

Hanna York and his shipmates are on a routine maintenance mission above the planet Mars. When caught in the ion plume of a man made terra forming storm on the surface, they find themselves suddenly crash landing on a seemingly pristine and primitive world.

After a series of adventures, he finds an advanced civilization and learns that he has travelled millions of years into the future of a terra formed Mars.

The earth's ecosystem had failed and humankind has moved on to their new home where genetically engineered Priests are now the caretakers of the human race.

Originally designed as servants with a duty of care to the survival of humankind, they have taken control of the population who now live safely, under their protection, inside dormitories, connected to the 'Net cap.'

However, *Hanna's* arrival has upset a delicate balance that has been in place for thousands of years and set into motion a series of events that will change the future of humankind forever.

He and his companions must now face the realities

of

'The Paradigm of Time.'

The Sun Rose

Book 1 of

Paradigm of Time

Saga

Prequel to

The Ark of Corporeity

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The Sun Rose

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For my brother

Andrew Peter Kinna

U.N.S.A. Marion Crew

(United Nations Space Association)

Hanna York	Ship's Captain
Ray Stevens	First Mate
George Pittsworth	Engineer

Androssan's Nordic Caucasian Human (Netlanders)

Arno	Youngest brother
Icno	Eldest brother
Kernewek	Chairman of people's council
Koorngal	Keeper of the books
Moonta	Traveller/psychic
Pirie	Dark Valley Guard
Rickaby	Dark Valley Guard
Tooligie	Mother of
Tunot	Balladeer
Urno	Middle brother
Weeroone	The father
Yurla	Captain at Arms

Cedunan's 'The Chosen' (Pure Human)

Bute	Rebel youth
Cleve	Rebel leader
Cowell	Cleve's sister
Curwie	Rogue Cedunan
Elliston	Rebel youth
Grundrie	Rogue Cedunan
Pillana	Rogue Woman
Rudell	Rebel youth
Wanilla	Hybrid High Priest
Wirrulla	Rogue Cedunan
Wudinna	Rogue Cedunan leader

Kiana Aryan Caucasian Human (Netlanders)

Yaiata Kiana Trade Master

Kimba Australopithecus Sediba (Evolved hybrid)

Perlumbie Homo Neanderthalensis (Netlanders)

Hasian Captain of the Imperial guard

Kyancutta Games weapons Master

Moorila Sergeant

Penong Politician

Taila Afro Capoid Human (Netlanders)

Poochera Group Leader

Turton Hunter

Wangary Avian Human (Hybrid Netlanders)

Bookabee Guard

Carappee Guardian of the Well's

Coulea Female

Moorowie Male

The Village Australoid Human (Netlanders)

Barunga Hunter/Gatherer

Curramulka Village Elder

Kadina Village Girl

Kielpa Hunter/Gatherer

Koonaida Hunter/Gatherer

Minlaton Youth

Unow Hunter/Gatherer

Warooka Hunter/Gatherer

Yaninie Hunter/Gatherer



Chapter 1

A sun rose slowly above the low lying clouds on the eastern horizon. Golden beams of light were now radiating from the crimson pillows that had shrouded it from view as it had risen above the horizon earlier. Hanna could feel the warmth of water as the chill of the morning air touched his wet skin and wisps of mist began to dance across the mirrored surface of the ocean. Hanna revelled in what he could see was going to be another glorious day.

Suddenly a call went out and the group started to paddle in unison towards the oncoming bludge on the smooth flat surface. George was in position and turned as the swell stood vertically and Hanna watched as he disappeared over the edge. Cries of approval rang out as the next in line positioned himself for the following wave. Hanna would miss out as he was too far away from the action and he realised his host didn't seem very experienced as he was now about to be caught inside the next breaking wave of the set.

Hanna emotionally disengaged himself from the man's frustrations as he savoured in the delight of the refreshing physical experience of the cool effervescent salt water. However, the man's fear and blind panic began to overwhelm him.

'Open your eyes! Open your eyes!' Hanna cried in vain, trying to tell him but his host's anxiety, together with his own frustration, was all too much and he jumped back into his own reality. With his thoughts remaining within the scene he had just left, he removed his cap in disgust. Hanna sat in his cell and stared at the cap as it lay on the chair beside his bed.

He felt unclean, violated, and depressed. He had just spent another three hours with the damned thing on and he had promised himself it would only take a ten minute location update check on his friend.

Before that, he had tried meditating and exercising to distract him. Yet the allure had gained its momentum. Like a drug, it beckoned to him. But this was worse than any drug, this was real, not some chemically induced dream, real.

'Yet how can any of this be tangible? This place, this new world, this new dimension, it all seems so unbelievable. And how on earth did he get here? How can such a short span of time change so much of the reality of one's own familiar space?'

He didn't want to use the device; he fought with all his strength to resist the temptation. Nonetheless, the fact that he could keep tabs on his companions was its most powerful attraction. It was always his self-justification when he lost his battle against using it.

As he stared at the cap, the walls of his tiny cell began to press in on him again, the reality of his confinement weighing heavily on his increasingly deteriorating mental state. He recognised the trigger mechanism's within his mind as the urge to escape and re-enter the Net gained momentum. He knew that the time he spent within his own reality was getting shorter and shorter and yet he continued to fight it.

It was then that his thoughts turned to Kadina. He sighed heavily as the temptation was overpowering, stronger than ever this time.

'To just relive some of their time together, just a little. How could it hurt?' His mind taunted him.

A tear formed in the corner of his eye. He placed his head in his hands. He knew that if he succumbed to that temptation then he would be lost to the ether forever and never return.

'Excuses! Always excuses! I'm not going to break. I know you're watching me. I know and I'm not going to allow you to win, no way!'

He stood defiantly, continuing his self-talk and began exercising. He started with his stretches. He could feel the muscles in his calf burn as he extended his right leg behind him. He leant forward; left knee bent as he stretched his head forward, then tilting it backwards, he arched his back, feeling the muscles in his lumbar as they pulled. He turned his head from left to right. He

stood to change side, and as he knelt, suddenly, without warning, the door to his cell swung open and he jumped in fright, toppling over to lie on the floor.

He looked up to see the expressionless faces of the two priests that had entered his cell. He remained still imitating their silent, solemn, dull gaze. However, he could not hold the straight faced look for long. He felt ridiculous, juvenile and with what started as a little smirk, he began to laugh. His laughter rang out. It echoed through the open doorway and down the empty corridors. He caught its sound as it reverberated back into the cell.

It sounded hollow ... and lonely ... and it sounded pathetic. He realised that it sounded more like a cry, a desperate call for help. He stopped and composed himself, as he lay back and once again reflected on the events that led to his arrival.

*

The mission had been routine as they left the comfort of the United Nations space facility stationed on Phobos, the closest of the Martian moons. After servicing the first of the satellites, they were moving on to the second when they began to experience the first indication that something was wrong.

‘Ray, what’s happening?’ asked Hanna, his voice tight but controlled.

‘Some sort of severe electrical static,’ said Ray, the ship’s pilot as he checked his instruments.

‘It’s all gone haywire!’

Suddenly, the ship shuddered and all lighting and instrumentation went out. They clamoured about for the battery-operated torches but even they did not work.

‘Now we’ve lost all power Hanna, and I can’t get any response from the back up. It’s all gone dead,’

‘I’m on it boy’s,’ quipped George, the ships engineer, as he blindly made his way to a panel in a corner of the cabin.

Suddenly a soft light wavered behind them as George flicked a gas lighter into action. Hanna was lost for words.

‘Report Ray,’ Hanna calmly requests of his pilot, ignoring his engineer’s blatant breach of protocol.

‘Last known position was eighteen hundred kilometres above the Martian surface Han, and approximately... directly, above the Olympus Mons,’ said Ray.

‘That storm was raging directly below us but we are too high above it to feel any effects from it, surly?’ commented Hanna as the ship began vibrating.

‘Who would know? They think their gods, those crackpot Terraformist’s. They’re only experimenting down there; they don’t know what they’re playing with,’ mumbled the ship’s engineer as he poked about inside the panel.

‘Power supply is still available,’ he added.

Suddenly, the ship jarred violently as George was thrown across the cabin.

‘You all right George?’ Hanna enquired.

‘I’m fine,’ he reassured as he picked himself up.

‘Those storms they’ve created down there are getting bigger and bigger. I know, for a fact, that they’re already twice the size of the projected probability ratings,’ he said as he continued to fiddle with the circuitry inside another open panel.

‘Well, the core is heating up so something’s working. Is that what you discuss with that pretty little Geo engineer: you’ve been seeing?’

Ray smiled, trying to defuse the tension.

‘Let’s stick to the problem at hand. We’re flying blind and judging from that vibration, our speed is increasing!’ said Hanna.

Just then, the lights flickered on and Hanna could see the satisfied smile on his engineer’s face.

‘Holly? Snap,’ yelled Ray as his instrument panel sparked back into life.
‘Thanks for nothing George, fasten your seat belts boys, we’re going down,’ he shouted.
The roar of the hull tearing a hole through the atmosphere threatened to deafen them all.
‘Where the hell are we?’ We’ve got atmospheric readings like earth here,’ George yelled.
‘It’s gonna be rough boys if I can’t get some control here,’ said Ray.
‘Hold steady pilot, I haven’t finished yet,’ stated the ships engineer.
‘All ready for a grade five crash landing,’ said Hanna in an authoritative tone.
‘I’m trying captain, I think I’ve nearly got it... under...control,’ affirmed George as he frantically worked at a control panel in the floor.
‘Captain, we’ve got no thrusters. Steering and some power yes, but for some reason... I can’t get the thrusters to respond sir,’ stated George.
‘I could glide her in if we had an atmosphere!’ said Ray.
‘Well I’ll be a... will you get a load of that,’ exclaimed Ray.
‘Seat please, Mr Engineer!’ ordered Hanna.
‘Aye, aye, sir! And I’m telling you there’s nothing wrong with that circuitry. What the hell! Is that an ocean I’m looking at?’ said George as he fastened his harness.
‘Pilot, confirm, grade four landing procedure,’ Hanna ordered.
‘Confirmed! Going for a grade four sir!’
‘Mr Pilot, try to head for the shore line, if we can skip her into that bay and put her on that beach?’
‘Yes sir.’
‘Jettison all fuel pods Mr Engineer.’
‘Check, mark on three Mr Pilot.’
‘Confirmed! Unus, Duo, Tresone.’
‘Thank you Momma, they’re gone, captain.’
The next few minutes seemed to be in slow motion as the last few minutes of the U.N.S.A. Marion played out and they sped toward the planet’s surface.

It was a fine ship. A shuttlecraft designed to reenter the earth’s atmosphere some four or five times without any major overhaul. It had done so on three occasions and had been in service four years now. It was Hanna first command and he loved every millimetre of her stream lined hull.

Ray had managed to regained control with only minutes left to avoid disaster. He flew the ship in an arc. With the skill of a glider pilot, he banked her gently to follow the coast with the sun behind them and although he had no power, he held her steady as she fell to ground.

Terror gripped them all as not a word was spoken. Hanna had sat helplessly as Ray levelled the craft to skip like a stone across the ocean surface. ‘Slap!’ They hit the water, bouncing, air born again, blinded by the spray of water that had pitched in front of them, Ray used his instruments and adjusted the steering gear. Slap!

They hit again, air born. Ray steadied the ship.

‘Two,’ he said as he did so.

Slap!

‘Three,’ he cried as George joining in.

Slap!

‘Four!’ they all chorused together.

‘Five!’ they cheered optimistically.

‘Six!’ Was lost with the roar of the fracturing hull. Hanna could feel the adrenalin surge as it rippled through his body, his heart pounding within his chest. Then a feeling of joy overwhelmed him, a strange mixture of terror, excitement, and optimism that shook him to his very core.

As he sat there, he slowly came to the realisation that it was over, they had survived. They were alive, yes, but somehow he felt more alive than he had ever felt in his life. His body tingled like an electrical current. Smell, hearing, taste, all on sensory overload as his heart continued to pump violently inside his chest.

The ship was in an almost unrecognisable state, trees and sand now part of the interior decor. They had come to rest on a sand dune above the beach. It seemed an impossible landing yet somehow Ray had managed to pull it off.

Hanna looked to George as he lifted his head to return Hanna's stare, a stunned look in his eyes, they both looked at Ray as he turned from the controls. Suddenly, like a football team that had kicked the winning goal after the final siren, they were cheering. Unbuckled their safety harnesses, they began slapping and hugging each other like the victorious team that they were in the realisation of what they had actually survived sank in.

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Three days passed as they acquainted themselves with their new surroundings. It was familiar, yes, but it wasn't Earth. Nor was it Mars, well not the Mars they were familiar with. The planet they had hurtled towards from space had vast oceans. Their Mars has no atmosphere or oceans.

Hanna also realised that that any chance of rescue must seriously be in doubt. All in an instant, fate had dealt them a telling blow. Their life had changed and a completely new perspective had now taken hold. However, one looked at it, they had been lucky. To have survived the systems failure, the unpowered atmospheric entry, and then to have crash landed on a habitable planet was something that they were all still trying to come to terms with.

Ray Stevens was his pilot, a good man, diligent and precise. Always thinking to cover the angles before making decisions, he was resolute when he made them. His attitude was more serious than Hanna's was. Never quick to jump to conclusions, Ray would always look at the negatives before the positives. The perfect contrast to Hanna's more gung hoe approach to life. Hanna managed to pull a few strings when he required a pilot for his ship and Ray's skills, as a pilot, were unparalleled. He had been dux of the academy in aviation during the last three years of their training.

Hanna had learnt early in his training that Ray Stevens was a man he could rely on and they soon become trusted friends. As they worked their way through the academy, he quickly learnt that he could trust Ray to back him in situations that may not have been becoming to a cadet of the United Nations Space Alliance. Ray had shown faith in his uncanny survival instincts and natural ability to play it cool whenever they ventured too close to the edge. They made a formable team, always managing to avoid trouble.

Hanna York was around thirty-four years old. Captain of his first ship at thirty, he had graduated from the academy at twenty-seven, the top of his class. Cheerful and positive by nature, his enthusiasm and energy were magnetic. His instincts, almost psychic, as luck always seemed to follow him wherever he went. He had the ability to put people at ease, even strangers and would always remain calm in stressful situations. Always quick to give praise and earn peoples trust, he was a natural born leader.

George Pittsworth was a little older than Hanna and Ray. At thirty-nine, he was the veteran of the team. As an engineer, he was resourceful, quick witted, experienced and skilful. He was pleased with his new crewmates, as he had some ongoing unsettled periods during his previous carrier. That was until he met Hanna and Ray.

They enjoyed his proud and judgmental nature that others were so quick to dismiss. They understood his honest yet sometimes contemptuous humour. Hanna was pleased to have George's experience on board and found him to be a great asset to the team.

They met him at a bar one night during one of their little pranks. A man was drunk and obnoxious at the gambling table and they decided to play one of their favourite tricks. While Ray distracted the man, Hanna approached from behind and unceremoniously dacked him. During the confusion that ensued, Hanna made his getaway and they rendezvoused at another drinking abode a little later. Luckily, for the victim, he was wearing underwear.

George, having witnessed all this, decided to play a prank of his own. He had followed Ray and then confronted them. He claimed to be the other man's friend and after teasing them both for a little while, he finally confessed his folly. And as luck would have it, Hanna had found his ship's engineer.

Hanna wanted to travel to the higher ground for the night. And as the sun began to warm the others from their sleep, Hanna started to plot the day ahead. George condition, having suffered the worst of the injuries, would dictate the pace of day ahead. They had set up camp outside the wrecked ship as the cabin reeked with the stench of burnt circuitry. The weather was favourable but they had been reluctant to stray too far, at least not for the first few days. Food was not a problem for now; they had at least six-month's supply of ship rations to get them through.

They were relieved to find an abundance of local food sources. They had already ventured small portions of the local fruit with no ill effects. Finding fresh drinking water was their priority now. Hanna felt confident they would soon find an ample supply once they started to move. The insect life seemed to be fairly non invasive. In addition, they had spotted what looked like lizards on occasion. There seemed to be plenty of bird life about.

George was the first to wake. He sat up, yawned, and looked around.

'How you feeling today?' asked Hanna.

'So far, so good,' replied George.

'I need to get some exercise though. Besides, I've got itchy feet to look around this joint. Let's see if there's a bar with some cute native girls running about.'

'Or man eating, two headed monsters,' said Ray as he turned over to join the conversation.

'I'd like to camp on top of that headland tonight and see if we can see any lights. I don't want to venture to far from the ship...you just never know,' said Hanna, pointing to the southeast.

'Sounds good to me.' said Ray.

'Maybe we should stock up for a few days travel just in case, hey Han?'

'Probably a good idea,' he agreed.

With improvised packs from the tool kits stocked with ships rations, blankets, and walking sticks/come spears that they had manufactured from the native vegetation during the last few days, they were finally on their way. George was given the lighter load, under protest, his right leg still being sore. As they got moving, it seemed to limber up and they were all starting to feel pretty good. It was refreshing to be getting some exercise in some real fresh air. They had been away from Earth for some eight months now and they had a strict fitness schedule that they had meticulously followed. The three of them would always turn it into a competition, trying to outdo each other, doing twice the exercise required.

With easily two and a half hours of daylight to spare, they reached the summit and scanned the horizon. Considering the soon to be setting sun, they looked to the northwest where a series

of bays and rocky outcrops had been carved out of the cliffs by the ocean. Still further west, the cliff faces rose higher, as the land held its ground against the relentless seas. It disappeared into the horizon. Looking North, with their backs to the sea, there were rolling hills with scrub type bushland that got thicker as it receded from the coast. The tallest trees would only have been five metres high and it looked impenetrable. Looking further around to the east, they found what they were looking for, a creek behind a lagoon. In front of the lagoon was a strip of sand dune and a beach that stretched on for at least twenty kilometres. It promised fresh water and a bath.

The breakers, rolling in from the open ocean, made a formidable site, as the northerly wind tried in vain to hold them back. The particles of water that could not escape the wind were rewarded with rainbows of colour as the sunlight was reflected back to the weary travellers. Ray sat down to admire the spectacular site; soon they were all sprawled on the ground, not a word spoken, as they took in the view.

Sea birds swooped to fish what was plainly a bountiful sea. Circling and diving into a swirling, splashing school of bait fish that larger fish were no doubt herding and feasting upon from underneath. Further out to sea and a little more to the west was a similar scene of frantic activity.

‘There should be a rookery on the cliff faces somewhere around here,’ Ray said.

‘We could be on for some fresh meat!’

‘I don’t want to risk a fire tonight, just in case it’s seen,’ replied Hanna.

‘But I’m on for some fresh eggs for breakfast.’

Ray was up and heading to the edge of the cliff some thirty metres away.

‘Hold up Ray.’ called George as he stumbled to his feet. Hanna noticed, but did not comment at George’s obvious discomfort. Ray called back.

‘There’s a little valley down here guys. I reckon we can light a fire in there and that off shore wind will take any smoke out to sea. The wood around here is pretty dry so hopefully, it won’t smoke much.’

‘Ok, let’s check it out,’ replied Hanna.

Later that afternoon, as they watched the lumpy moon Phobos make its second pass for the day, they gorged themselves on cooked bird flesh. They managed to consume two large birds each and after more than eight months of ship rations, this was a welcome feast.

*

As the sky grew dark and more and more stars appeared, Hanna covered the embers of the fire with the pile of dirt they had prepared earlier. The night was going to be cool, as there was no cloud cover to trap the warmth of the day. They prepared their sleeping arrangements and layback to ponder the evening sky, the blue star less prominent than Venus in the east.

Hanna finally stirred impatiently and got up.

‘I’m going to have a look,’ he said as he turned to go.

‘Me too, wait up!’ said Ray as he jumped up. ‘Hold the fort Mr Engineer.’

‘Don’t wake me if I’m snoring boys,’ said George as he closed his eyes.

As Hanna and Ray reached the top of the rise, they both instinctively hit the ground. There, before their eyes, was a sight they were unprepared for and it shocked the both of them. In a clearing, at the head of the creek, was a blazing fire with some fifteen men dancing and jumping about. A drum was being hit but they could only here the faint rhythm as the wind carried the sound out towards the roaring ocean.

‘Well, well, well. What have we here,’ said Hanna.

‘Looks like we’ve found George a party,’ joked Ray as they studied the scene.

‘It doesn’t look like the girls have arrived.’

‘And they look a bit too excited to be crashing their party at this late hour... But I’d like to get a closer look. We should tell George what we’re up to.’ Just then, George joined them commenting.

‘Curiosity got the better of me.’

George took up vantage point a little further down the hill while Ray and Hanna slowly made their way toward the dancing men. With still no moon in the night sky, it was a dark and potentially dangerous excursion down the slope. They found a good spot to view the festivities, some fifty metres away and sat for about fifteen minutes, watching the activities in the camp.

‘They’re humanoid all right and in fact, fine examples of the species,’ whispered Hanna.

Ray looked at Hanna and raised his eyebrows as if to acknowledge the same thought. Some were feasting on shellfish and crustaceans, as others danced around a large fire. They chanted methodically to the beat of the rhythmic drum and a deeply resonant pulsating bass. These dark skinned natives were dressed in leather loincloths and those that were not dancing, wore fur ponchos. Most were decorated with bright paint and feathers.

Hanna found himself bopping his head to the rhythm of the music as one of the natives sang a verse alone. Then, there was a sudden roar of laughter as the others joined in with the chorus. Again, Ray and Hanna exchanged glances. They seemed to be having a good time. Two men sat on the ground playing, what looked like didgeridoo’s, while three others were slapping flat looking sticks that Hanna assumed were boomerangs. Their rhythmic beat flowed perfectly with the fast paced chattering song. Five men danced in unison and with leafy branches in their hands, they stomped their feet into the sand. Then, after the monolog, they flapped their arms like birds as they laughed and spun around.

Then, in time with the high pitch toot of the smaller Didgeridoo, each would drop one at a time, to their knee’s while bowing their heads low. Fluttering in unison they slowly stood shaking their heads with something in their mouths. Single file, they stamped their feet, turned to the left following the leader and one at a time dropped their catch into a basket. The chorus began and the routine repeated. They all got their chance to sing their individual solos, some obviously funnier than others and then they would sing as a group.

Hanna counted about twenty men in all. All fine specimens, with the eldest being about forty years old. Finally, he nudged Ray and indicated that it was time to go and they moved off in the direction that they had come. Back at their first vantage point, they talked about what they had seen.

‘Well, they sure look like a healthy bunch,’ said George.

‘That’s for sure; I wouldn’t like to have to tangle with any of them. They’re all about two metres tall and built like Roman gods.’ said Ray.

‘What are your thoughts Han?’ asked George.

‘To be honest with you fellas, I think we’ll sleep on this for tonight. I don’t think we should be rushing down there too fast. If these guys are here, then there could be others around. If we know anything about our primitive past... they could be hostile to strangers and I think strange is exactly how they’re going to think of us. Maybe we should just observe them for a few days and assess the situation,’ said Hanna.

‘Sounds like a pretty good plan Han, I think I’ve got to get some shut eye. I’m off to bed and we’ll pick up this little adventure in the morning. Good night boys,’ said George as headed for his sleeping bag.

‘I’m with you mate,’ said Ray.

‘They don’t look to be early risers, we could get in another good feed in the morning,’ said Hanna as he stood and looked back at the festivities still transpiring around the campfire below.

That night Hanna had a restless sleep. First, he lay there contemplating the life these people seemed to lead. They all seemed healthy and they looked to be happy. Nevertheless, ignorance is bliss and that was only a small glimpse of their lifestyle. Something about them felt right though, but he was feeling strangely anxious. There was some kind of déjà vu here, a familiarity that he

could not quite place. Then he remembered that he had that same feeling the night before their forced landing.

This place and time, questions, questions, it was all too much, his mind was in overload. Meditation was his only means to escape so he focused down on his breathing and took himself to his secret place in the purple light he called nothing.

Finally, he slept, a deep sleep, and dreamt of faraway places.

*

Chapter Two

*S*moke, the smell of roasting bird and the sound of a crackling fire, stirred Hanna back to consciousness.

‘A little more sleep, to drift in his lingering dreams wouldn’t do any harm,’ he thought.

Refusing to open his eyes as his senses slowly responded and his memory triggered as to where he actually was. As he lay there, his stomach began to react, the sweet aroma of bird fat clinging to his nostrils. His thoughts turned to the possibility of constipation with the sudden transition from ship food to fresh meat and uncomfortably, finally, he succumbed. He turned to lie on his side as he opened his eyes.

Ray was still in his sleeping bag and his eyes were bulging out of his head. Realising that Ray was trying to convey a warning, Hanna remained motionless. Looking past Ray, with his top eye closed, he could see George was still lying in his bag. None of them moved as Hanna slowly stirred to see who was doing the cooking behind him. There they were, about six of the natives, sitting around a newly built fire. They were all very intent on cooking and not paying any attention to the three sleeping cocoons on the ground behind them. Hanna noticed that they were sprinkling herbs and oil on the birds as they cooked.

They all seemed to be sniggering and trying not to look at each other without smiling, in fact... Hanna realised, they were trying not to laugh aloud and wake their sleeping captives.

Before he could devise some sort of plan, they finished cooking and turned toward the supposedly sleeping trio. They crouched down around them, two men to each sleeper, waving the aromatic meat in front of their noses. While one held the food, the other used a blade of grass to tickle the nostrils of their sleeping quarryies.

Hanna eyes opened and as he looked at his host, eye to eye, he was offered the cooked bird on a stick. He stared at the seemingly unfazed, stern looking young man that remained crouching in front of him. The young man’s expression changed to a smile, a cheeky smirk. He quickly recovered with a serious frown, but his associate could not hold it together and they fell about in a roar of laughter. Hanna caught the hot bird in his hands and immediately reacted to the heat. With that, the whole group lay about the ground, holding their bellies, in an absolute fit of hysteria.

Hanna, Ray, and George instantly sprang out of their sleeping sacks and stood back to back in an instinctive act of self-protection. However, as their native captors look at the confused faces of victims of their joke, they only laughed more. Both Ray and George looked to Hanna for a signal, but as Hanna surveyed the strange scene surrounding him, he felt that there was no real threat or danger. In fact, as the shock and wave of confused emotions swept over them, they could see the merit of their jest and began to smile.

The man, who had handed him his breakfast indicated that Hanna should eat and as he bit into the bird, he realised that it was it was extremely hot. He reacted quickly as he choked. The natives started to laugh again and the reality of the situation began to ease in his mind. He looked from Ray to George as they shook their heads, smiling, acknowledging amusement at the strange

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