



Splinters of Immortality

By

Ion Light

EHP: Experimental Home Publishing
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WARNING: This book is intended for a mature audience. Due to violence and sexual themes, some persons, especially those suffering from PTSD or childhood trauma, could possibly experience unpleasant feelings or flashbacks. If you're a person who has abducted by UFOs, suffering from DID, or possessed, be forewarned: you could be unintentionally triggered.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental. (I would like to say 'duh,' but apparently, there were actually people who believed the Castaways of Gilligan's Island were actually stranded! No joke. There were people writing the US Navy asking them to please stop spending money on warfare and rescue those poor people before they starved. Tim Allen's movie 'Galaxy Quest' made reference to it, but I thought it was a joke till I saw a documentary on Gilligan's Island. Of course, it probably doesn't help that there is a stature in Iowa place marking the birth place of Captain Kirk. Oh, how reality and fiction love to mix. (And yes, I watched Gilligan's Island. And if you have to know: Mary Ann, no contest.)

This book is dedicated to all of those who have suffered through my grammar and teased out something more meaningful than the visible architect. May you continue to find meaning and joy in you all your multiverses

Travel Light

Ion Light.

Author contact info:

214-907-4070 (text preferred,) solarchariot@hotmail.com (In order to differentiate between junk mail, and letters, please put Ion Light in the subject line.)

Chapter 1

“American. Suit up. We’re going out, and off grid.”

Emily nearly complained. Might have, even, if the corporal had lingered. She allowed her annoyance at being called an American to give her energy to move from her work, a collection of artifacts that predated human society, and a language no one had yet deciphered. She simply dressed and was out of her ‘quarters’ and proceeding out of her work space and down the hall, past guards in sharp, dark colored uniforms and was the last to arrive in a line up. The suit she wore was not the bulky, clumsy thing one might don if they were a NASA employee. The thin ‘box’ on her back was flexible and moved with her and would provide enough oxygen for 72 hours, scrubbing the carbon she exhaled. The helmet was hardly more than a beach ball.

The Officer on Deck looked at his sleeve, clearly ‘marking’ the time that only he could see. All the clothing on the base had tech imbedded in it. Sometimes one could see it doing things, but mostly you had to be at the right angle. He didn’t address her, but he gave a look at the corporal that communicated unhappiness.

The Corporal directed the group to a transport. It was bigger than a golf cart, six wheels. There was hardly room for her with the gear. Emily was instructed to sit in back, with the cargo, her butt on the ledge. It was explained that if she fell off, they would leave her. A second buggy accompanied them, with on a driver and a guard, armed, shot gun position. She didn’t ask why she couldn’t sit with them.

The vehicles moved out, proceeding down a tunnel. They passed through several gates. The walls beyond the last gate was solid rock, not man made bricks and mortar and tiles. Though they hit no bumps, and the road was smooth, Emily had the sudden sensation of falling. Her gloved hands gripped the rail tighter. The suddenness of going ‘off grid’ nearly caused her to be sick because the sensation in her gut didn’t match her visual information. The vehicle pushed on. No one spoke. She didn’t know the names of the colleagues that were in the vehicle. She knew the Corporal’s name: Uwe Müller. His accent was hard German, clearly regional but she couldn’t pinpoint its origin. Out of all the people on the base, she had the most contact with him. He was her ‘handler’ while on the moon. She kept telling herself her attraction to him was evidence of Stockholm syndrome. He had shown absolutely zero interest in her. There were several times she had thought he was going to strike her. He had zero patience and was easily irritated. He was

also pale, as if he hadn't seen the light of sun in ages. His face was so perfect one might imagine he was the stereotypical poster boy for a past regime.

Their passage ceased being smooth. It was clear they were now proceeding through an 'engineering' project. There was evidence for a diamond tunnel, and other mining equipment. No miners. The tunnel became jagged broken, volcanic like glass. The tunnel ended abruptly and they came out into a cavern. She sought the ceiling and realized it wasn't a cavern. It was a crater. A domed crater! Starlight filtered through the glass, sparking rainbows through the broken pieces. This was likely glass made from moon sand. Moon glass had a purity and strength no earth glass could equal.

"You just discovered this? It can't be found from above?" Emily asked, breaking the code.

Müller looked back at her. To her surprise, he answered: "Camouflage tech. We don't understand how it works."

The crater held a portable, nuclear generator to which a dozen or so work lights were plugged in. The scene could have easily have been mistaken for a set on 2001: A Space Odyssey. They made a circle and came back to park by other buggies, all of which faced the tunnel they had emerged from. There were armed men. No one had yet explained why they needed an armed presence on the moon. Emily wondered if the builders of the artifact were still present.

"Welcome to Hall of Statues, or the Gorgon's retreat," Müller said. "You may explore the cavern. Do what you do best."

Emily excitedly hopped down, forgetting she was 1/8th her Earth weight. She fell. Her bubble helmet came into contact with a statue, the extend claw of the creature was perfect enough that it puncture her suit. She heard the suit rev up to keep the helmet inflated. Guards were on her faster than she could think. A patch was administered even as she was being man handled back onto her feet. Her eyes were wide. Müller's face was suddenly in her face.

"You realize, if you die, your family will not have closure," Müller said. "We will throw your body into a crater with all the other careless, stupid people we brought up here. Your resume said you were the best. We paid money for you. I will take it out of your hide if you injure yourself or put my group at risk. Are we clear?"

"Yes, Sir," Emily said. Her hair was in her eyes and couldn't shake it.

"Cut your hair, or I will shave it off," Müller said.

There was evidence he may have already shave two females bald. No one was looking at her; none but Müller and the guards that had saved her life. Her suit had quieted down. Her heart hadn't. She could feel her heart in her fingertips. Her hands were shaking.

“Get to work,” Müller said, and went with one of the guards, complaining about the stupidity of women, particularly brunettes, and Americans.”

Again, Emily nearly corrected him. The creature that had puncture her suit was looking at her. It was stone. It wasn't marble. She couldn't identify the material. It was exquisite, and the cuts were so perfect it was if this was a representation of a true beast. A six legged bear with a raccoon face, rearing up so that four arms were extended, four sets of claws ready to give a lethal bear hug. The hair on its back was bristled as if confronting an enemy. She couldn't discern if the hair was really 'bristled hair,' or porcupine like spikes. It occurred to her that it didn't matter; had she fell into that, her suit would have been beyond repair. She wondered if the crater with human remains was real or just the story people gave to scare people in line.

There were dozens of creatures that were beyond her abilities of taxonomy. She found one on an exposed pedestal. She discovered they were all on pedestals, simply buried. On purpose or by the dust of ages, or both. She found debris that reminded her of the splintered, broken glass of a windshield. Tiny diamonds. Directly above her find there was a star that shone through unfiltered. She wondered how any satellite could miss that hole. She wondered how the astronauts who orbited the moon missed that. Cameras and people aren't perfect was one explanation, but a dozen conspiracies were spinning, some she had heard and dismissed and some she was creating.

She came upon a marker, with writing. She hovered over it, wiping the dust free from the indentured patterns. Not hieroglyphics, but some of the 'marks' were similar. Her suit, through flimsy plastic, recorded whatever she faced. She could spend hours thinking about it later, but only a few moments to study it in person. Only a second to devote to touch. She had to move on. There was too much to see.

She came upon a pedestal that seemed to lack an object. There was evidence that there had once been something here. The pedestal was clean. She came upon a naked female. A human naked female. Her legs were together, leaving a tiny heart shaped thigh gap. Two snakes encircled her, pressing breasts flat and together. Her hands were free below the entwining snakes. She did not seem upset. The snake heads came to either ear, as if advising her. One snake

was black, the other white. The meaning of this seemed obvious to her, so much so she had to resist pushing her own interpretation. The woman seemed blissful, eyes closed and meditating. Her palms faced down, as if she were Iron Man in flight, her bosom thrust forwards unapologetically. Ayn Rand herself couldn't have crafted a better description of the perfect human in flight. The woman captured in stone was fearless, peaceful. She had the angle that suggested she was flying or was on her toes on the edge of a diving board leaning over into the wind as far as she could intending to fall, only the elements held her suspended in rapture. The face, the contours of her body, even partially obscured by tight fitting snake coils, everything about her, the lips, the suggestion of flight itself, aroused Emily. She touched the female's hard lips, her finger lingering over the philtrum. Her lips resembled a squashed heart. No matter how many times she looked at the female form, she always found hearts. The hair cut of the woman was heart shaped when viewed with the angles of the face to the point of the chin. Her butt leading to gently squeezed thighs was heart shaped, or an upside down heart with the point in the small of the back. The snakes at the ears going back to body, heart shape. The breasts yearning to burst free of snakes were the wave crests of heart leading the eyes downward to an incredibly small waist. The artists 'y' where inner thighs met combined with hips, heart shape. If she could spread the legs, she would likely find a heart shape box as well. The exposed navel framed by black and white snake described a heart. The headband she wore, a thin line buried in hair, with an almost heart shaped artifact on the forehead, reminded her of Wonder Woman's 'W.' For a moment, the daydream construction of all this coming together had Emily standing on an Oasis, surrounded by lush greens, and distant gold sparkling sands, and tranquil blue waters and this was emerging before her. It occurred to her that this was the lady of the lake, bring Arthur a sword: this was 'Almighty Isis' and nearly said as much out loud.

"Are you horny?"

The voice was in her right ear, jarring her back to her present. It was control. The world around her was dark, even though there was light. Air made the world seem brighter. She was now very aware that she had become wet, and only now just remembering that there were people assigned to watch the workers. The watchers had access to everything, getting telemetry from the suits, bras and panties; all clothing was interwoven with tech. Her heart rate was up again. There was no hiding her reaction. She might as well have been a man with an erection, as the suits shared all secrets. The wetness went away as fast as a man's erection who had been caught by a

parent. She had a sudden, new compassion for men; anything could result in an erection. She was reminded of her humanness. She felt shame. That was the controller's intent. She felt shame that she felt shame about a normal body reaction. A reaction that could wax and wane throughout the day and was more involuntary than people wanted to admit. She imagined laughter in the control room and men betting on bedding her. Men she had never seen and likely wouldn't given the level of controls and paranoia. Or, perhaps would. There were also rumors that people either earned their living through their trade, or through trade. There were no ugly women on the moon. It wasn't like she could just walk away from this assignment. Though Emily had evidence they had made moon travel as easy and cheap as going from London to Australia, they had made it seem like the cost of hauling her weight off the moon was beyond her ability to pay back. The inwards facing camera no doubt caught her blushing. If she peed in her suit, they would know the temperature and the volume and even if they didn't know her diet, they would likely be able to gauge that, too.

Emily moved on through the collection, finding 'words' that she couldn't phantom. There were more species represented here than fiction could have rendered in a thousand series. Her world paradigm had been on the verge of breaking prior to being brought to the moon. Now she was Alice, lost and searching. Nothing made sense. She came upon a man, simply dressed in trousers and loose fitting shirt, with a poncho over the latter. His hands were together in a 'Namaste' greeting. He seemed humble. She went to her knees and exposed the pedestal he was on. She took a tool from her belt to move the dirt from the indented writing. Air burst and light. There was something that looked like a Swastika and she had to take moment to sort her emotions about that. It didn't mean what her culture had given her. There was a time before the symbol was appropriated and it was known for peace and love, not hate. She ran her gloved fingers along the side, wanting to feel the writing with her fingers. She was certain there was a brail component. A flash of light startled her and she fell on her butt.

The statue came to life! Before her eyes the man's chest heaved, struggling for air that wasn't there. He fell to his knees, unseeing, in pain. The soldiers were upon her and past her. They took the man down hard, putting him on his back. Someone poured a bucket of slime over him. Now she understood the slime! It coated him, covering every inch of him. A tube was thrust into the liquid near his mouth and air was blown in. The slime ballooned away from him, pulling free from his skin. The man was carried away.

Müller got down on his knees. “Tell me what you did!”

Chapter 2

Inkeri watched as the medical staff freed the man from his own clothes and the gook that had saved his life. Her hair was a fiery red waterfall that fell to her kneecaps. The man didn't struggle. She assumed he was aware that they were intending to save his life. That, or the long sleep had turned his brain to mush. They pushed fluids intravenously, the lactic ringer contained in an armband that was Velcroed to the upper arm. She was present throughout the flurry of activity that was not just to save him but to collect samples. A portable fMRI scanner was used to capture deep tissue. Inkeri observed the results of the scans without sharing opinions. The medics said he was human, and the genetics suggested 'human enough' that he could breed with the present Earth population. The small differences she saw, in organs and genes, was beyond the present medical staff's knowledge and pay grade. Their spoken observations were flawed. She was amused by their conversations.

The brain scans did not reveal a brain that was turned to mush, but one that was hyperactive. It resembled the scans of brains under the influence of DMT. Micro-dosing LSD could get this level of coordinated activity, but DMT did it better, longer, and with less side effects.

The man's wrists and ankles were secured to the bed railing.

No one bothered her, no one spoke to her. They did not need to tell her to get out of the way, as she was always just out of the way, coming closer to touch the man and falling back in the mad dance. There was finally peace. She and the man were alone. Well, as alone as anyone could be here on the moon. She stood beside him. She collected her hair, pulling it to the ends, and draped this over the man's forehead. He was bald. He had a goatee.

A sister wife entered. Her hair was blond, almost moonlight, and equally as long as Inkeri. She was in her forties, but could have been mistaken for being in her twenties. The tiny blond hairs on her arm and leg seemed like jewels with the pervasive, indirect lighting that left no shadows. Her blue eyes were kind, innocent.

"Has he addressed you?"

"No, Runa," Inkeri said.

"Have you discerned nothing?"

"Have you?" Inkeri said.

“He is dangerous,” Runa said.

“And which of our guides are telling you this?” Inkeri asked. “He had the sign of the day. He is likely a master of the Arts. He will be peaceful.”

Runa nodded. She drew closer to the man, touched his face. There was hope on her face. Lust. Not just for intimacy, but for knowledge. There was no doubt she would give up her celibacy to this man for the exchange of knowledge.

“Maybe he is the One,” Inkeri said.

“Folklore talk,” Runa dismissed. “It’s a distraction from the path.”

“The guides lie,” Inkeri said.

“I know,” Runa said. “Just part of the game. It teases out the gullible. Even if there is truth in the stories of the One, what are the odds we would find him? Further, if he were...”

“They’d kill him?” Inkeri asked. “They’d risk losing the advancements he could provide?”

“They’d kill all of us to make sure he was dead,” Runa said.

“You cannot kill me.” It was German, perfect, an older dialect with an accent that no one present had likely heard before.

Both Runa and Inkeri stepped away from the bed. Inkeri’s hair came away slowly, falling from the rail. The man was not secured. He sat up, lowered the rail in an unusual way; at least, he didn’t touch the controls. He swung his legs out and stood, stretching, breathing. He did not seem at all bothered by the sudden presence of guards, all of whom were pointing weapons. He faced them, curious.

“You should not have awaken me,” he said in German. “They will come for me.”

Captain Stian Holk entered. He did not tell his men to lower their weapons. He was tall, clean shaven, and as blond as any of the guards. He was the only one wearing rank, and the only one with the ‘symbol.’ He inhaled through a ‘vape,’ and released a reddish vapor. “Who are they?” he asked. “The gods of old?”

The man did not respond to this. “May I have my clothes?”

“Bring this popper something to wear,” Holk said. “You realize, Sir, you are in my debt.”

“For clothes? I would just assume continue naked,” the man said.

“For saving your life,” Holk said.

The naked man removed the armband and tossed it to the bed. The man spoke in English, with a British accent. “You did not save me. You have definitely waken me before schedule. I did not foresee this, but I accept it. It’s within parameters, and clearly meaningful.”

“I prefer you continue to speak in German,” Holk said.

A hospital gown was brought. The guard offering it was too timid to approach. Runa took it, scowling at the soldier, but smiling rather manipulatively at the man. The man accepted, kindly, bowing. He donned this, pulling the strings around his back and tying it in front. He was aware his butt remained bare.

“This is only half as well as I would treat you, if the roles were reversed,” the man said.

“Speak German,” Holk said.

“No,” the man said.

Holk stepped forwards. He smiled. Only Runa and Inkeri knew he wasn’t really smiling.

“I can make your life very uncomfortable, Sir,” Holk said.

“No, you can’t,” the man said. “I will not speak German to you again, not because the language offends me, not out of defiance, but because I have a preference. I will cooperate with you in other, limited ways. I will not try to escape. When the others come for me, and they will come, eventually, I will aid you, conditionally. You will have to ask for my help, and grant me freedom to respond in the manner I wish to respond. You may take me to my cell now.”

“I assure you, Sir. I can handle those who will come, just as I can handle you,” Holk said.

The signal was subtle, but it came. Two guards fired their weapons. The flash of energy was as if someone had used a flash to take a photo. The man went down.

“See,” Holk told his men. “Nothing to fear here. Take him to his quarters. You, two, with me.”

Inkeri and Runa followed Holk in a different direction.

Chapter 3

Emily Grayson had been confined to her quarters since the incident. Though they assured her, she had done nothing wrong, she felt as if she had done something wrong. The more they assured her, the less convinced she was. They brought her her meals. The small cafeteria was the only chance for small, guarded social exchange, but now the only 'light' was media, and the large screen television which showed nature scenes 24-7. The screen was in an alcove, going from wall to ceiling, and folding along the edges going back to the room. Entering it gave one the illusion of being immersed in the environment. It was not precisely holographic, but it could be, and it could envelope her, and if she wore the head band, she could have olfactory and tactile sensations through brain stimulation. A shower head above allowed her to bathe with the illusion of rain. The screen was surreal enough that she imagined she could push through the screen and go into the environment it displayed, but her brain knew there was nothing but solid moon rock beyond, and going up would lead her to a barren, airless world. She called it a world. If she could walk on it, barren or not, in her mind it was a world. The moon had cease to be a moon, a mystical place. It was not joyful. She had never been to prison, so she could only draw on her ideas of prison, and suspected that prison life was a step up from here. The Oasis Alcove was her only respite from the barrage of greys.

The Oasis Alcove offered her a variety of nature scenes, but there was one option that presented her with a view looking out of a large, box seat window that overlooked her backyard as a child. It made her so homesick for childhood that she frequently felt depressed and was unable to linger. It was not a static, home video. It felt live- a breeze turning a leaf. Dew on the morning grass, grass her feet longed to walk upon. One day while sitting there, her parents emerged and went into the back yard. They were accompanied with friends and were grilling. They were young, like before she was born young. This bothered her so much that she hadn't watched it again. She didn't have the nerve to ask about it, for fear of being sent back to earth for hallucinating.

The door to her room opened, and Emily came out of her bed, leaving the book she had been feigning to read. She had never seen the women before. They were beautiful, even without makeup. She immediately boxed them as young, maybe teens, possibly twenties, but that was pushing the envelope. Their hair was long, pulled tight and over their ears, and a bundled stream

of a pony tail that went to the back of their knees. Their black robes were so simple, a single piece pull over, cotton, tied tight not at the hips, but just below the breasts which enhanced the bosom, accentuating the femininity. Each had a circular, gold plate, each their own mandala etching of flowers unfolding, and was centered on their navels. Gold ordained the collar rising to the neck. They had the Egyptian Ankh, and other symbols. She was drawn towards the symbols.

“Eastern Stars?” Emily asked.

The blond laughed and introduced them. “I am Runa. This is my sister-wife Inkeri, and my sister-wife Jorunn,” Runa said.

“The pattern on you mandala...”

“Your father was American. Your mother French,” Runa said. “Father was a Scottish Rite Freemason. Your mother was an Eastern Star. And you know more than you should know for someone who is uninitiated.”

“I am very observant,” Emily said.

Runa took Emily by the arm and led her to an open space in the room, away from the bed. For a cell, it was at least spacious. The three of them became points in a triangle in which she was center point. They brought their bundled hair forwards, handing the end to a sister-wife, so that now the triangle was defined by the length of their hair. Inkeri and Jorunn closed their eyes. Runa maintained eye contact with Emily.

“You know the history and the languages, and yet you prefer to mythologize it, favoring the occult parallels of the modern day age, super heroes and villains,” Runa said.

“It seems evident, that’s just something we do as a species. People assume the little figurines were worshiped as gods, but I postulated they are the equivalent of today’s action figures,” Emily said.

“In another time, you would be executed for such blasphemy,” Runa said.

“How can you not see it? In the old days, we had totems. That’s still going on! High schools and colleges have mascots and they celebrate in designated circles. Some even have bonfires,” Emily said. “We have always held symbolic rallying points as a way of defining membership, which is good in many ways, and yet also, by definition, leads to exclusions of a larger population. If we were able to recognize this and harness symbolic language in a more precise way that allows us to recognize all of humanity...”

“You want a One World Government,” Runa said. “The New World Order.”

“Um, no. Well, yes,” Emily said. “It’s inevitable. The fiction of independent, isolated countries needs to end in favor of recognizing how we all affect each other. War has to end. World hunger shouldn’t exist in this day in age, given our tech and resources. All people should have access to medical and clothing. We need a new paradigm, one that does not measure human being on productivity and wealth.”

“And what should the standard be? How would we determine the elite from the chaff?” Runa said. “How would we distinguish the queen from the priestess from the student from the impoverished? How will you know the good from the bad? Even you, you cherish the heroes and the villains of your preferred icons. You spin your own paradigm fiction of light and darkness. You are corrupt and everything you touch is corrupted. Your middle class status has warped your view of things, given you the illusion of choice and sovereignty. You are a peasant, a slave. All earth bound dwellers are slaves. You were born to serve us.”

Emily didn’t have a response. She wanted to ask if she could go home now. She knew, there was no going home now.

“What is your relationship to the man you released from prison?” Runa asked.

“I don’t understand,” Emily said.

“The man you released from stone,” Runa said.

“I have told Müller everything. I don’t know how he became human,” Emily said.

“He was always human. He was frozen in stone,” Runa said. “As is the entire garden of stone creatures. They are imprisoned there. You freed one. What is your relationship with him?”

“I don’t understand. I have no relationship with him. I have never met him,” Emily said.

“Truth,” Jorunn and Inkeri said.

Runa frowned. She suspected a lie.

“Your unconscious has information about this man. Reveal it to me now,” Runa insisted.

“I don’t know anything about this man!” Emily insisted.

“Truth,” the sister-wives said.

Runa scowled at Emily.

“You saw your parents, and yet you’ve asked no one about them. Why?” Runa demanded.

“I…” Emily looked back at Jorunn.

Runa smiled. “Thought you were hallucinating? What if I told you we have the ability to see the past?”

“You time travel?”

“We can see the past. We can record the past,” Runa said.

“You mean like, remote viewing?” Emily asked. “Or with tech?”

“Everything is tech. Your body is tech for the soul. Every plant, every creature that walks on the earth, or swims the seas, or burrows- it’s all tech,” Runa said. “Either you are a tool that unlocked the man from his prison, or you’re co-conspirator. You do realize, girl, if we want, we could kill your mother before you were born. We can undo this thing you have done. For what purpose was he unleashed?”

“I don’t know,” Emily said. She couldn’t discern if they were bluffing. They didn’t deny time travel. They didn’t answer her question at all. If one could see the past, could one influence the past? Clearly there was a paradox here. She was too wound up in that to experience the fear that was growing inside her.

“Truth,” the sister-wives said.

“She conceals a deeper truth,” Runa insisted.

“Truth,” the sister-wives agreed.

Runa chuckled. “I will get to the bottom of you, yet, girl. I would like to get there without breaking you. The information is more reliable if we get there without breaking you. I would like you to consider ways to be more compliant. If you didn’t know, there are a large number of single, horny men on this base.”

“I would like to go home now,” Emily said.

“You will never step foot on Earth again,” Runa said.

The sister-wives opened their eyes and dropped the hair. The frowned indicated the statement was false, a look that Emily didn’t catch. Runa let go of Inkeri’s hair, and patted Emily’s cheek. The sister-wives were already out of the room. She leaned in close to Emily.

“I own you, now,” Runa said. “You will serve me, or die.”

Chapter 4

The man sat in a cell, lotus position. He was a man in his fifties, but had the appearance of someone younger. His beard was trimmed. His hospital gown had been upgraded to light blue hospital scrubs. They felt like pajamas to him. He seemed to be in shape, but not someone overzealous about exercise. He had not touched his bed or any of the food offered him. There were two guards inside the room and two guards outside the room. The guards watched him. The cameras watched him. At no point was an eye not on him. Captain Holk entered with a personal guard, and a female dressed in ceremonial robes, black, gold trim, and accouterments of a past long gone, of a place, immeasurably far away. The man got up without being prompted, brought hands together in a polite gesture and bowed. The female started to emulate the gesture but was nudged. Holk went to the table and sat. His attendants stood behind him.

“Come, have a seat,” Holk said. It was in German.

The man came to the table and sat. Holk poured himself a tea. He poured one for the man, and set the cup on a dish and served it. Holk drank the tea.

“We are civilized. I would not poison you,” Holk said.

“I know you would not poison me,” the man said.

“And yet you don’t eat or drink?” Holk asked. “Are you protesting? Are you trying to die?”

“I will not die,” the man said. “Not here, anyway.”

“Still determined to speak English? I will continue in my native tongue,” Holk said.

“As to be expected,” the man said. “Again, I am not offended by the language.”

Holk frowned. “Let’s start over. I am Stian Holk.”

The man brought his hands together and bowed. Holk did not imitate. The girl behind him bit her lip, feeling very uncomfortable about not being able to respond appropriately.

“This is where you tell me your name,” Holk said.

“You’ve not entered the ritual with respect,” the man said.

“So, if I don’t dance to your tune, you won’t tell me who I am addressing?” Holk asked.

“Do you care who you’re addressing?” the man asked.

“Not really. Simply a formality. Greases the wheels so to speak. The people watching, the upper echelon and the scientist and the historians, they are all curious. I’d just assume kill you and be done with it,” Holk said.

The man said nothing.

“Your name isn’t Gilgamesh, is it?” Holk asked. The man seemed amused but didn’t bite. “What crimes did you commit to be put in stone for all eternity?”

The man’s eyes went distant, searching for a memory that was for him, merely days ago, but in actuality- the actual time stamp held no meaning here. He returned his eyes to the present, to Holk. There was a humility in the smile.

“We all have fallen short and I have done many things that should be met with consequences,” the man said.

“But being put stone, that seems a bit harsh,” Holk said.

The man nodded, a slight agreement.

“Please, I must know. What is your name,” Holk asked.

The man brought his hands together again, and bowed. When he came up, Holk had still not entered the ritual. “I am Preston G.”

“Preston! That’s a nice name. Almost modern,” Holk said. “G. G? G is your sir name?”

“My people do not have Sir names. We do not sort people by families by lineage. Some of us do have titles,” Preston answered.

“So G is your title?” Holk said.

“No,” Preston said.

“So, is G short for something? Does it mean something?” Holk said.

“You may make of it what you will,” Preston said.

“Do you have a title?” Holk asked.

“I am a Waycaster,” Preston said. “Preston G Waycaster.”

The female went to her knees, bowing. Holk hit her with a back handed fist, knocking her to the floor. He got up from his chair, took her by her bundled hair and lifted her till her feet found purchase. Preston stood. The male attendant drew a weapon. So did the guards.

“You will not bow to him! He is not a god!” Holk said, spittle coming out of his mouth from his rage.

“She was merely demonstrating respect,” Preston said.

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