by voice and name). Glancing down, I note the time on my watch... 12:28 p.m.

Hearing the units ramping up as Ginger is communicating with them, there is a noticeable low hum emanating from the power units as the demand for power increases. Digital bar graphs display the power levels rising. Colorful LED lighting panels are glowing all over the units indicating every status of the experiment as it is taking place. Ginger is carefully monitoring the status of all the critical functions. If a problem arises, she'll take the units offline, ramping them down carefully to prevent unit damage. Fortunately the experiment is proceeding as planned. No trouble lights or alarms!

Having satisfied myself that everything is proceeding as planned, I direct my attention to the crystals placed in the chamber. The chamber has a very thick quartz glass viewing pane, where I can watch the material being saturated by the combined output of the units. Noting the various gauges, I see that power levels have stabilized to allowable levels. At this time, Ginger is varying every parameter available in the units. The equipment can be heard, varying in pitch, along with Ginger's commands. Man, this

experiment is really an audio/visual experience! Reminds me of the old TV program that had the catch phrase... "I love it when a plan comes together"!

Hmm... Looking through the quartz glass, a pulsing blue haze seems to be forming around the crystals. If I'm not seeing things, the crystals which were opaque seem to be nearly transparent! Ginger has already detected this anomaly and is starting to "zero in" to optimize the effect. The audible varying pitch of the circuitry in the RF unit in response to Ginger's commands cease and are emitting a constant frequency tone as she has found an optimization point. The REF unit circuitry can be heard varying... ok... now it locks steady. The blue glow has intensified and is pulsing brightly. Wait... something strange is happening! The pulsing blue glow is expanding in size... morphing from just a blue light into a clearly visible sphere. Hey, the crystals have vanished, but the glow is still expanding... now extending itself outside of the chamber! What's going on? I slowly back away from the chamber... trying to distance myself from the expanding glowing sphere. As it grows in diameter, I can hear the power units humming louder as Ginger is allowing them to consume more power to maintain the anomaly. I've got to stop this somehow!

Before I can take a step... yes... the sphere has stopped expanding! It seems to be maintaining a diameter of about ten feet surrounding and centering the chamber. It's morphing again... I can make out strange wispy clouds swirling, forming on the surface of the sphere. It's becoming opaque. It's still glowing blue, but I can't see through it anymore. It's just hovering... the surface still swirling. Man, this is really weird! My curiosity is getting the best of me. I slowly approach it, hoping to get a better "handle" on what is going on. As I approach, I feel a chill... it feels like the room temperature is dropping somewhat. I stop within a couple feet of it, just standing here in amazement. I feel a strange energy field emanating from the sphere at this distance from it. Slowly, I extend my open palm toward the sphere. As I do, the surface deforms slightly... the swirly surface attempts to rise toward my hand as I place it near. I pull my hand back quickly and the surface retreats. Man, this is strange! Once more, I move my hand even closer to the surface. I feel an intense pulsing cold sensation on the palm of my hand as the surface of the sphere leaps up to meet it!

Chapter 4

Slowly waking from a deep unconsciousness... feeling totally drained of energy, I struggle to get my bearings. I'm lying flat on my belly... my first thought... where am I? I'm spitting something that tastes terrible out of my mouth. Feeling totally soaked from head to foot, I nearly jump out of my skin as I hear a sharp crack and see a blinding flash of light through closed eyelids. This sure jolts me out of the fog my brain was in! Pushing up from the prone position, I attempt to look around to get my bearings. It's so dark that I can't make out anything visually. I feel like raindrops are pelting me. From all appearances, I seem to be in a rainstorm somewhere. I find myself in mud and what feels like tall grass, and realize it's not a cold rain. The rain is rather warm; the temperature seems to feel around mid 70's... another flash of light and rumbling from a distance. This time I can see my immediate surroundings. Yes, I'm definitely in a rainstorm at night... tall grass and trees all around me are being blown about by the storm. Feeling my way around, I'm looking for shelter from the rain that seems to be pouring down in buckets. There's another flash of light, allowing me to see a thick grove of trees with a heavy canopy of foliage off in the distance. Turning toward the direction of the grove, I'm making my way as best I can through the tall grass. My shoes are totally soaked and the suction of the mud pulls them off my feet several times. I have to keep stopping along the way, groping behind me in the mud to retrieve my shoes. Slowly, I make my way towards the grove... my eyes being of no help to me. Every step takes great effort to proceed forward. Even if the flashes of light in the distance could help, the rain is coming down so hard it's getting in my eyes, blurring my vision. I trudge up a small rise where the groves of trees stand. The leafy canopy is keeping the majority of the force of the rain off of me. The ground is somewhat more stable here... at least it isn't a mud so thick that my shoes would pull off if I walked on it. I'm really not concerned about walking any further though.

The flashes of light are becoming more infrequent; the rumblings from the storm seem to be moving further away. The leafy canopy of the trees are blocking out what little light is to be had from the flashes. I'm totally alone... in nearly pitch darkness. I feel around for anything that could be used as a place to rest for a while. Between the strange unconsciousness I experienced before being jolted awake, and the physical effort it has taken to make my way to this grove, I'm feeling quite fatigued. I need a place to rest...

anywhere that will provide shelter. Stumbling and feeling my way around, I find what appears to be a raised mound of some sort that is covered with short grass (from what can be felt with my hands). I lay down on the mound on my back. The warm rain that has found its way through the thick canopy is more of a mist now than a downpour. So tired... exhausted... can't help but drift off to sleep...

Chapter 5

Morning...

Suddenly, I'm jolted awake by a feeling that something is moving upon my chest. Instinctively brushing my hand over my chest, I sweep away whatever it is. Turning on my side to see, it's some sort of small green lizard scurrying away through the dense cover of leaves on the ground. Pulling myself up to a sitting position on the mound, I notice that I'm feeling quite well compared to how I felt during the rainstorm. I notice I've picked up a few bug bites from sleeping on the mound, but otherwise I feel great.

Looking around, I seem to find myself in a warm, humid, light fog. A thought occurs to me that this must be a low-lying area. Slowly turning my head around to get my bearings, I quickly notice trees are all around me. Oh my god! Something's very odd here... I'm in a forest but it's certainly like nothing I'm familiar with! This forest looks like... I guess the word I would use would be "primeval"... ancient. The trees are very large in diameter, and also quite tall, which is a good indication of their age. This forest is dense... many varieties of ferns and mosses are growing everywhere. I continue to scan what is surrounding me... focusing my vision... first near, then far. Large and small mushrooms of many shapes and colors are growing at and around the base of the largest trees and also pushing up everywhere through the leaves of the forest floor.

The sun is low to my right. I can't see it directly through all the foliage, but its light is streaming through the trees and dancing about on the forest floor around me. While stretching every muscle to shake off the last bit of sleep, my breathing is quite effortless and really invigorating. Normally, when I wake up, I have a bit of a coughing spell and feel

somewhat in a daze for a few minutes after rising. The clarity of mind I'm now experiencing has jolted me back to my immediate circumstances. Where in the hell am I? What happened? The last thing I clearly remember was that strange sphere in the lab... immediately after that, lying in mud in a rainstorm! What's going on now at the lab? How do I get back? Maybe I was struck from behind while in the lab and carried off in the trunk of a car and dumped here. No, I feel no injury. How could a car have gotten here... in the middle of nowhere with no roads around? Where is here? Why would someone do such a thing? How could they have gotten in the lab without me knowing it? Was I drugged? ... nothing but questions, and no immediate answers. Standing up to assess my situation, I look my clothing over and find it quite stiff and caked with mud. Taking a look at my wristwatch... hmmm... also caked... totally soaked, and inoperative. Reaching into my pocket, I pull out the removable drive. It has a clear plastic case exposing a view of the circuitry inside... cracked and submerged in water and mud. Well, that's the end of the drive... and my experiment! Rather than tote around the useless items, I toss them aside. Back in the lab, it was getting quite warm from the operation of the machinery so I took off my long-sleeved shirt and just worked in my t-shirt. I was also wearing just a pair of old jeans, so here I am. Hope it doesn't turn cold soon! My shoes are muddy inside and out. Taking the shoes off, I attempt to scrape out as much of the mud as I possibly can. They're going to take a while to dry out even so. Putting them back on, I proceed to walk in a direction that seems to have the least amount of trees in my path. I don't want to go back the way I came in because I'd probably just end up in a mud patch again. It doesn't get much worse than walking in wet, muddy shoes that squish with every step you take!

Walking along, there are so many noises and creatures moving about, that I'm constantly distracted by them. What an unusually high density of animal life forms around me! Birds are continuously darting through the trees screeching or singing, small lizards are running up and down the trees, small mammals are scurrying away from me as I walk on my way. I've been in forests a couple times before out in California, but they sure didn't have the numbers and diversity of life that I'm seeing here!

Besides the many forms of animal life, I've never seen such a diversity in the plant life surrounding me. From the tiniest of sprouts at my feet, there are some really huge and strange looking varieties of plants. Some are ablaze with brilliantly colored flowering of

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