

# RAVEN'S CHANCE



C. DESCRY

***RAVEN'S CHANCE***

***e. Desery***

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**RAVEN IS INSANE... SHE MUST BE!**

**A BOOK THAT EXPLORES  
THE UNCHARTED TERRITORIES OF BEING!**

***DARE GO WHERE EVERY SUBCONSCIOUS  
THOUGHT IS A SYMBOL, A WINDOW INTO  
THE SOUL!***

**WHAT WE DON'T UNDERSTAND *THEY* TREAT  
AS INSANITY!**

**BRUTALITY! SAVAGERY! SURVIVAL!  
THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE**



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This is a work of fiction. Names and descriptions of humans and events are fictitious and solely the creation of the author. No connection to any humans living or dead is intended or implied with the exception of Raven, who came to life in my *Spirit of the Sycamore* novel and is with us now. References to public and private agencies and to orders and assemblies of people for government, religious, educational or other means is purely fictitious. No mental health care personnel or desiccated human remains were damaged while researching this novel.

***Raven's Chance***

1. Psychological thriller
2. Paranormal/metaphysical
3. Desert Southwest
4. Archaeology/anthropology

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**Thanks Carla**





*When I was young  
I was the wonder of my body  
In time, the wonders of my soul*

*The Great Mandini*



## SANITY

**W**hen we meet we meld together, not in our  
minds, but through intertwining resonances.  
Not within, without!  
Not confined, spiritually!  
Not as we are, as we will be!

**We** haven't discovered our souls. The souls of  
those past. The souls of the future. We are primitives!  
We aren't insane.

**W**hat would you do if you knew time is not lineal?  
What fields would you wander?  
What would you know?

I'm calling...

Jane "*Raven*" Alexander  
Arizona 2010 C.E.



## Prologue

**PHOENIX TRAFFIC** didn't give way for the Sanitarium's dark blue van as it came into the city under a dirty cloud of dust. Heat trapped under the cloud soaked into the asphalt, softening it, making the driver imagine he drove through sand. The concrete mass of the Barrow's Neurological Hospital looked like a floating, shimmering mirage as he turned into the emergency entrance and followed the arrows around back to the wide, gray, metal door. The placard read: Morgue Entrance. Authorized Personnel Only.

"Park here, Dusty, wait for me!"

Lester Kaker pointed to a space big enough to accept the van's mass. "They'll want me to bring her out this way. When you see me, get the doors open and help! Act fast! It's so damned hot we could have heat stroke before we get her out of here."

The dim, cool corridor led to a flight of steps sealed in a tower. He knew the way. On the third floor, he pushed through the doors and crossed to the nurse's station.

"Lester Kaker, here for a...," he fumbled with the papers in the vinyl folder. "I'm here to pick up a Jane *Raven* Alexander. She ready?"

The nurse ignored him for as long as it took to finish writing notes on a file; long enough to let him know he didn't run the show. He didn't care, could wait all day, he got paid either way. She looked up. No smile.

"Mr. Kaker, I need the papers!"

He slid the vinyl folder across to her. She grimaced, opened it and sorted through the release and transfer orders.

"Have to be signed by her doctor. He's on the floor. I'll page him."

“Says my pick-up’s comatose. ‘Handle appropriately. Instructions with patient.’ That’s a new one on me. What instructions do I need?”

“She’s in a coma. Doesn’t look it. She looks awake. Her eyes open, she moves. Shield her from bright light. Keep the restraints tight—cinch her legs—she kicks out without warning.”

The nurse gave him a quick study. She didn’t like him, or the sanitarium he worked for.

“Doctor will tell you more. She needs special handling, has since they brought her here.”

“That why you gave up on her?”

She straightened. His words were insulting.

“We don’t give up on patients! She’s been here months. Needs custodial care and time—and I, guess, treatments we don’t do here. Things they do at Spine Cactus Gardens.”

Her words curled out, telling him she acknowledged things distasteful.

“You folks don’t like what they do, why send ‘em to us?”

She shook her head, pretended to study the records, and let her breath out slowly.

“They tried everything else. Perhaps your medieval house of horrors will save her.”

“I don’t envy her either, Ma’am, but sometimes it works!”

The doctor wouldn’t look directly at him. He took the forms from the vinyl folder and pretended to read through the documents, signed each, and snapped the folder shut.

“Get her file,” he directed the nurse, “not the original, the copy!”

The nurse went into the attached room and came back with a folder thick with forms and reports and handed it to the doctor.

“This the copy? It goes with the patient.”

He looked down, frowned, turned and started down the hall. Then over his shoulder ordered: “Nurse, you bring her out. Make certain she’s covered!”

Lester knew what to expect. He had picked up dozens of withered, wasted people whose minds sought refuge in other places. He prepared himself to take charge of a torpid old lady. The sight of—he read the name on the file—Jane Alexander, face framed by raven hair, was such a surprise he stepped away from the gurney.

“She’s beautiful!”

She lay, eyes open and darting about as if she had just awakened from a quiet nap. Yet her eyes didn’t focus. No meeting, no locking on, no recognition!

“Wherever she lives is beyond this plane—she’s in another reality. Be gentle with her.”

He checked the restraining straps, grabbed the file folder, and gently pulled the sheet over her face. The nurse helped him wheel her to the elevator, offered to help him out, but he didn’t want or need her help. He hit the opener button for the exit door, saw Dusty get out of the van, running to help get the patient loaded.

Before he closed the van doors, he pulled the sheet back. Her eyes were closed. She lay still, her breathing regular. He took the file folder and locked her in for the long drive to the Sanitarium.

“Lester, did I see what I think I saw?”

“Beautiful lady?”

“Yeah! Why we getting her?”

“Coma case. Strange! She’s not like the others. Neurological guys gave up on her.”

“Wait ‘til them orderlies get a look at her!”



“Cut it out, Dusty! Don’t believe rumors like that! We could both lose our jobs, you heard the warnings!”

“Okay, but.... Lester, how does a person get that way? I mean, what the hell happened to her?”

“We aren’t supposed to know.”

“But you...? It’s a long drive. Can’t you just peek at the file?”

“No way man! It’s for them to know, not us.”

## Chapter 1

*A thousand years ago when you were trapped, did you know I'd be the one who would set you free? Did you know I was coming?*

**HANDS SHAKING, COLD,** Raven fumbled one of the last candles from the cardboard box. Straightening the wick, stealing flame from the dying stub, she let the flickering element meet the source it would consume—a short-lived, flaming entity capable of dominating everything in the cave. Steadying her hand, holding the new candle on its side, she let the old flame lick its base until the wax glistened. With a quick movement she stuck it butt-down on the wax covered sandstone ledge, cradling it until it stood erect.

Glowing candlelight ate the darkness, revealing rough, uneven walls; roan colored sandstone backdrops against which moving shadows differentiated themselves. A concave ceiling patterned by root-like fractures, stained by long-dry seeps of mineral-laden water and veneers of carbon from the juniper smoke tongues of ancient fires. Her eyes followed the light as it revealed what she expected—what she found that day more than two years before when, after days of brutally hard, skin abrading, finger-mashing work, she clawed a hole through the sandstone rock fall. That moment of discovery that forever changed her life—opened her window into the past—and provided the opportunity archaeologists dream of; an experience so intense nothing she had ever done—would ever do—could equal it.

Her quick assessment of the cave's interior assured her nothing changed while she had been gone.

*I've been out! How long?*

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She couldn't keep track of the time. Time had no meaning.

*I've got to be more careful surveying the canyon for ruins. It's a shame I have to go out. I've got more work here than I can do in a lifetime.*

She felt pain swelling on the top of her hand and held it to the light to confirm the hurt.

*Catclaw bush must've hooked me, punctured my hand.*

Her head ached. She rubbed her temples then wiped greasy-sweat away with her sleeve, disturbed her perspiration congealed like Vaseline.

*I want a hot shower. Oh well, forget that!*

Her ankles hurt, the skin burned as if chaffed by leg irons.

*I need high boots! Got to be careful bashing through the brush.*

She turned from the light and examined her corner of the cave. The dark blue backpack, ripped side panel repaired with silver duct tape, her dusty, stained, black sleeping bag, feathers lumpy, appeared as if some small creatures had taken it for their home, were as she left them. Notebooks, loose pages lined with inked notes in her tiny hand. Journals and books with curling covers. Thick, red silk bookmarks spreading bound pages like labia; reminders of professional obligations, her reason for being. Boxes filled with bottles and containers of pills, and food, what was left of it, jammed into an old Coleman cooler without a lid. Her belongings gave her corner of the cave an alien presence, alien compared to what she found.

Greeting the others, she became aware of echoing answers from the shadows. Unwilling, too cold to acknowledge them, she let her voice out to still them.

"It'll be cold tonight, not that you care! I've got to have a fire inside! There must be a way I can cut a hole to let smoke out! Oh, none of you care! You sit around your fire

pit. I'm the one who clawed through the tons of fallen sandstone, something you tried but failed to do. I'll figure a way to let smoke out of this cave! You had your fire...."

Her thoughts played.

*A thousand years ago when you were trapped, did you know I'd be the one who would set you free? Did you know I was coming? You called me here! Did you sit through forever waiting for me? You had to know I would come, that I am The Continuation! I'm sure of that!*

She smiled, knowing she belonged, was fulfilling prophecy. Then she continued her dialogue, the comfort of her own voice easing the loneliness, "I'll find a way. Not now! I've things to do!"

She visualized sliding her body into the sleeping bag, fleeing from the bone penetrating cold, knowing the silence of the cave belied an early Fall storm blowing its way through the wild canyons. She imagined the wind wailing warnings around the sandstone reefs guarding her secret place; making sounds like moaning fans blowing a cacophony of human misery through aural tunnels.

Clamping her hands in her armpits, withstanding the shock the cold sent through her body, she clenched down until her fingers felt flexible enough to write; warm.

Careful not to make dust, she pulled herself back, bag and all, until she sat upright against the sandstone. Her headache eased. Her body panged as if every muscle and inch of exposed flesh had been stressed. She focused her mind and made her list, things she had to have, things she couldn't glean from the canyon. Then, too comfortable to consider getting up to put the candle out, but not willing to waste light, she put aside the stained, hand stitched, thick silk bookmark from her grandmother's lap desk and wrote in her journal until the candle guttered, her body relaxed, she slept.

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The specters which arose behind her closed eyelids and fought for power over clarity came awake. They fed on her memories; energized by angst and fear. They fought battles she could never win, and re-fought, time and time again, the battles she lost. They revised history and played out new scenarios in futile attempts to change the outcome. Whenever they were free to roam, when her conscious mind was not in control, they raged and stormed and battled—and always lost, as she lost. They retreated as ephemeral dreams when her dawn came, lurking, always present: dementia.

Running the zipper down she freed herself from the bag cocoon. Absolute darkness didn't faze her anymore, not as it had when she first found the cave. She put her hand exactly where the candles and matches were. She lit the last candle and waited for its flame to fill.

"I'm going in for candles, paper, my mail. A good blanket too!" The sound of her voice cut the quiet: alien, serrated vibrations, then replies? Echoes of her making? No! They argued a delay.

"Don't talk behind my back, any of you. You think I don't know your voices? I have to go!"

She dug into her backpack and brought out clean, faded jeans and the blue work shirt she had rolled into them so it wouldn't wrinkle. She must dress as a field archaeologist—an arkie—that's what they expected. Turning away from the men, modest as inculcated, she slid out of the layered tunic she had made from the bolt of gauzy cotton cloth from Phoenix. As she lay the tunic on her sleeping bag, she marveled at its gossamer beauty; recalled her image, her reflection in the quiet water, as she looked on that hot summer day. The filmy cloth flowing around her—she became aware she was The Earth Mother, The Continuation.

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Naked, shivering, she pulled her jeans up. Underwear created unnecessary problems. It didn't matter, she chose not to wear it. She buttoned the faded blue work shirt. She decided she needed a heavy parka. Dressed, she snubbed the candle and climbed up and over the rubble, through the small ragged opening, down the slick sandstone mass remnant of the arch that had fallen so long ago forming the cave, and up, over and out into the blinding Arizona sunlight. It was evening... no, it must be mid-afternoon because she needed daylight. It was mid-afternoon. She was pleased. Time had little meaning in the cave. Outside, she had to be concerned about time.

Making her way along the twisting, narrow trail, she spoke in whispers to those following her. "Something's been on the trail. Cougar! Won't be around this time of day." Silently, she acknowledged, *I know you're watching me, sleek cat. You think someday I'll forget and let you get above me. I'm not afraid of you, but you would be afraid if you knew who I am.*

*Damn it's cold!*

She was freezing cold, but realized it had to be warm out. Her body warmed in the hot sunshine.

"The Blazer may not start!"

*What will you do then, Raven?*

"What will you do?" The wind moaned as it pushed against the sandstone cliffs: not an answer. She worried now. What if the truck didn't start? She shuddered, chilled, her defenses weakened.

"Listen to me! I can't talk louder. Stay near me and talk to me in whispers. People may hear our voices, even out here in the canyon." She looked around, afraid their voices had given her away.

"Be careful! Don't slip here! Keep your eyes on the trail. Climb! Its only a mile now...."

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*It must still be there in the brush where I hid it. Good! No one found it.*

“You better start Mr. Jimmy Chevrolet! It’s only been a...? How many months? Gad!” Her eyes darted, her arms jerked in response as if she were turning a wheel.

The tires grabbed, the steering wheel tried to spin out of her hands. The ruts were deeper than she had ever seen them. She fought the vehicle around a sharp hairpin curve and saw rocks had fallen from the canyon walls, blocking the main track.

Reaching down to the lever on the hump at her right, she forced it back, shifting the Jimmy into four-wheel drive. Panicked, yet still in control, she cut up over the side of the shoulder. The truck’s steering belt squealed terror. The motor lugged. She worked the clutch until she got the transmission into low gear. She never doubted the vehicle, but it seemed to have reached its limit.

“Oh don’t stall, don’t stall!” she pleaded as she fought the wheel and turned down, back onto the rutted road. The temperature gauge moved into the red. Some warning something buzzed at her. Her feet automatically worked the accelerator and clutch. She shifted into second and rolled on toward the gravel road. At the gravel, she forced herself to relax. Pain shot across her back. “Don’t you bounce me anymore, Jimmy, I can’t take anymore,” she commanded, at the same time patting the dash; silently blessing the vehicle.

The gravel road was maintained. It had to be. The tires bounced across washboard sections. The vehicle, shaking, tried to fish-tail off the road. She held the wheel, crying that her kidneys couldn’t take any more. The road became smooth as pavement.

She came to the stop sign, stopped and turned onto the state highway. “Three miles, Jimmy. Only three more.” She drove into Sedona; driving the strip. Heavy traffic? It

had to be light! She decided the early cold snap forced people indoors. Tourists were heading back to Phoenix or hiding in bars where the first fires of the season had been lit in giant fireplaces.

The Jimmy cooled and the gauges told her it had recovered from the fight to get out of the wilderness. "We have to go back, you know! You seem okay... well, I'm not. I hurt all over!"

Shaking from fear. Fear of town and town people. Fear of being taken—she visualized herself being captured, put in a sanitarium, suffering experiments.

*They can't do that!* her inner voice protested.

*But they can, will, if they catch me.*

*Why? Just because I live free?*

*No, they want what I have! I have to hide!*

Fear she couldn't control sapped her energy almost paralyzing her.

*If things go wrong again—what if they follow me?*

Long minutes passed. Taking deep breaths she calmed herself. With her loudest, strongest voice she built her strength. "I have to do this right this time! God, give me strength!"

Raven saw there were only a few shoppers in the small market. The three young clerks turned and stared at her as she came in. What's wrong? Were her clothes...? No, she knew they would stare. All her life it had been that way. She hated it.

Good! He still worked here! She gave him her sexiest smile. Thank God for Freddie. He hadn't changed since she met him when, as a high school student, he volunteered on a dig she was working.

*Damn, I hope he picked up my mail like he promised. Still thinks he's a blond Elvis. At least the sideburns hide some of his acne. His mother was awful. She signed his work slip after giving me a*



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*lecture about how worthless he is. He's a kid who made his mother loathe her first husband.*

"Doc! Doctor Alexander! I thought yu'd probably gone back ta the U. Are ya still surveying out there in them canyons?"

"I have a lot of work. Probably be working all fall and maybe through the winter, if it's an open one."

"Ya—ya got a lotta mail. I'm glad ya come in. Certified letter came a few days ago. Didn't know what ta do.... I wuz goin' ta send it back—in fact, I planned to bundle yer stuff and...."

The shock must have shown on her face. Her mail was her only contact with...?

"Send it back?" She tried to sound hurt, not angry. "Don't do that until I tell you to, okay? I mean really Freddy, I count on it being here!"

He nodded and nodded again. He understood. He wouldn't send it back.

"Ya alone out there? I mean workin' by yurself?"

*Damn him! He suspects something. I can handle it better than before.*

"No. I have five helpers, same as before—no, I think I had six last time, didn't I? They get their stuff when they're in Flagstaff, or like today, they go on to Cottonwood. They don't much like Sedona and Sedona sure doesn't want poor archaeologists—arkies—hangin' here." She paused long enough to assess that he was buying it. "I like to come here though, I've always liked Sedona. My fiancé does too. He comes up from Phoenix as often as he can get away. I'll bring him in, he'd like to meet you—and—and you know what Fred? You have strong features like he does. You're both handsome men! Say, maybe you could help me out next summer? Are you still interested in archaeology; being an arkie? Would you work for me?"

His face lit up. "Ya bet I am! Didn't enroll in NAU like ya said I wuz to though. Couldn't. I plan to though, if I make

enough working here—money I mean.” He stood back and let her cart pass. “Sure I will! I’ll work fer ya.” They had the same conversation each time she came in.

*Hold yourself together! He can’t see how vulnerable I am. This is too hard. I don’t want to be here! Get the supplies and get out!*

She started down the aisle, putting things in her cart. She was aware he studied her back; the tight fabric stretched over her tight buns. Looking across the counters at his buddies, he kissed his fingers and shook them as he had seen an Italian actor do. Then he walked fast and caught up with her.

“Say Doc, they’ve been looking fer ya, them men I mean. I didn’t know what I wuz to tell ‘em... where to find ya or not, I mean. One was yer boss—ya know, Doc Adamson. The one on the Yavapai site. That boss I mean.”

“Him? That pompous...! I don’t work for him any longer, Fred, and I don’t want to. He’s after me to come back. If you see him again, tell him to write me another letter. I’ll get back to him.” Fear welled up in her as bile. She put her hand out, steadying herself against a case, fighting the horror of what she knew he—they—did to her. He went on talking. Maybe he hadn’t noticed.

“TV says winter’s comin’ early this year. Damn cold fer around here already don’t ya think? Wasn’t like this last year, I mean.”

*Be smart. Don’t let on...*

“Well Fred, if you’re right, I’ll need a warm blanket, won’t I? And, can you recommend portable heaters that won’t kill us with monoxide in the tents?”

“In tents? Tight? I mean, if it’s too tight ya got two problems. Monoxide as ya said, and using up all them oxygens. Me? I’d rather to have me a warm sleeping bag and blankets. Bring in hot rocks from the fire, I mean.”

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“I can count on you to know, thanks. Dripless candles still over there? Oh, and did the vitamins and supplements I ordered come in?”

He nodded his head until he was sure she saw him. “Doc, I gots to tell ya the professor said some things—really strange, I mean.”

“My competition! He knows I’m on to something. They want to jump my claim. They think they can steal my research... publish it themselves.” She felt calmer. He might give her a clue as to their plan. “What kind of things?”

“Well, ya really want ta know? Doc Adamson wuz madder’n hell when I told him I didn’t know how—how to contact ya, I mean.”

“Shoot!”

“Well, he said ya’d gone mad and wuz hidin’ out in them wilds by yurself. He said he thought ya died out there, I mean.”

“Wrong!” Her laughter filled the store with her glee. A small window in the door slid open and someone stared at her. She had to be careful not to attract attention.

“He come in with a cop! Sheruf I mean.” He dropped the bomb to see what she did. He stared at her face.

She let the laugh flow into her answer. “Damn, I may not have paid the ticket I got out on the highway. Would they go after me for that?”

“Sure... well, it don’t seem likely. They’d catch up ta ya when ya tried to renew your license or... know what I mean?”

Her reaction confused him, as she knew it would. By his way of reckoning, from what he secretly knew, she should have been shocked or at least really concerned a cop was looking for her, wanted to arrest her. He had to believe they were wrong about her. She had to reinforce the seeds of doubt to counteract their power.

"Look at me Freddy! I'm not dead, and as you can tell, I haven't gone mad." She walked over to the school supplies. "I like narrow-lined paper, narrower than this."

*They got the police involved, those SOBs! They did it! First the Treasury Agents and then..., I knew they'd do it. I've got to get out of here! Someone in here spying may have called them.*

"Don't have none. Can't get none fer you. Try Wal-Mart in Cottonwood. Need anythin' else?"

*What's he talking about? Oh....*

"That's okay, my crew said they'd pick some up. Woman's things? I'll get them!"

He knew better than to follow her down *that* isle. She watched as he trudged back to the front and stood by the register, shooting glances at the other clerks. He believed he conveyed his sophistication. She finished gathering and pushed the wobbly-wheeled shopping cart through to him. He had to focus on prices. She pretended to look at the magazines.

"Yu'll want boxes fer this mail an stuff Doc. Ya must subscribe ta every archaeology journal published."

"The others read, too. If you want to become an anthropologist you should start reading them. I won't mind if you don't mess them up and if they're here when I come in to get them."

*I always offer, he's too dumb to take advantage.*

"Ya always pays cash. Don't ya believe in credit cards?"

Sure, but when I'm in the field I have no way to mail the payments, silly."

She exposed his feeble attempt to trick her.

*He thought he was smart enough to get me to slip up. Now he won't believe I'm crazy.*

"I'll help with this. Ya needs help!"

"The box of mail? Can you put it in back? And Freddy, thanks for doing what you do for me. And thanks for being

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my friend.” She needed his friendship. She instinctively knew what to do. Without giving him time to hug back, she gave him a long, full frontal hug, pressing her breasts and thigh into him, raising her right leg between his, wrongly assuming by the feel of him as he tensed that he wouldn’t betray her.

She drove away leaving him in the parking lot, white apron hiding his, *Physical repartee*, she thought.

He would try to learn where she was going and what it would be like to go with her. Then slowly, as he savored the memory of her body against his, she had him turn and strut back inside. She knew what happened then.

“Boys, that woman’s really somethin’! I don’t let on, but I knows about her. I been her friend fer a long time, I mean.” He knew Danny and Bill hadn’t been able to keep their eyes off her. She had beauty; a magnetic attraction that reached out and grabbed men.

“Know what about her, Fred? What do *you* know about her? Hell, you’re just a kid like me.”

“She’s crazy as a bluejay on berries, I knows that! Calls herself Raven. Thinks she’s the Earth Mother. Claims she’s *The Continuation*, whatever the hell that is. She’s wasting that beauty. Lives out in Secret Canyon Wilderness somewheres. People is always trying ta find her and bring her in. Ain’t she a beauty through? You see the ball-crushing hug she gave me?”

“Can’t look at her without getting the hots. You sure she’s nuts, Fred?”

“Yeah. And she lies all the time. She ain’t got a crew and she don’t live in no tent. She ain’t got a boyfriend what visits, neither. Boy, if I wuz older, I’d go out and find her! She’s hot, I mean!”

“Freddy, you’re shittin’ me! She don’t look crazy. Who told you that crap? Why don’t you turn her in if it’s true?”

“Main man. That professor guy that wuz here with the cop? Ya seen him! He’s head of her department at the university. Worked on a site with ‘em, both of ‘em when I wuz a kid, four years ago about, I mean. He wuz here, told me everythin’.”

He looked around the store as if anticipating a challenge. “And I’m a goin’ to turn her in ... big reward fer it. I’ll call him.” He paused, thinking. She was his friend and maybe someday...? No way! He’d call Adamson, he knew for sure. He fingered half of a fifty dollar bill in his pocket. He’d earn the other half.

“Ya know guys, nobody could survive out there like he says she does, I mean. I’d lay ya a bet she lives down around the Verde River someplace, or over in Jack’s Canyon, or...? Hides out from the cops ‘cause she done somethin’—somethin’ really gross! Woman like that, she has the whole world if she wants. Wanna bet me? Wanna bet when I call the Professor and tell him she wuz here, he’ll call the cops and they’ll find her in a hideout probably living with some guy? Screwing his brains out, I mean.”

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## Chapter 2

*And in truth, she was feral. Like the cougars that denned around her she could survive in the desert.*

**SHE GROUND THE ASHES** of the certified letter into the sand on the floor of the cave. Their curt condemnation—their threats—echoed through her mind. The way they tried to belittle her had come through the notice of termination louder than any other part. She clenched her teeth as she read the reply she had written; her curse:

*Don't laugh at me you bastards! You jab your sick insults at me like darts. I'm not hiding! Not from any of you! You think I stay in the deep canyons because of some force you exert? You think my mind has gone because I don't think as you wish me to? I pity each of you your ignorance. Your thoughts are trapped. Your collective ken lies shrunken behind your academic facade. What I bring new, you shun out of ignorance. You fight to protect past conclusions. You lose! To cover your lack, you make me out to be mad. With this curse, that ends now!*

*I curse each of you! Suffer dementia! With the powers in me, I end everything each of you pretend to be!*

It was done. She re-read the letter aloud so those gathered would know the injustice. The pencil lead broke as she emphasized the curse with black underlines. Written and read, her reply, a spell frozen as a curse on silent lips.

Striking a wooden match against the sandstone she held fire to the paper until it caught. Mumbling the curse over and over, she held the paper until the flame licked her

hand. She dropped it onto the cave floor and watched its ash mix with the ashes of the certified letter she picked up in Sedona years before.

*The curse is set! The constant pressure they exert will be gone now. I feel lighter clearer.*

The refreshing clarity let her process. She flew deep within her emotions. Free at last. Well, she hoped it was over, finally over.

Looking down on the black smudges of ash mixed into the sandy red soil, she sniffed the wafting smoke from the burned curse into her lungs.

*Acrid! Like the curse, like the bitter taste of what they do to me.*

Her buns were numb. Sitting for hours on the cold cave floor with her back against the sandstone was foolish. Even insignificant things like lighting another candle caused emotional pain to well up inside her. Time after time she fought down the dreadful horror of being shunned.

Her lips moved, "It's my punishment for enlightenment, being alone and shut off from the community; my peers," she told those around her, her voice loud, but wavering enough to betray self pity. "I became what I made myself! I'm at the top of my profession. I should be World renowned! They're blotting-out my contributions and my name. They're threatening to take away my honors, my credibility. They accuse me of being mad! Mad! How dare they! How can they think they'll get away with it?"

The voice inside went on when the other finished.

*I am the One! Of course they fear me. Of course, what I know threatens the foundations of their conclusions. I must continue—evolve! And the forces of good protect me. In time... time will make it right, but how much time? How long can they ostracize me for what I know?*



C. Descry

*I must live here where my work is, deep within the rock formations of this canyon my kind haven't conquered. Isolation gives me the freedom to think beyond their restrictions—to let my mind expand far beyond these canyon rims.*

Hiding in the cave, in the ragged cut erosion had torn down through the earth's crust, understanding came to her as she touched the past. She was learning to tap new sources of knowledge.

"I'm on the edge of greatness beyond anything they will ever accomplish," she lectured her silent witnesses, certain they cared. For over a thousand days she lived in the cave with these Ancient Ones. To survive that long she learned how to gather food and live off the land. Occasionally, she went into town for supplies and her mail, but those infrequent trips were faint memories as she stayed to learn the ways of the ancients.

For those few who caught sight of her in the wilds, she was ethereal. The observers couldn't understand how a woman with the body of a temptress, the magical beauty of a woman in her forties—resilient breasts, luscious, full and lithesome trunk, flowing black hair framing facial features seemingly lifted from the cover of some fashion magazine—could have gone mad and become a wild creature haunting the canyons.

And in truth, she was feral. Like the cougars denned around her she could survive in the desert. She could move with the power of a beast communicating to other living things she was Queen; not to be harassed. She could move silently and disappear into places domesticated creatures would never go. Beyond this plane, because she had spent her lifetime learning about the past, Raven could live within many layers of time. She learned to move through the warp and weft of more than a thousand strands of woven years. She was learning how to

go to ancient campfires, or sit on ridges, overlooking the land as it had been in times totally void of human denizens.

As a time seeker, she became aware of her previously innate, unused ability to travel through time. In the dark confines of their cave the student explored her powers and timidly began to use them. The passageways were in her mind. The adventures she had were too vital to be imagined.

The candles flickered, the walls seemed to undulate. Her mind opened. She had questions only they could answer, she broke the silence. "I know I can find you. I sense the power you gave me... I'm afraid, help me!"

Her mind filled with the noise of thoughts. She held her breath, relaxed, letting air out slowly. The messages sorted, the traffic cleared; she thought she understood. She was being pushed over a wall built of carefully cemented objections. They were playing with her—the cyclic chemistry of her body. "You know I need! Damn you all! You know I ache for... touch, someone's touch."

*And the pounding release I must have*, her inner voice whispered.

Without conscious intent, she made the connections they urged. Without sense of time or travel—any sense of motion—she was in their time. Freed to be driven, she pretended it was only a dream, a sexual fantasy where she could have....

Approaching a ridge-top farmstead, her archaeologist's mind analyzed and classified the scene.

*Developmental Pueblo, maybe 900 to 1000. Good time to visit. Prosperity. Anasazi. They're stripping vegetation, denuding the land like insects—clouds of smoke hanging in the air, strings of gloom—the Mesa Verde off there to the south. It's like I knew it would be in their time!*

### *C. Descry*

Moving off the trail, she crouched behind a great juniper, observing. In time, vigilance was rewarded. He was beautiful! Hair neatly tied back by a feathered thong, wearing a breechcloth of thin, soft hide folded over a woven belt of malleable hair-like material, carrying a bow and quiver—the arrows held tightly within the intricately painted leather. He came toward her along the narrow trail, eyes flashing vitality. She stayed hidden and let him pass. She followed him as he hunted his way down off the ridge into a narrow canyon. He wore youth: a mantle of smooth skin and muscles, a quickness of step; cockiness—the sexuality she sought. Her mind played with thoughts of him. She stalked him, her cerebellum generating sleek, soundless, eager movement.

He stopped in the canyon's cleft, leaning far over the edge of a pool to sip water. She stood where her reflection appeared to him in the pool, a nymph, a vision, a vital sexual fantasy he couldn't resist. He turned from her reflection and saw.... The power of her body; the force of features evolved for the sole purpose of exciting men, overpowered his fear. He stared at her, his gaze searching through her filmy garment.

A woman's bare breasts were as familiar to him as their shoulders and backs. Yet the circular form of her breasts; the way they sat, nipples erect, caused his body to react suddenly. His gaze dropped to a triangle, raven black. He gasped. She looked like no woman he had ever seen or imagined. Her skin light, pale, almost pink. Her face wasn't round like his. It was longer and her nose narrow and sharper. His mind sent warnings. His body filled with the chemistry which puts one into sexual rapture.

Raven knelt, touched, pulled and admired him, never able to satiate her knowledge of those appendages. His hands moved as she expected them to. She pulled him to her and ravished him until he gasped. Electrified, she held him until their energies stopped quivering.

*Raven's Chance*

In time, he awakened. He lay there, amazed. She fondled him and kissed him until she cooled. Then she stood, smiled down at him and returned to her time.

He cooled his head in the pool, splashing water over his shoulders. When he stood, he looked around, unsure what happened. The spirit had...? His conscious mind shut down during the overpowering rut. He wanted to recall everything, but, as always in sex, it was lost—except the image of her in his mind, the pungent pheromones which clung to him; the feelings of excitement. He was forever changed. His encounter with the goddess became his Vision.

The old men, interpreting his vision, gave him power over fertility. In time, his seed blessed the corn.

*I needn't be alone!*

She played the message to herself as a promise that everything she sacrificed to be here was no sacrifice at all.

“Thank you for taking me there...,” her voice filled the cave and made it seem small. “You men! You used my sexual drive to teach me. Are you sure you know what you’ve done? You’ve unsheathed my power. I can join you now!”

As she lay back against the sandstone wall of the hidden cave, body still tingling, excited, she felt mellow, relieved—then, powerfully, like slow-flowing magma, a dull, aching hurt came from the depths of her heart.

*I didn't prepare myself. My God, why now?*

Passageways opened and memories came out of the depths to degrade the joy she felt; compared it to then, to him, to what she needed, wanted—to what should have been! She kept it walled away, a cyst in her core; contained. She had learned the hard way that sexual release opened tar pits containing lost love, lost opportunity—shattered hopes.

*Damn you Stewart, damn you to hell!*

C. Descry

She saw him walking toward her as he had so many times when they met on campus, his smile still floating in her mind's eye, a smile she had learned too late was the facade of a user, a shark, a soul-dead creature using charisma to prey on others.

*You bastard! You dirty rotten bastard! Go away!*

She lay back, unable to stop the contractions of sobs that punished her—had punished her for the sin of giving her love and soul to the devil in a man.

The emotional pain cauterized nerve endings. She felt the jolt in her brain as circuits closed and survival mechanisms enclosed the cyst, veneering new layers around it. Her body slumped, spaced for long minutes, then came out of the fugue. She was completely unaware of what happened; challenged by new thoughts.

She picked up a new journal and, honoring the habits of her profession, began to craft her research design.

*I'll travel back in time and... I'll be the one! I'll record their knowledge! Through me, those gathered here will be able to pass their wisdom on to the future. That's why I'm here. That's what they want.*

### Chapter 3

*He holds the black-on-red ceramic bowl in his lap...  
blood caked inside. It is blood. Black scabby blood!*

**THE DESICCATED ANCIENT ONES** sat around their long dead fire, each supported by a stone slab mudded into the floor. They were meeting as they had for almost a thousand years. Were they meeting to share powerful secrets and perhaps their thoughts about unity? She didn't know, but she would learn. That's why they brought her here.... She broke the silence.

"I sense your power. It's stronger than ever." She spoke directly to the tattooed one. "I sense a power in the cave that...?" She stopped speaking. Her mind struggled with something new.

*It seems like a scream; terror. I've sensed their energy before, energy, but not like this! Is it terror? I can't think straight—it can't be... be bad. It's me because I'm weak, scared...!*

Her legs jerked. She got up slowly and moved forward, careful not to block the candlelight as it fell on the mummified face of the oldest visitor, the one she knew to be from the Northeast, the land of plenty. The man bore the mark of his people: the Anasazi as she knew them. The back of his head had been flattened. His hair decorated with a porcupine quill board held in place by fine buckskin ties with antler-tip ends, and yet his face was modern, not unlike the strong mesocephalic face of a modern man with Oriental heritage.

Studying his features she sensed his resignation to death. These leaders had come to sit this way after being trapped in the cave formed by the collapse of the sandstone arch. Knowing no way out, each had drunk poisoned blood. Each died in place, mouthing spells and

### C. Descry

curses or quietly, silently, awaiting their final breath. Was their entombment an accident? Had Nature trapped them by some freak earthquake or landslide? That seemed unlikely. She shuddered. Had they been shut away by others for reasons too complex and too long past to understand? Was it the echoing of their terror that penetrated her?

*The old shaman died looking across the fire at—at that man! His body covered by tattooed blue designs, cicatrized bands, color. Excessive ornamentation of his skin probably signified his rank. I named him the Garish One. His frontal plates are deformed, forced back in childhood until his forehead slopes back into a bulge or collar—the cap of his skull. From his skull cap—he let his long black hair grow long so it covers his back. He must have been very proud of it. It's tied with macaw feathers and woven around the beaks of birds of prey and brightly dyed woven strips. His lips... parted as his jaw relaxed. Teeth filed to points, inlaid with jade, filmed over and lackluster. Jewelry, a necklace, a corroded copper disk with... something, some shape cut into its patina. He's hunched over, a spinal deformity?*

Raven had come to know them all, the great spiritual leaders, the travelers from the south and north who had come here so long ago to meet for some reason she had to know. She knew of their diverse cultures—she had studied their artifacts for more than twenty years. When she cleared the rock fall and opened the sealed chamber, when she learned they still existed, every imagined dream and hope she had about her profession came true. She gained the ability to travel back into their time and be with them. She focused upon them, examining them, questioning what she could learn from them.

*The shriveled flesh of the man from the east doesn't hide his powerful physical presence. He's*

*humpbacked, yet he sits erect, radiating energy—had to be someone great! Looks Hopi, could pass as Hopi today. Must have traveled from the ancient cities high on the mesas where the sun is first seen over these deserts. He, of the great spiritual leaders gathered here, will know the connection between the Sinagua, the Patayan, the Utes and his people. Through him I can fill the voids of modern knowledge. Oh my God! Of course! He must be the humpbacked trader Kokopelli. His staff, laying across his knees where it fell as his grip died. What an amazingly beautiful inlaid staff. It has a trader's crook like Kokopelli pictographs and petroglyphs show him carrying.*

*They're linked around the circle by a rope; a woven strand of human hair a finger's-width thick. The humpbacked man's left wrist is tied to the shaved-head man, wearing delicately carved stone rings in his ears. His skin dyed red and blue, but there's no scarring like some of the others. He's horrifying! He must have terrified others when alive! The mug in his lap looks Chacoan. Eight inches high—tall and straight with no noticeable curve at its rim—almost bulbous at the bottom, painted exquisitely with black on white geometric patterns. Is he a representative of the Chacoan culture? Will he answer my questions about conquest through terrorism and cannibalism? Can he tell me about those who first came up from the south—Mexico? Will he explain what happened when the Chacoan culture collapsed?*

*That one! Desiccated, hard to... also a powerful man... has the strong features of the Pai peoples. He's dressed simply, woven fiber and hides. Pride and power radiate from his features. The way his jaw relaxed left his mouth open in a shout, like maybe a war cry or the yell of a powerful man challenging*



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*death. It's his presence I feel, even away from the cave. He'll tell me about his people and their ways. He'll explain so much I can't glean from their sparse, long abandoned campsites. Maybe he'll be my teacher? What will he do? How will he react if I, when I, contact him in his time?*

*That old one. I know he was the host, graciously providing, carefully steering the meeting. The candlelight highlights his hair through the dust. His skull flattened in back; strapped against a cradle board when still flexible. He wears his thick gray-streaked hair in braids and, like the others, he's naked except for body paint and breechcloth with a porcupine quill pattern woven into it. His shrunken feet are bare. He is at the same time humble and powerful; masculine and feminine.*

*He holds the black-on-red ceramic bowl in his lap, blood caked inside. It is blood! Black scabby blood. He's gripping a long-handled ceramic ladle, cup stained black by the blood. He must have dipped from the bowl and passed the ladle around the circle. Horrible! The blood came from... oh my God!*

She went around the circle and knelt before a tangled net bag she discovered contained a small, desiccated, leather-like body. Forcing the bag open, she examined the child, a girl. Her throat slit.

*That blood! That's the way they took strong poison. They died at about the same time, painlessly or they would have writhed about. They used a poison to enter the next world; to wait for me. Poison mixed with blood!*

Raven moved into the circle, carefully finding her spot between the ancient men. She nodded, and for maybe the hundredth time began to chant. Timbres echoed around the chamber, changing as her many voices mixed. Soon

the walls reverberated with the chanting. In the flickering candlelight, the Ancients began to move with her life. She smiled and felt a sense of anticipation. Her new power over time let her travel back to them..., but she had to overcome the waves of terror which rose from the hypothalamic center of her brain.

Prickly pains in her throat reminded her cave dust was dangerous. She stopped chanting and sat back, silence velvet in her ears. Breathing heavily, she wiped sweat from her forehead, looked with disgust at the greasy smear on her hand, and stood. The candle flickered, almost gone. In the strange pulsation's of the guttering flame she caught a movement to her right. The Garish One's head seemed to have turned toward her. She stared. The head turned back.

It took time to calm herself. She lit another candle and then another. The bright light burned her eyes. The men sat as always, waiting for her to join them. The Garish One's head faced forward, and yet she knew it moved! He had turned toward her. Her mind raced:

*Was it a sign? Does he want me to find him in his time? Is he angry or...? Why would he want me to contact him? In life he was powerful. He had control over others. If I go to him, what will he do to me? How will he react to a woman? A woman not of his kind?*

She lay back and thought about what she must do, aware she felt restricted, strapped down, unable to move; anchored in place by forces they controlled so they could access her mind. The bright candle lights forced her to keep her eyes tightly closed.

*If he thinks I'm a spirit—the Pueblo man did—then he might believe I add to his power. I can't speak to him! Whatever language he spoke died out long ago. I don't know the mores and customs of his people, his times. What can I do?*

C. Descry

Time passed. She didn't know how long she lay there fighting the light. Then she opened her eyes and knew she would go with him.

Dressed in her gauzy cotton tunic she made her way around the seated cadavers until she stood in front of him.

*I hear you! I understand. Your body holds the secret keys I need.*

She carefully removed the pendant from around his neck, rubbing the face until the copper shone and an etched jaguar stood out. She put it around her neck, swishing her hair away as she tied it. Beneath his brown, desiccated hand she found the butt of a short quirt-like thing held to his wrist by a leather thong. She took it from him, careful his hand didn't come off in the process. She raised up, stood back so the candlelight could strike him; studying him.

*His hair! Tied into it is a leather bag—a medicine bag! It's important to him, important as life. As she removed it, long strands of his thick black hair fell from his skull. Dust rose up glittering in the candlelight. It didn't matter. He was in her power now.*

*Okay, I'll come to your time. There have always been goddesses, and witches.*

She carefully tied the leather bag around her waist; under the flowing veils of her tunic where it could dance and tangle in the soft curly hair below her belly.

She found herself on her feet, standing in hot, wet, humid air, the stench of rotting flesh, the twilight of a cave. Only this cave was built of intricately shaped blocks. White, cloudy light filtered in through a narrow lintel doorway. She tried not to take the putrid stench in, but her lungs filled with the fetid air. She gagged, mouth and lungs filled with the smell of death, decaying flesh, the metallic stench of blood. Her eyes had no trouble seeing in the half light. She

knew darkness and closed places. She was less confined here in the gut of this chamber, but the flatulence gagged her; made her want to flee. Something moved above her. Bats hung only inches above her head, from a ceiling covered with mold and growing things which seemed to compete with the clusters of brown furry bodies. Leather-like wings flapped occasionally as the creatures fought for a better grip.

*The Garish One.... He's squatting naked in the center of the cave, skin crusty with drying blood.*

She watched as he took a fat, sobbing, squirming baby from a net bag and held it up by the feet. The baby's cries turned to a hissing gurgle as his obsidian knife slit its throat. Blood pumped out in spurts. He caught most of it in a gourd-like bowl. The blood that spurted onto his hands and arms he rubbed over his bare chest and erect organ.

*The cadent chanting—hypnotic—low, monotonous. It's coming from the six men squatting behind him, bodies and erect organs coated with blood. The other sounds, the whimpering and crying.... Coming from the back of the cave—they have other children in net bags!*

*After he kills them he lays aside the bloodless bodies—my God! Their heads are canted back revealing the deep red gashes which separated them from life. They're girls! All little girls!*

At once she knew where she was and what was happening. In Central American jungles, temples like this had been excavated by her fellow archaeologists. She had studied the reports about places where human sacrifices were performed for reasons too complex to comprehend. There had been speculation after they published their papers, but later she heard the rest of the story in the dark recesses of bars as alcohol loosened their tongues and her peers dared speculate about things they could not prove by digging or analysis....

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*They believed Cannibalistic rituals followed sacrifices. The small bodies provide a feast.*

He saw her then as he turned to receive a bag from his chanting accomplices. He looked directly at her. She grimaced. The net bag held, like the others, a fat, squirming, year old child. He hissed at Raven through his filed, pointed teeth, and began waving his bloody hands, palms out as if to push her away. She fixed a fierce look on her face and pointed the quirt-like thing she had taken from his wrist.

*He's staring without moving, as if in a trance. His face...! Others are wide-eyed with fear and frozen in place, each dressed as some creature. The Garish One is a Jaguar. I expect that in this culture. The others are...? A scorpion, a tarantula, a snake with long fangs! Some kind of large bearish thing, and a centipede maybe...? And the one nearest the doorway is a—a bird: a kind of vulture or raptor with an awful beak. Why? Why are they dressed as these creatures?*

The Garish One screamed at her as if he could break the spell and chase her away. His cry spittle-cracked with stress and fear. She reached for the copper pendant, held it toward him, and pointed her finger at him as she stepped forward. He cowered. The little girl whimpered and squirmed in the sack. Blood dried and peeled on his skin. His organ shrank and tried to worm away. The men, arrayed as creatures, groveled.

*They're afraid! They won't look at me!*

Awkwardly, they spread out on their bellies on the filthy floor, prostrate, moaning, whimpering supplicants before her power. The Jaguar cringed. He held his hands before his eyes. He stole quick looks at her and then, shaking, put his head down between his knees, staring at his loss of power. Dried blood crackled on his skin. Sweat oozing through the cracks like paint curling from the flame of a torch.

*Raven's Chance*

She eased forward and struck him hard with the quirt. He hissed and tried to sink into the floor.

*I'm in control!*

He moved slightly and she yelled "No!" and struck him again.

*They're aware I dominated the Jaguar Priest. They won't give me trouble.*

Raven looked around the room to make sure it had only one door. Then walked slowly to the light. As her eyes adjusted, she viewed a green canopy stretching away below her. She became aware she was on top of a temple, above a jungle. Looking down, she saw steep steps leading to a great paved square or assembly area filled with people. She turned back into the room, slapped the quirt against her hand and yelled out "No!" once again. No need, not one of the priests dared move.

The sound from the babies tore at her like pain. They wailed and bawled their exhausted pleas for survival.

*I have to free them!*

She moved quickly and took the knife from the Jaguar's hand. He tried to look up at her and she flicked the quirt across his face. With the knife, she cut the net binding the child; the next offering. The baby girl lay grossly fat and weak. Too weak to do anything but lie on her back.

*Is it weak from being in the bag without food for hours? It just lays there, feet and arms flailing. What's wrong?*

She went to the back of the room and cut loose five other children. Each lay helpless on the floor. Each seemed to be at least a year old.

*Babies of this age should be able to right themselves and crawl... they're fat beyond any... my God! These baby girls were raised for sacrifice. They've been fed, probably in cages, fattened for slaughter.*

### C. Descry

The sights, sounds, smells were blurring her senses. She calmed herself and took a few moments to let her thoughts sift and file; to lecture herself; to attempt to be sane.

*I'm interpreting, reacting, through my cultural biases. What is horrible to me, is the norm in this culture—that's the way it is! I can't judge them by my cultural predilections. The fat babies lie on their backs slowly kicking the air.... They were raised for this purpose, just as pigs, goats or monkeys are raised in pens, fattened and then slaughtered. I've got to set them free! ...Who would take them? Who would believe they have the right to live?*

*And the priests? They mirror their culture which is true to the ways of Nature. They honor and emulate the things around them, creatures with power and strong defenses. Things that sting, bite or poison to survive. That's what's important! They survive because they control weaker things. These people observe nature and follow natural laws. They don't alter or try to change nature.*

*Easy, Raven. I know there are fewer veneers—layers of refinement—like those built up in our own culture and, except in wartime or cases of insanity, divert man's relationship with nature to other practices. Adjust! Accept it! Here, things live, suffer and die by natural law. To these priests... of course! They represent their God-given conditions of life. The weak providing for the strong.*

She shuddered. She had to grasp their ways of looking at life or fail as an anthropologist. Sacrificially butchering babies raised for that purpose was wrong only because she came from a culture that abhorred and forbid it. In nature, there is no differentiation.

*This harvest is no different from raising and harvesting any animals for food. The merit of this culture is they see religious significance in the act, probably because they're killing their own—or are they? Are these babies from their people or were they captured from some other tribe? A group considered sub-human?*

Realization came, her body jerked.

*My God! This culture is basically the same as our own!*

*Blood has magical properties. Covering one's self with blood is a way of showing humbleness and submission. I read that in... a paper. The anthropologist sought understanding of a practice that made him cringe. He said we must learn to understand the significance of blood rituals. I must understand! The blood... try to..., but...? Sexual excitement? The Jaguar Priest is killing babies, smearing himself with their blood and...?*

Her mind closed as if wilted shut by something so offensive that....

*My problem! My hangup! I must see without filters from stupid limitations! His erect organ...? It can't mean, obviously doesn't mean to him...? Could it be he's honoring death with his power to create life? Is he humble, good? Is he subjugating himself to a greater force, enduring the blood, committing the act, and honoring the sacrifice with the message of life?*

*Everything about him screams Evil, but I've got to see him as a good priest trying to honor Gods who called upon him to act beyond the limitations of natural law; Spiritually!*

He dared look at her again. She nodded and motioned for him to get up. Shaking, he obeyed. She approached him and, as he cringed away, removed the copper pendant



C. Descry

from around her neck and tied it around his. His eyelids flickered with fear and defensive mechanisms. His crusty hand came up and held the pendant, felt it, tracing the etched Jaguar with his fingernail. She took his crusty hand and tied the quirt around his wrist. Knot in place, she stepped back. He dropped slowly to his knees and began chanting. The other priests had seen. They sat erect now, staring, shriveled organs testimony to their impotence. She opened the lacy folds of her tunic and let him see his sacred medicine bag tangled in her hair; standing out like an organ.

*Damn me! I've broken the first rule an anthropologist must follow. I've interfered, changed things in this culture I only wanted to observe and learn from.*

The child at her feet squirmed and cried. Thoughts flooded her mind.

*I can save the girls from death. I should, I must..., but...? What then? Will they become slaves? Are they already too damaged by lack of nurturing and stimulus to develop as normal girls? Do I have the power to save them?*

She had already done too much. There was only one course open to her and that to get things back as they were when she interrupted. Against her cultural instincts, her heart-tearing reactions, the messages from her time and her God, she motioned for the Jaguar Priest to continue. He stared at her center; her breasts and vulva. He understood.

Praying loudly, he tried to get back into the religious trance necessary for his duties. She backed away, unwilling to be witness to the butchering or the events that would follow; needing to break free. He couldn't arouse himself, then closing his eyes and working his hand, he regained his bloody state of grace. Then he reached for the next girl to sacrifice.

*I must look at the view from the temple. The people gathered below. We think of them as blood-thirsty savages.*

She stood in the shadows and looked out over them, studied them. They weren't a hysterical mob crying for human flesh. They were sitting and standing patiently like a group used to hours of waiting for the priests to do what needed to be done. None were yelling or threatening or worked into a religious fervor. Some faces turned her way from time to time, but the majority of the people seemed to be drowsing or visiting as they waited. The sun beat down on the crowd. It wasn't pleasant being there. She thought of crowds she had seen waiting in St. Peters Square for a Papal happening.

*People do what the priests expect them to do. The Gods direct the priests, so what is done is necessary, beyond question. They're held together as a people by beliefs and staged events. In time, economic and political problems will destroy the cement which holds them together. Well, despite all our so-called progress, the same forces are still with us. We will destroy our world as they did theirs.*

*He's watching me, studying me. He's confused, hurt! He's looking at me like...? My God! He's focused upon his medicine bag. I took it from his hair, but he was much older then. I have his power. I have him! What else do I want here?*

She shuddered and felt dizzy.

The cave floor was cold. Her back ached, her buns were numb. She had returned hours before and slept. She didn't wonder if it were day or night. In the cave they were free of those cycles; time an equidistant point. It never passed, it went around them.

She lit a candle and waited for its fire to grow. In the dim light, she smiled across at the Garish One; the Jaguar

*C. Descry*

Priest. He needed help. Some of his long black hair had pulled away from his skull and was laying on his shoulder. She got up, went over to him and fixed it back in place. The pendant he wore shone with the light, it's Jaguar etching freed of grime. She had taken it from him and polished it before she gave it back to him in his own time. She knew from that sign she hadn't been dreaming. She untied the thong about her waist and holding the tunic open, spread her legs as she pulled the medicine bag free.

“Here! Just remember I have power over you too!”

## Chapter 4

*Interesting, she thought. I'm not like them, never was.*

**SHE WAS ALWAYS COLD** when she returned to the cave. The zipper stuck. She fought to free its bite on the nylon bag. Freed, she zipped it up over her head. She snuggled down into the bag, getting warm; drifting back along the course of her life to salve her soul with safety and warmth; remembering.

She came into the bedroom before dawn, as she often did, shucked off the big T shirt she slept in, and crawled naked between them, snuggling beneath the covers into the big four-poster bed. She eased her way until bare breasts pressed against her back and the hard back of her mother pressed against the length of her lithe body. They gave out clucking sounds, nurturing little breaths of love and comfort. A hand gently caressed and explored the length of her body until she slept.

In time she lay drowsing on the hard cave floor, curled on her side, bladder demanding relief, enough to wake her, but not urgently enough to force her out into the cold. She pretended she was still sandwiched between love. Then her body's need to relieve the pressure brought unpleasant memories and thoughts—the seemingly eternal processing and reprocessing of the unchangeable past. Thoughts of Wyoming, a place she never lived or visited for more than the time it took to pass through. The Wyoming of her Grandmother, the suffragette, the leader of women, the maker of women's rights! Wyoming, where suffrage began in 1869. The place where, in 1920, her grandmother had gone to celebrate the ratification of the nineteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution. She knew Wyoming

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and those times, but only from the stories and the pictures she studied and studied as she tried to understand.

Her grandmother, standing tall in the kitchen of their house, a visitor who made her mother sad and mad. A force, not a woman. Incapable of love, but loved, as one must.

Tall, angular, smelling of a peculiar powder-like deposit—maybe perfumes layered over body odors; the leather-taste smell of old shoes with curled and cracked soles; menthol in the V of her neck, used to aid her throat she said, and; sometimes the strong essence of tea or rather tannin, burnished on her teeth and tongue and even her face where she placed tea bags to ease the dark swelling pockets under her eyes—that formed the veneers of her. Her hair seemed forever set in place, tied tight, hard, back into a round bun which hadn't been opened since she left Wyoming and came to New York, six months before. If anything lived in there, it had been skewered through by five pearl topped hat pins, two and two and one in from the top.

Remembered like her grandmother's lap desk, passed down through time and finally brittle, powdery and unable to respond to love or care or memories—nor glue or even rubber bands to hold it together. A memento of her life, gone now, leaving only the fifteen red bookmarks, carefully stitched-up along the sides like her life, fading and yet able to do what they existed to do, mark ideas which formed rungs in the ladder of experiences she collected and then provided. So her daughter, and her granddaughter, would not have to start at the beginning; could stand on her shoulders.

A gangly lady with a straight back and large hands, long thin fingers which had never touched her since her punishment as a child. Hands raised to shield women, her fellows, from the cruelty of men. A woman who had inside, used but once, ovaries, a womb, and chemistry she had

dammed and cauterized with fear and testosterone. With teeth gritted, she allowed a man's gross invasion, felt the painful, dry friction and tearing of the attack on her tender tissue, her dignity. But she prayed she had accomplished what she willed; to capture the strange stuff of life within her womb.

And so her mother was born, a virgin from an almost virgin birth, a miracle, and pain which felt better than the placement. She had what she wanted, kept her dignity and a girl. She had what she wanted, no man.

And there were no men in her mother's life—except to repeat the pattern—she said. She bore the insult and the indignity; the penetration and the strange smells of lust... his at least. She defended herself well, never hesitating to reiterate she had her eyes tightly closed and lay there, unfeeling, her dearest friend squeezing her hand and wiping her brow, while the donor she had so carefully selected for his genes came inside her. "Your father, dear! You would not have liked him, I think. Besides, in your time, now, the gynecologist can put it inside you. You don't have to go through what my mother and I did."

She had to pee bad, had to get out of the warm sleeping bag and, hugging a blanket about her shoulders and holding it out in front of her to shield her release from prying eyes, crouched over the cold metal. The connection broken.

*Interesting*, she thought. *I'm not like them, never was.*

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## Chapter 5

*He came to her, his lips massaging his smile and a tip of tongue: a promise of secrets he shared, of delights she alone among women knew.*

***I NEED TO WRITE IT DOWN before I forget.***

“Listen my friend Mister Garish One, Mister Jaguar Priest, all of you! You’ll need to help me remember! I was... there was so much happening. You! I didn’t understand about life back then. We take the blood of Christ, but—symbolically. The drinking of it comes from a past, like yours. I understand now, thanks. You served and controlled the people, and if you failed, they probably killed you. You had to be right, do it right or you would die. We don’t have a way of dealing with our failed priests... probably tells you something about the power of religion over time. And with your power and dedication, your focus and ability to stay distant, you sit here so smug as if you think you’re a part of this present. Like him for example, across from you. His face is longer, older, wrinkled, but I can see others I know in it...”

*Damn, he really reminds me of that SOB Stewart!*

She sat back hard against the wall, her nylon sleeping bag gasping out air as it compressed. “Whew!” she announced to the chamber, a way of letting them know she needed a few moments to get her thoughts straight. She closed her eyes to clear her mind and suddenly found herself standing in another time, one remembered, a place she went back to often in her attempts to understand—no, to change things or at least find a way to change *him*.

She saw him cutting across the grass, briefcase in hand, dark hair combed back and loosely in place. His khaki, polished cotton slacks, button-down oxford cloth

shirt, V-neck sweater slung back over his shoulder, held by one crooked finger, and penny loafers making his boyish statement as he walked toward her. He wasn't handsome. He was of slight build and very plain until he spawned charisma and aimed it at you. He came to her, his lips massaging his smile and a tip of tongue: a promise of secrets he shared, of delights she alone among women knew.

*The SOB! He had my papers in his briefcase, even then. My work, my research! He stole my ideas, my creativity and used it to impress the powers that pull people up into positions of power.*

She sobbed, breaking the silence of the cave; assuring herself that she grieved.

"Stewart," she yelled at the ceiling of the cave. "May you rot in the hell of your making! You abuse life itself! You have eaten the quality out of every soul you've touched and it passed through you with no effect, you shit!"

*He grew up as a user, a shark! His mother... damn her! He had been a sickly kid, small for his age, always ailing and passive, except he wasn't! He was healthy and strong. He played frail for attention. He knew, he always knew, he could manipulate people and use their gifts as a thief takes tools to steal more. He had a powerful, devil-given gift, charisma. God knows why he had It—was born with it. He always had charisma!*

"I'm talking about my old boyfriend, my one true love. Don't laugh! I was twenty-four, a brilliant Ph.D. candidate, totally innocent, open, with no experience with men. The hot house creation of my grandmother's and mother's world, an academic leader and breakout scholar, but emotionally as open as a four-year-old, open and loving if you know what that means. He was the Great Professor, my advisor, my teacher—In love, and yes, life, I guess,



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what proved to be the ugly parts of life and love. Want to know more? If I tell you maybe I'll get it out and be over it!"

*Why should I tell them? I came up in a home without men, with a hatred and fear of men. I was coddled and nurtured by strong women who fought constantly, thrusting words like sugar coated jagged pieces of glass they used to cut away at each other. When little, I was warm and cuddly and untainted. I believed everything I experienced was as it should be; what I had to learn.*

Suddenly she laughed so hard her side hurt, her eyes watered. Her laughter reverberated around the cave, stirring the essence of time. "Listen to this! When I found them in bed, feet to head, they said their feet were freezing, massage is pleasing! Honest! And I accepted that, why not? Until, when I was eleven, one of her friends came into my room and tried it on me. Then I knew what I hadn't even suspected, but it made me sad because I had no feeling like that for her friend or any woman, though I loved women. You have to understand, I didn't have contact... I mean I wasn't around men in those days, but I still didn't desire women, though I loved them as friends, but then, when I knew for sure what they wanted, I kept myself distant from the girls I knew—all of them!"

Girls' schools. Strict supervision. Implanted parental tapes played through overpowered amps reverberating through her glands when her natural feelings made her itch or twitch, swell or cream. The messages were bombs carefully placed by female terrorists who knew how to keep her safe from the hairy barbarians at her gate. Focus, studies, competition, and then, an acceptable profession for the product of their decidedly superior class: Anthropology.

Now Raven knew those misdirected creatures of Sappho hung the curtains which shielded her from life; placed her on an island within the world like Lesbos must

have been. She had been rescued. She could thank Stewart for that!

At twenty-four, her research and editing skills exceeded those who had fought their way through the corridors of ivy covered halls for twenty years and longer, often as long as their academic lives bored the world. But her experience with herself, her own body and with men and the workings of their bodies, was the Rub' Al Khali of her soul. At the start of her twenty-fourth year she had never learned to pleasure herself, never held an engorged member of the other sex; never sweat the nectar of love.

A mediocre student, he didn't apply himself because his charisma oozed a snake charmer's music. He could wriggle through the pages of an instructor's grade book and place his eggs in the little boxes where A's and B's reported excellence. He worked at milking human kindness out of others, leaving a gift which left them in some heartfelt way obligated to him. He was a boy playing, then a man playing; a playboy when he needed to advance his game. A game he didn't play to win or lose or even to have fun. His game? Power over others and the love of power used to destroy what he stole from them—created, and then destroyed—just to prove he could.

She learned, over time, when he still needed her to do his work and further his cause, that his anger stemmed from his mother's. Inculcated in his gut with her milk. Ground into his psyche like pepper in raw meat. They had been wealthy: miners and processors, iron and lead. Nickel and limestone, before the crash. Before they tumbled down and became "little millionaires," as they professed to be, but actually, less than half that in reality.

Their most Catholic presence had been bought with the fruits of ownership of minerals and men. His mother was Somebody! Someone of worth because of exploitation, not her own accomplishments. An easy-way slut who grew up in a middle class neighborhood in Chicago. She sold a little

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patch of hair and two shapeless, immature, uninteresting glands, her own special charisma. As she reached twenty, the skeleton of stately good looks and knowledge of sex connected her with an unsuspecting industrialist, a weakling who couldn't hold on. The bastard who lost it all! Her hope then turned on her first born son. His older brother was bright; the passive-adaptive one. The business was salvaged, stabilized, but generated less than one fifth of its previous income. She ignored Stewart, enjoyed his games for a while, and then shrugged him off for what he wasn't. After college, he was on his own.

If it surprised her when he was graduated from a top Ivy league school, she didn't let on. She knew what he was and how he did things. He lived off others, playing with different careers until his ego found one with status and easy access. Anthropology became his game. It wasn't a science. It didn't belong to the social sciences. It existed as a discipline lost out there in the great collection of misinformation called humanities. It required a facade of academic dedication and exactness, but in actuality became a profession which collected stuff and wondered what it equaled. He saw it as a perfect scam, a place where he could rise to the top... if only he could find.... Then, after years perfecting his leeching techniques and climbing over those who had something to offer, he met the most brilliant student the university ever enrolled. A student, *the student* who could further his career. Soon he began his dance and the pricking of her mind and body. It was so easy, and with her work he could rise to the top of the academic pyramid and start tearing it down.

He knew something else he used as a means to change her footing and tie her to him forever. He smiled. A girl never forgot her first love, the first man to lead her to orgasm and enter her. He had the proof of that, as they wouldn't let him go, even when married, after years of separation from him, they would come back if he called. He

used them to raise money for his causes or to further his career. They gasped and cried in his arms, reunited with the one and only one who had ever...? She was to be one of these.

She sat in his classroom, unbelievable in her innocence. He walked with her across the campus and sat her on the bench in front of Old Main. There, on the hard, butt pinching cast iron, beneath the twining ivy, he courted her with his magic potion, the words he had learned hooked others to his cause.

You! All of my life I've been working to create what is probably the most significant development in our field. I've struggled and fought and worked until I'm exhausted; ready to give up and go somewhere else and start over. Until now, what I have dreamed was more than impossible, it was defeating me, breaking me—and now you! You are the missing ingredient, the special part that will make it come together. With my direction, my help and guidance—I'm very patient and nurturing, you'll see!

I know this seems beyond you, but trust me, work with me—you will be the one! You will make it happen. We will change it all." He paused holding his breath to exude his charisma. "Will you do this for our profession? I will make you great!

The interesting thing is the lie lay on truth. She was the one he needed. She had the brains and the editing skills which would make him into the academic scholar of the century. He took her hand and placed it over her heart, holding it there, his hand on top, feeling her heart beat through it. He played the role of the weak and damaged, dejected and unloved boy, but now the grown boy in the professor. He looked up into her eyes, did a quick lightning jerk of his head, sat back wide-eyed, amazed.

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My God you're beautiful! I've been so fascinated with your work I didn't take time to see you. Thank you!

Her mouth fell open as she gazed at his face, as naked and exposed as any woman can ever be, bared before the mobs, spread and open as the breached palaces of her imagination. She didn't understand rape—mental or physical—she felt unsullied.

## Chapter 6

*For the first time in her life she knew the clenching grasp;  
the immobility of fear.*

*I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND THEM! Where are the sites? If these men were meeting here in the cave, who lived out there? Sinagua? Pai? Patayan? Maybe outlier camps from the south, Hohokam? From the east, Chacoan? Damn! I have to know. I've searched the entire canyon for the sites, where are they? What am I doing wrong?*

She smiled, a broad, full smile which should have lit the darkness, and turned to face the Pai-faced man.

"You said you would be my teacher. Well, let me rest a bit longer and do some work. Then prepare yourself! I'm going back to join you and find the answers to my questions."

She turned back to her journals just as a cold wind hit her. She felt dizzy, confused.... The candle went out. She slumped back against the wall.

*This is—wild! Like a tangle of untamed plant creatures who have fought each other to a standstill. They're waiting.... Waiting for fire or...?*

She heard noises, the crashing and snapping of broken vegetation, the voices of people, women out gathering firewood.

*Only fire or man can clear the thousand years of tangle in this canyon. Man! Eating away, gathering, changing the face of the land.*

*I know this place! The arch over there—there's smoke coming out of the pocket behind the arch. It's*

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*before the rocks fell, before the cave formed, trapping my friends.*

*Careful Raven! Don't screw-up this time girl! Hide, observe, avoid contact. This is it! I'm the one, the only one who will ever know for sure... he brought me here to observe, not to interfere. They're going away.... This isn't their camp or I would have found it. Someone's in the pocket in back of the arch. I bet it's him.*

She moved carefully through the thick tangle until she found a trail. The brush tore at her flesh, seemed to grab her feet, abrading exposed ankles; manacles of rough, bark-covered fiber.

*Ouch! Damn! I can't... great! Careful Raven, they may use the trail. No, no sign. But... easy, careful, they may be watching. Oh, wow! It's him! Not younger, I must be close to the time... colors in the woven belt are the same one he's wearing now. He's alone, praying or something—no, eating! Should I...? No! It's a secret place where he watches for the Vesper in the evening sky and sits through time studying the painting of the moon. It's not too long before they came and joined him.*

*I've got to follow the others—find the camp. Then I'll know who his people are. I need to climb so I can see over this shit. Easy, careful of the loose rock, keep low! Oh wow, that's a main trail and it goes back over the ridge. I can get closer if I...? Take it easy, don't get caught. If I climb into that deep split in the sandstone, good! Great climbing gal, should have been a mountain goat.*

*There they are! The way the vegetation has been eaten back, this is a big camp, used a lot. There's lots of smoke hanging in the hot air. A half dozen cooking fires. Maybe a mile from the canyon I searched*

*until.... Stupid! I should have known! Dumb! Of course! That's why I missed their main camp—or is it a village? Hunting, gathering...? We know so little. Probably a camp, but the cave? Is it a special place? Used all year? Seasonally? He's got to be Pai, early. Yavapai? or, Patayan? No, probably earlier. Is it too early for Apache? Could be early Apache, can't be Navajo for another four hundred years. Hopi out gathering? Hohokam up from the south? Think earlier! Has to be much earlier, before 1000.... Priest from Chaco is with them.... Has to be before 1180—maybe not Pai at all. Ute? Shoshone base? It's possible.*

*They're all around. Kids too. Gathering. Everybody's gathering... not just food and wood. She's carrying long sticks for... of course! The Wikiups! Stick for frames to cover with mats and brush, like beavers down there in their round houses. What's that noise? Oh my God! Oh no!*

She thought she had hidden in the crack between large boulders; behind the ancient alligator bark juniper. They stood on the round surfaces of the boulders staring down at her. Kids, young boys with fire sharpened spears, their black points aimed at her.

*My God, kids! If only I had worn my white tunic...! No, they needn't know who I am, I've got to get away.*

But there was no way out, she was trapped. They were calling and a chain of excited yells linked across to the encampment until everyone was bound. Soon two dozen people looked down at her, jabbering, guttural clacking which seemed to come from the back of their throats. She had never heard a language which resembled it. They were motioning for her to come out of the crevice. A man on the other side of the crack prodded her out of the hiding place. She backed out ahead of his spear, this weapon unlike the kid's sticks, tipped with a blade of chert or flint.



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They herded her to the camp, a strange and scary witch, held in a porcupine perimeter of spears.

*The boys are being brave, they stare when I smile. I can communicate...! Now what? They're turning me over to the women... although there is nothing womanly about them! They use their hair, cut it off as it grows out. Chopped, would be a better way to describe the damage. I should be afraid of the men, but these creatures are disgusting, angry, hardened meanness; filthy, sexless creatures—hags—that...?*

For the first time in her life she knew the clenching grasp; the immobility of fear. She fought paralysis and lost control as her systems froze; were rendered inoperative by the scene. They surrounded her, squealing not laughing, screeching obscenities of sound at her, pointing and enjoying her loss of control as the wet spread from the crotch of her jeans. A hand from behind grabbed the collar of her shirt and tried to tear it from her body. The fabric held, the collar choked her and then buttons began to pop off. A dirty, crazed old hag made a grab for her but missed as the others jerked her backwards by the shirt. She remained unable to fight, unable to get her arms free of the sleeves and their grips. The murder of hags crowed at her, closing in to fight for pieces of shirt cotton, and to rip at her jeans with dirty fingers, chipped and broken nails, and then what felt like teeth.

They stripped her, letting her slam back on her butt as they tugged the tubes of faded blue from her legs, dragging her along on her bare bottom. She felt the pain screaming up her spine. Its fire seemed to release the paralysis. She tried to hold the jeans on, but they slapped and struck her hands until she let go. Then, naked, they held her down while several of the vicious hags examined her body, twisted and pulled at her breasts and then forced her apart to examine her sex and cruelly force a stick into....

*My God! They want to stop me from peeing again!*

A dirty, chopped-headed creature bit the soft flesh on the inside of her elbow, and again, the top of her hand, sucking her blood. Another forced her mouth open and held it open with the handle of a knife jammed between her teeth. They probed for her tongue, pulled it out and clamped it. Her cries were gurgles of sound which made them laugh and chatter.

Bright, blinding light flashed through her eyelids, then one of them—something—hit her hard; slammed into her head with such force her neck muscles bunched and cramped. Pain shot through her brain like lightning flashes of brilliance; licking flame. It shot through the length of her body triggering every muscle. She convulsed hard, again and again. The light turned red, her silent scream.

She drifted there, out, stretched flat out, still held down by creatures from hell. Her eyes hurt. Pressure built in her eyeballs and she knew they would explode. She let her lids come open a crack, not wanting them to know she was conscious; wanting to know what the women had done to her.

He leaned over her, talking softly in the strange clicking tongue. The pressure eased and she was able to breathe.

*He stopped them. Oh thank God, he stopped them from...? What did they do to me? I'm so cold. I hurt, please let me die. My God, what's happening? I'm spinning....*

Her body was always cold and stiff when she came back to the cave. She ached from the strenuous work of hiking trails, bashing through brush covered hillsides, navigating rock falls. Her bare skin had been punctured by the hooks of catclaw plants. Her wrists chafed and sore, as if ropes had worn into them. Her leg muscles quivered with exhaustion and the cold, her ankles sore from the grasping tendril stalks of woody plants.

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*Next time I go to town I have to find high boots.*

She held her head and pressed the palms of her hands into her temples, relieving the paired headaches that hid behind the soft flesh. The sticky sweat and grease on her skin made her feel dirty. She wiped her hands and pressed her temples again until the pain eased.

*The climbing and exertion made me sweat: Stink!*

She raised her arm and bore the acrid indignity. Her mouth was dry. She ran her tongue over her lips and tried to melt the fish-scale dryness with saliva. Her tongue felt thick and sore. Her mind began clearing....

*Sunstroke! I overdid it out there. I'm not in as good shape as I—I need to go out more... keep in shape.*

*They know I'm back and yet they're quiet. How long was I... the sunstroke! I can't remember! My day pack? My notes? Oh, I remember! Gad! The encampment, the women—oh my God! No wonder they're silent.*

## Chapter 7

*The past—fields of life energy—are resonating in the world forever.*

**CUDDLE. CURL-UP AGAINST WARM FLESH**, against my back, against my breasts, front or back as the adventures left us, so warm and safe like when I was little. Innocence! Exploring everything in my world, never suspecting the darker side. Hugging! Fuzzy teddy bears, Raggedy Anne dolls, soft blankets. Nuzzling! His breasts, the nape of his neck, his ear, the softness of his sex. It's so warm and comfortable in my bag. I wish I could hear the birds singing. I could hear them every morning as false dawn played across the eastern sky. Not here, not in this cave. It's so quiet.

Quiet...? My time to think and not be distracted. My God, I was in danger! His people camp along the sun side of the long, wide, dune-like ridge of exposed rocks and gravel-surfaced earth. Too severe for agriculture. Before they came, the ridge hosted a sparse but thriving forest of stunted junipers and an occasional pinon standing tall and green. It's been denuded by their consumption of wood—for tools, for fires, for shelter. Maybe even the insatiable mouths of kilns to fire their plain clay vessels. The ridge is bare of vegetation. That explains why they were in the canyon gathering wood. It means they use the place—have used it for a long time, but without agriculture they have to be nomadic, hunters and gatherers..., but the cotton? They traded, or perhaps their permanent fields are down below where the rich red soil lies in the delta bottoms of drainages, out on the

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*flats near the water. That has to be it! That explains the cloth, the rough look of the camp and...?*

*They're up here for a reason... the cave? What time of year? Of course, the summer solstice! So does that explain why the others came? Why the gathering of men. What is so special about the sandstone arch? Why did it collapse, trapping them forever in the pocket which became the cave?*

*I should go outside and map the arch as it was then, but I can see it. It faced east-southeast and the base of the arch was in the sandstone reef, toward the west. Of course! The evening star. The stone connected in two ways to the solstice. The arch centered the pole star, Polaris, while pointing to the place on the horizon where the bright star-like planet would set. This is a magical place of special energy. Wise men traveled here to see the wonder for themselves.*

*Reality check Raven, my girl! How do I know this? I never thought of it before. You're the academic. Gal, where's science in this? How do I know what I'm experiencing in time is real? So much of what I'm learning—experiencing first hand—cannot stand the scientific test. Where's the empirical evidence? Where's the proof? You're fooling yourself, Gal, if you think anyone would ever buy this shit. But.... Of course! There are other levels here—things happening here—which those who don't have open minds reject without consideration.*

*What had Karen Black talked about all the time? She thought that as a volunteer on my site, she had to entertain us with her stories about metaphysics and her work as a researcher at Duke University in the Golden Age of psychic research. What a dynamo! She got me questioning.... But is she right! I tried to keep*

*an open mind, read the stuff she foisted on me and now...? Of course!*

*Karen is right! Henri Bergson is right! Memories are not stored in physical form in the brain, they exist in energy fields that surround us. It proves Rupert Sheldrake's concept of the past—fields of life energy—resonating in the world forever. I'm learning to tune-in to those fields, I must be...! thank you Karen Black! But they would laugh at me. You need solid evidence, Raven! Of course silly! You can plant something in the past to prove I was there!*

The idea argued itself in her head until she was certain she should do it. There were other messages, warning, morés of her profession which forbade interference in other cultures, forbade contamination, and they were right. But....

*...But not in my time, my own culture!*

A tingle of energy ran her spine. She could plant her proof in her own time. Do something that would....

*Stewart! I can go back and get that bastard! Plant something that... of course Raven! You can document my sources of information and get him at the same time!*

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## Chapter 8

*Beautiful girl, you can do nothing wrong. Go with your feelings, your needs. It's the most natural and healthy thing you can do. Do what ever you want.*

**THINK THIS THROUGH, RAVEN DEAR.** *What can you plant which will discredit him—expose his theft and his nature? A record of the work he stole? Not just mine, everybody's? Yes!*

*The Professor! The man with a permit to steal from his students. We did his work. We provided the ideas and the connections, but admit it, girl, it wasn't one way. You received so much from him. Oh, I know he didn't feel the same way, but you did, admit that! It changed my life. Admit it girl, you could never have experienced life if he hadn't used his power over you to reach our core.*

*He did, didn't he! He was so clever, so patient, so practiced. He prepared me as a gigolo serves his mark. His carefully chosen words, the 'hurt puppy' look, the accidental touch. He built me up until I stood exposed, and then made his move to take me apart....*

*She closed her eyes, shuddered with excitement, and was with him again. Raven watched as he began to control her; rape his intent! She was a victim of her need.*

*Pay attention Raven, you can help me separate these parts in my mind. To get even, it has to be through something beyond this? I'll know!*

He bent over her, one hand on her left shoulder, lightly, head near hers, reaching forward around her to point at a line in the work she edited. She felt his breath in her ear as he read from the work. The blood pulsed through her,

prickling her cheeks and the back of her neck. He put pressure on her left shoulder when suddenly the pencil dropped from his fingers, rolled down the book and fell into her lap. Without thinking, she reached for it, but not before he began his search. She felt his hand press against her tummy and then the point of her breast as he drew it back. He jumped back, apologizing as if he would be accused of molesting a child. She was confused, hurt; hooked.

I'm sorry, I didn't think! I know you don't like that sort of thing, but believe me it wasn't my intent to—to touch you..., especially there. I'm very sorry. Will you forgive me?

*What did he say? Things were happening inside her that.... You don't like that sort of thing. Is that what he said?*

Her stomach ached. She felt the heavy weight of loss. It took seconds; long, stretched out clicks of time for her to regain control.

"Do you think something's wrong with me? What did I do? What's wrong?"

He stood close beside her and smiled down at her upturned face.

I'm.... You don't understand, I'm your teacher. Teachers don't touch students there, even by accident.

"But you acted like, you said.... 'I know I haven't had any experience.' I mean, but do you think I'm not, well, I mean not normal? A woman?" She broke away from his eyes and looked down, trying to focus on their work. Her body tightened. She braced for his answer.

I don't know if you're normal or not.... I mean, I just think you communicate a..., well, an *all business* attitude. Nothing wrong. Nothing bad. You are all business and I like that.



C. Descry

"You mean you can't tell I..., that I," she almost said, "am a virgin," but knew he would be shocked, "I've never spent much time with men?"

Honestly? He came around the desk and stood before her. A woman as beautiful and bright as you are? I assume you have men you use at your pleasure. Don't you?

She shook her head from side to side, afraid to raise her eyes to meet his.

"Professor, I wasn't raised that way. I mean around men. They sent me to a girls school, you know. I never had the chance to be around men. I don't know much about men."

And women?

She knew what he suspected. The memory of her mother's friend who slipped head first into her bed and tried to lick her, flashed through her mind. It was very important he understand. "No! I have no interest in women! Really! Honest, I am not that way!"

He smiled. A smile she interpreted as an outflow of his compassion and understanding.

What I can tell is you seem to have something pent-up and dangerous inside you. Haven't you ever had a boyfriend?

She shook her head. "No, I haven't, not like that."

I guess the answer to your question is 'yes,' I can tell you have... well, let's call them needs. I guess the real answer lies in *why*? Why haven't you found someone you trust and become a woman? He stepped back, raised his sleeve and looked at his watch. Sorry, but I have to get to the faculty meeting. Finish the part about the James River Floodplain and then leave it on my desk. Okay? Sorry, I don't want to leave you, but I'm late and I'm in enough trouble as you know.

It was so easy, everything going according to plan. He had controlled his reaction when she confirmed his suspicion. She had never been touched. Amazing! That complicated things even if it would bind her to him. He wasn't sure he had the emotional stamina to take the time it would take. Why were things always so complicated? A girl like that! But he had already decided she was worth it. She got into his work in a way no one had ever been. In two years, even before she was graduated, he would have edited the entire series. He laughed as he walked across campus. Leaving her hot and hanging had been the perfect move.

*You see Raven, he stalked me. What he did, he did not as a lover, but a thief. I don't think he got much out of sex, except maybe the feeling of being in control—maybe like steering me around with his hands, mouth and genitals. It doesn't matter, really. I got what I needed, although we know I gave too much.*

*That was the longest night of my life, Raven. I couldn't sleep. I got up and walked around like they say you should, but my mind boiled with thoughts, remembering the way his hand rolled the pencil up against my stomach. The electrical pulse as his arm rubbed against the point of my breast. I touched myself then, for the first time when I was hot. The pleasure came so great I sat up in bed and made my decision. Then I couldn't sleep because.... Well, I had to make it so.*

He said his schedule was jammed. He asked her if she would mind if they didn't meet that day.

I'm scheduled every hour. I'll have to take the work home.

She started to offer to come over and help....

*Too obvious.*

"Professor, if you need my help, just ask."

C. Descry

Really? Would you mind picking up some Chinese or something? I'll reimburse you. Which of course he never did.

That's how it was done, she thought she had pried into his life.

He was laughing at her. How easy it was!

*He wants to work. I can't stand it when he's this close. There's lint on his sweater, I'll brush it off. He's looking at me... touch his cheek! He's turning toward me, putting his hands on my temples, over my ears, pulling me to him, I—I feel him against me..., his lips, my God I'm hot! It feels so...! Makes me weak!*

"I'm looking for a teacher. You'll have to start from scratch, I don't know how."

There's no hurry. Come where we can be comfortable. I'll teach you about making love to a man; about being a woman.

*He's undressing me, slowly, maddening me. I can't help him, I feel as if my body is caught in a magnetic field. He's reaching around, having trouble with the bra's hook. There, oh God! He's moving around me, cupping my breasts in his hands from behind. Gently pinching; pressing in the soft areolas with his fingers; kissing my neck; breathing in my ear; biting the upper part of my ear.*

*His hand's sliding down, too slowly, forcing under the elastic, down...! He's running his fingers in my hair, following down, touching me, spreading me... I can't... oh! How does he know? I didn't know until last night.*

*Raven, are you watching? Do you understand what I felt? Does it explain why I was so blind? Why I let him steal my ideas, my work, my time? I knew, Raven, I knew! I'm not stupid. It was a trade, only I thought I was playing for keeps.*

Raven's Chance

*I wanted to lie back on the bed and turn myself over to him completely. I wanted him to examine me, stare at me, see the hidden parts he unwrapped, but he wouldn't let me. He sat me on the edge of the bed while he stood in front of me. Then he took my hands, rubbing them across the bulge, holding them, directing them to his buckle. Then he let me go, just standing there in front of me letting me do the rest. I thought, be aware girl, look, don't forget! This is a man, a fully developed erect male... all the mysteries you have wondered about as you stared at bulges and dreamed. He's letting me explore the wonders, the shaft, the softness, the exotic hanging treasures of his body. I'm tingling all over, shaking. Will he mind if I— It's not as hard like I thought it would be! I've got to! My first kiss! My God, what will he think of me?*

*He sensed my fear.*

Beautiful girl, you can do nothing wrong. Go with your feelings, your needs. It's the most natural and healthy thing you can do. Do whatever you want.

*I remember the message and the amazement I felt. I could...! I moved my hand with the loose skin, back and forth, up and down, and he tensed. I thought I hurt him. He pulled away and quickly stepped out of his fallen slacks. He slipped his shirt off, then pushed me back on the bed until he could kiss my breasts and work his way down, slowly, kissing, licking, fondling.... I heard my cries as if they came from you.*

C. Descry

## Chapter 9

*I'll need to defend the sources of my information—  
more than the information itself. Nothing I write will  
be accepted if I don't document it.*

### **WHAT IS IT? THEY'RE ANGRY, but why?**

She kept her head buried in the warm cocoon of the bag, angry herself, because they interrupted her dream. She felt so relaxed, so comfortable, like falling asleep in front of the fireplace, cuddling with her giant panda, surrounded by Christmas presents; the turpentine aroma of the tree. She loved that feeling, that time of her life when things were so sweet, so real. The big old house her grandmother inherited from a friend and passed down to them. The old Persian rugs with intricate designs. She tried to follow the lines and got lost in the mazes, but not before discovering ships and maps and fabulous places which were to be forever woven into her life.

"I hear you. I'm getting up. Why didn't you warn me about the women? None of you cared enough to protect me. If I am to tell your times, you have to protect me. I *am* The Continuation, but not if you get me killed. Tell me, what happened?"

*They know it matters, they aren't mad, they're embarrassed. They failed to protect me. My God, my whole body hurts.*

She straightened her legs and felt cramping pains in her muscles. The agony in her neck sent flashes of light behind her eyes. Her ankles and wrists hurt where the stinking old hags held her. Her arm...? She remembered. The creature bit her. She pulled her arm from the bag and felt it in the dark. There were welts on her inner arm, and others on the top of her hand. Human bites were dangerous...! What if it got infected? Their teeth were flat,

worn, probably incapable of breaking the skin. No, there had been blood.

The men were mumbling among themselves, the sound of bees in a tin can or rocks rolling in a stream. She could find the bucket in the dark. She put the blanket around her and made her way carefully. She squatted, ready, unprepared for the pain.

*They jammed something up there, it wasn't a dream. Ow! It burns! Why? Just because I lost my control when they grabbed me?*

It was better now. Relieved, she made her way back to her bag and pulled her clothes on.

"I'm lighting a candle. Shield your eyes!"

She looked away as the flame caught and rose. The light seemed too bright, baring every corner of the cave, revealing the circle of men. Exposing the brown net bag in the far corner which looked like tangled roots. The bag holding the body of a sacrificed baby girl.

Could she trust them to protect her? She had so much to learn from each of them, especially the man whose people she had been searching for, the ones outside when the arch collapsed. She couldn't—wouldn't—trust him to take her back there now, though he sat looking so innocent with his fierceness and power.

*Today's not a travel day, she decided. Today I catch up. I have so much to write. They're being quiet, letting me know they agree. I've been moving too fast. My body can't take much more of this abuse.*

*I'll need to defend the sources of my information—more than the information itself. Nothing I write will be accepted if I don't document it. But if I prove I have moved through Jung's Collective Unconscious.... Through morphic resonance: the memory of what has been, then the information I present will be accepted—well, maybe, but I'll need to footnote with the markers*

C. Descry

*I place in the past I can use as proof. First, I have to do it! Plant references in Stewart's editing. If it works, and it will, I can go back to their time and draw my moon and snake without changing the flow of history.*

*Where did I put... journal I started the other night.... Where...? Good! I—I guess I fell asleep before I had a chance to finish. Bookmark... start fresh. This one's worn and faded. The stitching is coming undone along the side. She must have used this one a lot... That angry old lady, the bookmark still smells of her....*

The journal slid from her grip, closed useless in her lap. Her head slumped forward until her chin almost touched her chest.

The wind came hard from the north as she fought her way against it toward the weathered, dismal clapboard house which would never know paint or care. Snowflakes, caught in the wind, tiny saw blades of ice, stung her face. The board steps to the porch were worn and slick. The rail she grabbed to steady herself was wobbly; threatening to tear loose in her hand. She made it to the door, bent forward, her face to the oval glass, looking in at a hallway distorted by bevels, cants and sandblasted designs. A bare electric bulb's light fractured into a prism of dazzling particles as it met her eyes. She felt for the knob, gripped its ridged and knurled brass, ignored the cold which shot through her hand, heard the click of access and forced the door in through its frame.

Clara died... and the child. My God, what a waste! Why? Why? Tell me that, you monster! What kind of God are you? A man, of course! You kill women as you enslave us for men. You don't care, do you? You're oblivious to our pain!

The coal sat low on the grate, almost ashed over. She stirred it with the hooked fire iron and slowly moved the

shaker lever back and forth until blue flame curled from the cracks in the lumps. Two more lumps, she decided. The fringes of the room were cold, she hated that. The big, velvet upholstered chairs sat alone watching the fire, their backrests warmed and waiting for them. She went back into the hall and shook the droplets of melted snowflakes out, hung her scarf, long winter coat, and hat on the wrought iron horns of the rack. The fingers of her gloves were wet. She carried them back into the parlor and placed them carefully on the arched handle of the cheap tin scuttle. Tea would be nice, but a trip to the kitchen would sap the heat from her body.

The kettle sat on the mantle... maybe? No. It's empty. She put it back, seeing her reflection in the old mirror as she did. The diamond and silver backing corroding away, created a lace-like frame of decay eating into the edges of the glass. The reflected image was dim, an image filtered through layers of coal dust and old yellow light. She raised her hand to her head, pushing an errant wisp of hair back toward the bun which failed to contain it. Her face. Long, drawn, gray; harsh! Her cheeks sunken; skin a wrinkling cast at the end of youth. Her gray eyes were the color of the mirror's dust. What she saw frightened her. The woman looking back had dark circles beneath her brows, not eyes, dark holes which captured what little light there was, and consumed it.

The warmth of her chair back and the radiating heat of the stove let her comfort herself and rest. Her back ached from bending over the bed; trying to force a delivery not meant to be. My God why? she prayed. Why go through the months of pregnancy... the hopes and dreams... the imagined heaven of motherhood, and then have it end this way? Why educate a woman... teach her the ways of the world and how to contribute, if she is destined to die? Over and over, time after time, they died. Why? Damn you God



*C. Descry*

of men! Women are beings too... There is a loving Goddess to protect us, and she must be freed!

A Loving God? She thought. The oxymoron makes us the oxen suffering the contradictions, the incongruous nature of the world. Love is the problem, not the blessing. Love, sex, the evil used to attract the unlike, women to men, so the species can go on. There is no compassion in that love, no evolved sense of being. A woman is used at whatever cost, enslaved and discarded without pity or remorse. "I loved her! Oh Carla!" she wailed to the empty spaces. But that love is secret emotion... a secret women have which not even their God knows the power of.

We give birth to the males and teach them. It doesn't make sense—never has. They get their viewpoints from us. We sabotage ourselves. Women are so cursed that given the chance to change things, given the chance to inculcate the males with our worth and our perceptions, we give them power over us instead. Why? What sort of devilish master plan are we forced to carry out? It has to end! I must teach our sisters there is another way! I am that way! My life is testimony!

She luxuriated in the radiation from the glowing iron and her convictions. Tea would be nice... The kitchen would be ice cold, like their bedroom. She must wait for Nancy's train. She lifted her watch from her breast and smiled. Only an hour if the train is on time. And fifteen minutes or... the snow... it will slow her down. She'll be chilled to the bone, although the dry Wyoming cold is never as penetrating as New York's. Another lump, a big one. I've got to go up to the bedroom and open the floor vents. The kitchen may be freezing cold, but our bedroom must be warm.

Water for tea. "I can never rely on them!" she lamented to the room. "That awful man didn't fix the pump right. Damn him! Damn them all. I can never trust them to do

anything right. No matter what I tell them, they don't listen. They treat me as if I'm stupid and dumb as an ox because I'm a woman. Damn them!"

We won the right to vote! They ratified the nineteenth amendment! Nancy will want to celebrate. We've demonstrated we can organize woman and change the world! Women! Not the weak and hateful men who use them. It's 1920! The time is almost here. We will create the new age.

She stood facing the mantle—tugged smartly on the flaps of her bodice, stiffened her back, tucked her chin in her most powerful pose. I will show them how; lead them. I am the Goddess, *The Earth Mother*, the one who will reinstate the power of women! I am *The Continuation*! The future. Through me, the male God will fall and our Wiccan Goddess will regain her rightful place as the protector of women.

C. Descry

## Chapter 10

*They committed the gravest error our so-called profession has ever been discredited by. They imagined a people and a culture, an ideal, and ignored information that didn't conform to their archetype.*

*WHERE WAS I? STAY AWAKE RAVEN, I dreamt of Grandmother. You have work to do, so much to write down... and the markers, every place I visit I must chalk the moon in its current phase and the snake on their walls....*

“Okay you guys, you can help me with that. The problem is they will never believe me if I don't document my findings. I have to place my footnotes on the walls where they won't erode away—in your time so in the future Stewart can find them and my plan to discredit him can work.

“They'll discount everything I write for you if I'm not successful. Think! I have to leave clues and, at the same time, as we learned Mr. Garish Jaguar, and Mr. Pai who let the women attack me, I can't be seen. I can't interfere. I can only be an observer... if that's possible? Can you protect me? Will you? Can you hide me or.... You've got to come up with something or I won't do this for you! Understand?”

*Research designs for each culture, basic questions to answer, plans of attack, methods to use... what culture? A safe one this time: Anasazi. I should have observed more when I visited the developmental period....*

*Was it really a good time? The Great Old Men of Southwest Archaeology have lost their credibility....*

*Biggest blunder and stupidest thing that has ever happened. They committed the gravest error our so-called profession has ever been discredited by. They imagined a people and a culture, an ideal, and ignored information that didn't conform to their archetype. I tried to expose them! No! Those in power had their minds focused upon what they wanted to believe.... Elementary error! You don't establish your thesis by pretending it is a hypothesis proved by ignoring contradictory evidence. But they did! Damn fools...! And they were so pompous about it! Rather than admit their bias, throw out their false conclusions and purify the data—make it conform to the actual data—they're trying to stop those of us who are the true scientists. Well, my curse has changed that.*

*Impossible to believe such great men were so biased! I knew as a student. "Research" they called it, ha! That is the vital flaw in their whole approach. The so-called science of archaeology assumes a pure and unbiased search. Those who followed, trusted the work of the men who laid the groundwork. Then they perpetuated the biases by researching—which really meant restating the conclusions of the biased. I figured out what is wrong, but they refused to consider my evidence because I'm a woman. Well, I'm a searcher now, with access to the past. I'll go in fully aware of my biases. I may state a hypothesis, but I will test it, considering all the evidence. I will never ignore information like they did.*

*Funny, there is so much evidence the Anasazi weren't a peaceful and happy agricultural people who lived in an egalitarian society. My God! What were they thinking? That Rousseau was right? That they had found a society which practiced equal social,*

C. Descry

*political, economic and civil rights? The only society known on Earth which accomplished this? Talk about contaminated thinking! They wanted to find it, they didn't, so they ignored evidence.*

"I'm sure you don't understand. It doesn't seem possible, but it happened—is still happening. But don't you see why it's so important to place my footnotes?"

"Of course, I didn't mean to imply that you couldn't understand. It's just so damned important, guys!"

"Yes. I can do this if you help me. But promise me Old One, that I'll be safe if I go back to the great valley below the Mesa Verde where you came from."

*I'm not ready to go now, he'll just have to wait! I have to get this research design down on paper. Think Raven! Not corn, beans and squash. Not peaceful little people tending their crops and getting along.... Think fresh! Recognize them as people who were archetypically human, with the savagery and viciousness that implies. As people with anger and superstitions, murderous tendencies—xenophobic people who felt superior to others of their kind. People who feared the power they observed in nature, tried to appease it—the Gods—for their own gain, and thought it necessary to sacrifice, kill, eat and take power from their enemies. Think of them as we were... still are, though it's usually contained under the veneers of civilization. Think of them as creatures surviving because they did unto others before others did it to them. Think of them as humans.*

"I'm getting my work done, gentlemen! I have questions I would like answered so I can finish. It will be much easier if...?"

"No? But...? Look, I can write a better research design if I know exactly when we're going—I mean, when and where?"

"Okay, let's decide! Before or after the Chacoan influence?"

"Then? You mean before the Pax Chacoan? That's where you took me the first time...."

"Okay, just as long as I know approximately. But before Chaco fell, right?"

"I don't think I know much about that time, except your people were prospering. Isn't it about the time your people went south and built Kin Kletso in Chaco Canyon?"

"No, you're right. Long before that time. I have a lot to learn...."

"I'm not ready to go yet and you haven't done as I asked. You haven't given me your plan for protecting me."

*Don't give in to them. No plan, no go! No protection, no way to be there unobserved, then I won't do it. But am I asking too much? They can protect me, but what do they know about footnotes? Nothing..., but I do, from Joseph Campbell. Symbols. Universal symbols! The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Masks of Gods. Mythology. Stewart will be able to interpret the documentation I leave. I can communicate with him, especially when I tell him what to look for. Perfect!*

*But I must be safe! Think Raven! Think! Think! Oh sure!*

*Our thoughts are not in our brains. Sheldrake described it best: they're nonmaterial morphic fields that extend from our bodies as energy. When we contact others, the experience is not within our minds, it's through our intertwining fields, morphic resonances. Of course! That's what they do—are! Those fields still exist around their bodies. There is no reincarnation, just fields intertwining. When I travel, I'm there, but not there.... Maybe I'm merging with their—their souls. Souls! Of course! All their memories and stored experiences. Everything they saw, felt and lived through. The composite essence of..., the part*

C. Descry

*that doesn't die. The repository of experiences. They don't know my world, couldn't know, because they're not alive—their souls are not being programmed by their bodies, their senses. They are as they were! They resound their collected experiences; a window into their times! And I am the connection! I am The Continuation, the link. Whatever I experience as I intertwine with their souls, no matter what happens, I can always separate and I'll be back here. But—but, if that's true, if we are mingling morphic resonances, then why do I get hurt? Why when I come back from their time does my whole body feel like it's been dragged through hell?*

*Girl, pay attention! Maybe—maybe when the fields touch and times connect there is physical teleportation? That explains why I hurt.*

## Chapter 11

*This is a happy time, a time of victory and celebration. They have obviously vanquished some enemy—a neighbor from the looks of it. They've taken corn and slaves. They're the survivors, the ones who will persevere.*

**HE CAME FOR HER AND HELPED HER** from the warm hiding place of her bag. She saw his desiccated face; the distortion of his features caused by the flattening of his head when, as a child, it had been tied firmly back against a cradle board; the ridge across his forehead formed by the tie straps, which made the space between his eyebrows and hairline seem wider; the too-broad face which resulted from deformity. He smiled and nodded. It was okay, she was ready to intertwine with his spirit.

*Screw the research design! I have enough of it done. I can use the moon as my marker... the moon women are tied to, and the snake. Stewart's symbol. Creeping evil! The marker I will implant in his works to discredit him.... I'll be able to put the symbols every place I go. Campbell would love that!*

*What? Why is he being so rough? My God, hags are fighting him... they're coming after me again! I should be melding into his matrix, going back to his time... why do they want me? Stop! It hurts!*

*My God, who's that?... Mother?*

*She's pulling me away from him. Mother! Let me go! I need to go with him, my research, this is my opportunity! Oh no! She overpowered him.*

*I'm here dear. You promised me! Stop fighting! Right now!*



C. Descry

*You don't understand. I have this opportunity.... I can make a difference in my own way. I can change things.*

Yes, of course you can. But there is something more important you must do first.

Her mother grabbed her head in a vice-tight grip, her fingers tangled in her hair, squeezing. Pain blasted through her head, her body convulsed, waves of involuntary muscle contractions swept through her. Her mother took control. Mind racing, she blanked out, totally without power. Time passed, pain retreated, making it easier to breathe.

*You win again Mother. But what have you won? You know I'm not like you or Grandmother. I'm me! Different! A normal woman. You can't change me! I have a destiny I must fulfill.*

She tried to move. No appendage responded, nothing worked. She clenched her hand—tried to—gave up. She drifted, cold, naked; little..., a girl no longer innocent or cuddly. No longer soft and happy exploring the soft tissue of the world. The delicate flower of her was dead, hard, dried...! Anger surged and pulsed within her like it always had, yet she had the smile to hide behind. The smile to protect her. Behind it she hid from them, her mother... her mother's rough friends.

She heard the voice jabbing her. She couldn't turn it off or get away.

You'll learn to enjoy it. Relax, this is one of the few pleasures we women get out of life.

She saw her mother's face and cried out. Time after time, she heard the same warning; hid behind her smile; found places to go where flowers still bloomed... or where the packages lay under the boughs of the Christmas tree, cuddling with her Giant Panda, savoring the warmth of the fire, the turpentine smell, the wonders of....

*But I'm not like you! I AM NOT LIKE YOU! Not you or your friends or Grandmother! Let me alone! Don't do that! Don't let them do that to me, MOTHER?*

What's wrong with you! These are my friends, your friends, they would never hurt you. Be part of it! Give something back! You, you're selfish and cruel. How did I ever birth a bitch daughter like you!

*A bitch mother like you! She's right. I can't give. I am selfish, but.... BUT it's not supposed to be this way! I want to love her... them. I try, but I don't feel anything—nothing... NOTHING!*

*I don't feel! I want to curl up where its warm... sleep. I must get away, join him, find the place he will take me.*

*It's deep and wide, tall spruce trees growing against the sand colored rocks and—and short, brown people everywhere... going, what's the matter? Why are they running? Where are they going?*

*Way down there, a line of people coming this way. People running to greet them. They're coming out of the shallow caves beneath the bulging sandstone cap. They're climbing down from the top of the mesa... forty or fifty of them, women and children, old men. Cries echoing through the canyon. They're happy... maybe the men have been out hunting. I can get closer.*

*He's leading the.... What the hell! They're tied together with rope around their necks. Women carrying baskets full of—little ears of corn. Little children being dragged along. All of them naked. He's bringing slaves! The other men are guards. The prisoners look battered, barely able to walk. He's waving his hands, greeting the first of the runners. They must have been on a raid....*

### C. Descry

*The women are meeting the returning men. They're taking the baskets from the slaves, hitting and slapping, cruelly battering the naked women and children. The cries are discordant; mixed into a screaming howling cacophony; makes me shiver. Several of the captured women are down and the women are—abusing them. Hitting their faces, breasts and vulvas with fists and sticks!*

*The men are angry. They can't move the line forward with the women down. They're kicking and beating their own women away; prodding the downed slaves up with their spears; getting the line moving toward camp again.*

*Wailing! What a terrible, sad sound. Grief. Pain. Misery escaping from hell. The captured women and children are bunched together. The women, young enough to be the mothers, form a circle around the children. They're all dirty, bloody from beatings, rope burns, rape; abuse!*

*The conqueror's women are building up their fires and sorting through the baskets of captured corn. They sit on their haunches like brown-bodied harpies, eyeing the captured; waiting. Two men guard the captured from them. Some men who brought the prisoners in, and some who stayed in camp to guard it, and four or five old men, sit on the rocks. They're pointing, obviously discussing the prisoners.*

*What an awful time to come here. Why? Why bring me here, now?*

*Think Raven! Think as one of them!*

*This is a happy time, a time of victory and celebration. They have obviously vanquished some enemy. A neighbor from the looks of it. They've taken corn and slaves. They're the survivors, the ones who will persevere.*

*They're untying the captured women, sorting them. The men are allowing their women to examine the captives. Eleven souls on the auction block! Their women have chosen, they're putting ropes around the necks of their choices and leading them off, beating their backs with broom-like whips. The five remaining women are tightening their circle, trying to protect their young, crying, wailing.... The men are laughing.*

*Near the fires, the slave women are being forced to work—grind corn, tend the fires. Some are given water jars—they're being led up to the seep.*

*Old women are... they're making tools. They hold the rock nodules out away from their bodies and strike them hard with another rock. Big flakes break off. They examine the flakes and work the edges with antler tips. They're making butchering tools.*

*It'll be dark soon. I can sneak into the cave and chalk my symbols there while they're focused upon the captured and... some ritual is about to take place. The camp is active, children running about, women forcing other women—slaves, old ones probably, and a few of the new ones—to feed wood to the fire pits. An old man has climbed to the top of a boulder. He's signaling to the camp below. The sun is setting. A joined cry echoes through the canyon... everyone in camp is crying out in joyous praise.*

*A cry through the echoes, a horrible, screeching cry of terror. He's pulling a woman with a badly broken leg from the group of slaves and dragging her up the slope toward the fire. She stops screaming, her good leg gives way and he's forced to drag her. Others are laughing and pointing. He lets her drop to the ground near the great fire pit. She's trying to roll away. Another man steps forward and forces her to a sitting position. He's handed an ax, black stone head*

C. Descry

*He is tied into a split branch with throngs of rawhide. He raises it. The crowd quiets. The woman raises her hands but cannot deflect the powerful blow. The ax head comes free as it slams into her skull. It rolls across the clearing, blood gathering dirt on stone. Her naked body arches back, quivers and lies still.*

*He's backing away. Others are dragging the limp body to one side. They're butchering it! Her! They cut off body parts; strips of meat they skewer on sticks. Don't get sick!*

*The desirable parts must be gone, they're rolling the bloody cadaver into the fire pit. Sparks fly into the darkening sky. A horrible hissing sound comes from the flames. The body convulses and jerks. People cheer. Slaves are forced forward with long forked sticks to rake the coals up and over the body. The smoke becomes black, oily; filled with the awful stench of burning flesh. Other fires light the area. Another fire pit is ready. The men drag a child to the pit—six, maybe seven—a skeleton of a girl, naked and battered. Soon, another body is roasting in the coals. A muffled explosion sends sparks flying into the sky. My God! The woman's head exploded!*

*How can you watch? Don't watch Raven! Get into the cave, chalk the symbols and get out! Don't experience this....*

*I have to know. I have to have proof! They'll keep this up until the prisoners are... until there is enough flesh for everyone.*

*They defeat their enemies and consume them to add their power to their own. Isn't that what we know about cannibalism? Isn't that what man does?*

*This is more than cannibalism, this is political control through terror. Watch, they'll let one of those captured women go. She'll go back to her*

*Raven's Chance*

people and.... Terror! They'll move away or maybe they'll tithe to their conquerors. Enslavement! Power! An economic system based upon fear and horror. Watch Raven! Learn!

*Stewart? Who's that? Is that my guide talking to me? Is that...? Oh, I understand. I'm not here alone. Others can meld into these networks. The resonance is open to anybody who.... But who are you?*

*Stewart? How could it be you! I don't want to touch your field again.*

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## Chapter 12

*Come with me, trust me, help me and we will make a difference. Without me you are nothing, you know that.*

*I NEED TO CLIMB UP AND SEE where I am. Moonlight. I can see for miles. Full moon, my sign.*

*Bear's Ears way off there to the west. The Ute Mountain to the south. The dark line is the Mesa Verde.... Far to the east, the peaks of the La Plata range shimmering in the moonlight. This canyon is near the Colorado-Utah line.*

*It's part of Hovenweep, the lonely place—maybe the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. I'm east of the complex at the Hovenweep entrance, at least where it will be built in a thousand years.*

*Early—probably still Pueblo I—developmental Pueblo. No laid walls. They live in pit houses they've dug into the protective recesses under the overhangs. Some jacal, I can see where they've put posts in the ground and jammed slabs around the base, sticks and mud: waddle and daub walls. Roof vigas covered with matting and brush—above ground structures, crude! Slave pens?*

*No sign of kilns. I saw pots, thin, unpainted, beautiful! They use baskets for almost everything—and gourds.*

*This canyon head is easily defended. They've built stockades at the narrow points where anyone coming up or down canyon will be stopped or forced to pass through one at a time and have their heads knocked in. The smaller crevices and caves are barely visible. Storage rooms. Where are the fields? Oh, there! Their*

*corn plants are black shadows in this light, like Hallowe'en fields under the full moon... What? Wind, icy cold! Damn I'm cold! It's getting black... I'm, he's sending me back?*

You're like the night, Jane! The full moon is your time. You're a prisoner of the phases of the moon. I'll help you. Come back with me, I need you! You're the one, the only one who can help. Without you everything is lost. This is the most important contribution you can make. We'll change it all! Together we'll create the new archaeology. We'll leave out the 'e' that suggests the archaic; the old world. We'll refer to my science, my breakthroughs, my methods as New World Archeology. Not the archaic æ, but new, like my work. Like the insights I have which you must help me develop! Come with me, trust me, help me and we will make a difference. Without me you are nothing, you know that. I prevail, you succeed as long as you honor our agreement. There's no way you can go on without me, I prevail, not you!

*And what? Lay with you listening to your lies, knowing you would rather be somewhere else? Touch you and feel the cold emptiness of your soul? Work and create and have you pirate my genius? Damn you! Damn you Stewart! You have no right to be here. No right to pull me away from my work. You're nothing without me! When I turn away, you wither. You have no power of your own.*

I told you, Jane. All your life I tried to prepare you and what? You have to lay down in the mud and wallow around with men until you learn? What do you think mothers are for, if not to protect their children from known evil? You would never listen to me, obey me, let me reason with you. He's after you again. What did you think would happen? Men



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are users. At least you know I never lied to you. I told the truth, didn't I! He used you as I said men would. He.... Well, at least be thankful he didn't get you pregnant! He didn't did he? The devil's spawn? No? Thank God! ... My God, what did I do wrong? I tried to be a good mother. I tried to give you everything I had to pave the way for you—to make you strong and powerful.

*You let Grandmother do to you what you tried to do to me! Remember? You were a woman once. You had feeling of your own.*

You don't know what you're talking about. My mother loved me. She made me strong. She prepared me and showed me how to live in a world of women. Your grandmother was as close to being a saint as.... But you never understood. You ignored history! You pretended the great victories she fought for, she won, meant nothing to you. You're ungrateful. We gave all, and you have lowered yourself into the muck we fought so hard to keep you out of. I will win! I will do as a mother must to protect you. You can't stop me, even when I die I'll have my way!

They did, you know. They tried to keep you from the hell they blame on us men. But you've seen them, the hags, the harpy women of the past. Not a feminine spark in any of them, right? No femininity, none at all. Didn't you know that hadn't evolved yet? Did you believe their bunk that women were enslaved by men? Ha! Women were gross vicious animals—still are in most populations. I can confirm that some of you are evolving, have evolved. You have, but not without my help. You need me more than I need you. Come with me, I'm not well. They're trying to stop me, take what I have. Blame me for things.... I have a reputation to maintain! If it's lost, my work is discredited.

*Damn you Stewart! Women were enslaved by their bodies and by men. Things have changed. We've tapped into the lost energy of The Earth Mother, the*

*Raven's Chance*

*Goddess. We're maximizing the power of our feminine nature. That's why I'm here. I am Raven! They will believe in me, for I am not your creation. You cannot have her. You can't stop me! I am the future, The Continuation!*

*Freezing cold! How long was I—it couldn't have been too long, the flame still has an inch of candle to eat. My God, I hurt...!*

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## Chapter 13

*She raised her head and saw ghost figures moving in the gray light and knew they were the morphic resonances of her fellow travelers; globes of energy, lightly glowing, featureless as they drifted in the blackness of the cave.*

**CANNIBALISM! IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO EXIST** in their time—not before the influence from the south, from Mexico. Not before Chaco built its roads and came into this region. What if it were political, the use of terror to control others? Why not? Wouldn't our ancestors have done that? Didn't they?

*They say you can't recreate social or religious systems through digging. That archaeologists will never be able to discover and recreate political or belief systems. Damn them! They're wrong about that too! And those great old men would have us believe the Ancients had an egalitarian society, no ruling class. No priesthood. There's not even a glimmer of the "natural man" they wanted to find, not from what I see.*

*They were just like us, power rested in the hands of the few. The rest were of no consequence; to be used as those in power saw fit. And women were...? Is there a feminine side I didn't observe? Any womanly virtues? Anything I saw that suggests they were feminine? No, nothing like that. They had no womanly way of walking, carrying themselves, acting. No softness. No grooming which would suggest... the men in control were groomed and wore pendants and decorated breechcloths.... A few of the men—the men in power—like him, were cleaner, kept their hair long, neat, worn back... none of the women. They were*

*filthy, unkempt and, not like anyone expects women to be, not any different than their slaves. Except maybe... I'm not sure, there were a couple of old women who seemed different. Maybe of high status? I must observe them!*

She pulled herself out of the sleeping bag and stood, suddenly feeling dizzy, faint, woozy. Her stomach tightened, queasy nausea sickened her. She had to lean against the wall to steady herself. Her hand went out, but in her confused state the wall felt soft. She leaned on her hand, and her hand seemed to sink into the sandstone. The cave should have been totally dark, but the walls shone gray. She felt vomit coming and turned, ready to lunge toward the bucket. Too dizzy to stand or walk, she clamped her mouth shut, tightened her lips and swallowed hard, keeping it down. She dropped gingerly to her hands and knees and made her way to the bucket.

*My God I'm so sick! I can't be sick, alone out here. What is it? Shit! I must have picked something up—some germ, some virus from back then. I need help. I can't be alone!*

*The cave's gray and soft. My eyes won't focus. There's no light, but I can see—where are they? They should be sitting.... It's black; totally dark. The light is in my head, like the lights in my eyes when I squint. What's wrong with me? Must light a candle—have to lie down, be still.*

Her body convulsed with waves of nausea. Her skull felt as if it were peeling open. She forced her eyes shut, trying hard to escape the strange light. Pain caused her stomach to turn again. Grabbing the side of the bucket she coughed bile into it, then too weak to move she lay on the floor, head on hands. She wanted to crawl back to her warm bag, but stayed, afraid to move away from the bucket. She couldn't make herself move. She rested. The

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pain in her head eased. She heard voices then, soft, soothing voices. Gradually she raised her head and saw ghost figures moving in the gray light and knew they were the morphic resonances of her fellow travelers; globes of energy, lightly glowing, featureless as they drifted in the blackness of the cave. From below the floating ones, she heard the guttural, unintelligible, reassuring familiar sounds of her hosts as they argued among themselves.

*They're still here. Thank God!*

The globes of light seemed to dance above her seated guides. They floated around the cave. She felt one as it rubbed against her; a stinging-tingling sensation when it touched her. She couldn't form the words to plead for help. Her nausea passed. A soft weight pushed her down. She blacked out. In that space of time she imagined the ghosts lifted her and slipped her back into the comfort and warmth of her pupal sack.

*Why is it always so cold? I wake up cold. I was dreaming; processing the past.... That's healthy, I need to—healthy people have their lives in perspective. By forty if you don't have it together, haven't processed that shit, you're really fucked!*

*Yet you're not your own person, Jane....*

*But Raven, I've dealt with the things they did—things that happened when I was little.*

*So, Miss Jane Alexander, Doctor Jane, Janie my girl, why can't you get on with your life?*

*Grandmother was hard, hard like the rigid stalk of some alien plant. She wore her clothes like dry husks over a long dead fruit; tight black skin worn shiny at the seat and elbows. When she visited, I felt her anger—and her sterility! Mostly, I remember her anger. It dried her up and made the orifices of her body pucker in, like sacks tied tight, unwrinkling,*

*opening only to unleash her power as vile attacks against—me—Mom and me! Men! She scared me, she still does!*

*I know why Mom feared her. Mom was different. She was soft and warm. She wanted to love—me, the others. Except when Grandmother visited. Then, she became wooden. Even her voice changed. Those times were the worst. That's when they tried to force me to be like them—to kill what is inside me: Me! To accept their—really Grandmother's—hatred of the world, men, and especially the God of men.*

*When she left, Mother let go. I needed her.... She changed, but not back to what she had been, what I needed, not for weeks. Weeks of parties, women, and wildness. She told me once—stoned out of her mind, breaking her vow to lie—she wanted a man to love, a father for me, a masculine presence in the house. One time! That's the only time I ever suspected she was normal underneath it all.*

*Why am I telling you this? It makes no difference now. I understand it, have dealt with it! It doesn't mean anything now. Old stuff! Grandmother is dead!*

*She wanted me at her bedside. I sat, listening to her wheeze and strain. Four nights! We thought she was comatose, but each time I tried to sneak out, she came awake and ordered me to stay. Monstrous old lady! Just before she died, she opened her eyes and stared at me without blinking. Then she raised her emaciated, blue-veined hand and motioned for me to come near, as if she had something she could tell me. She grabbed my arm, her long yellowed fingernails curling under my wrist. I remember looking at her hand on my wrist and seeing the way her long, thin fingers curved.... She croaked out: "You are the one! You are the one I have chosen for the continuation of*

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*my work. You must find The Earth Mother and....” She had no air left to wheeze out. She was dead; cold and stiff even before her head settled back into the pillow. I was free! I felt free, even though a voice in my head shamed me for not being sad.*

From what you’ve told me, your family’s nuts. Listen, I’m glad you’ve worked through that with me. Because of me you’ve learned about yourself. But Jane, you can’t let any of this get in the way of your work. You have a year—at least a year. He quickly gauged the number of works which still had to be edited and decided he would need her for another semester... before this university places the mantle of accomplishment over your shoulders and sends you out into the world as my colleague.

*Stewart gave me a lot back, didn’t he?*

No Jane. He only played you as an instrument. You were his dupe! He used you to build himself. You should have graduated that semester, right? He sabotaged you! He undermined you so you would stay until you finished his work. All he gave sexually is what any man can give, but not like a woman can give, don’t you understand? Any relationship with a male will leave you empty, drained, used—and maybe even dead! That kind of spermal love kills women! Your Grandmother knew! I know! When will you believe your own mother who loves you...? I love you! If you can’t believe in me, who can you believe?

*He’s right about one thing. I can’t let what happened to me as a child interfere with my work. I must continue—I can’t interfere with you Raven. You must go forward. You have the opportunity—opportunity and obligation. Raven, you’re the one who will connect the past to the present.*

Daughter, you’re a fool! You still won’t accept the facts. You still won’t deal with it, will you? What did you think? Oh, you didn’t think, did you! You believed he would use your work and then let you out there to

discredit him? No! You were blind! I warned you! You wouldn't believe your own mother!

It was Stewart who went to the members of your doctoral review committee and laid the sad news on them—the news about how their best and brightest student, the one he had put so much time and effort into helping, had something missing, some part kept her from connecting the facts and information she could memorize so easily. He carefully laid the groundwork over time—the groundwork necessary to discredit you! He almost cried as he took each aside and told him in confidence that he had had such hope, but he caught you plagiarizing his work. He had lost sleep, tried to understand, but you were.... Well, the university would be discredited if it came out. There was another way, if they would be generous, let you graduate, but without honors. “Just let her go, and tag her files so others will know.” That's what he did!

You're not surprised, don't pretend to be! You knew he did that to others. You knew how slick he was. How he undermined everyone who trusted him, discredited them and then got others to get rid of them. You knew how he worked and you chose to ignore it because he convinced you that you were special, you were the one! You were different!

Jane! Wake up! He's the one who discredited you and destroyed the brilliant career you would have had!

*I couldn't prove it Mother. All I knew is every time I tried to get a position—every time I wrote a paper—I got rejected. They rejected me! I suspected him, but you're right, I was blind. Even when I knew for certain, I didn't know how to repair the damage he had done to me. I studied, worked on sites which provided new and exciting data, yet he had planted a virus in my files that kept discrediting me.*

*Nothing I did was acceptable. No major university or research organization would employ me. When I did get a position with a university, they let me go before I got tenure or a full professorship. There was nothing I could do! Really, I tried everything I knew... could think of. I contacted others—others that he*



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*shafted in the same way. But he planted the virus so cleverly even those in the academic world who knew what he was—what he did—were afraid to stand up for us. And then, after years of heartbreak, I got the survey contract in the Secret Mountain Wilderness. I used my instincts. I looked where nothing is supposed to be. I heard them calling from their tomb. I found the rock fall. I clawed my way into their tomb.*

*It's my one last hope. What I'm learning will blast away their doubts about me. I...*

Suddenly her body was freezing cold. A wind—she felt as if she were riding the wind. The land passed under her. The vegetation was gone, the soils gray. To the east, broken escarpments of mesas rose out of the desert. Ahead, she could see rolling, broken country, volcanic cinder cones, ancient stains where lava once flowed, dry canyon heads with blobs of stunted junipers and woody plants, broken tumbled rocks; bleak wilderness.

And something else—dust devils? No. A line of men, running—that's where the dust came from, along a cleared way, a road across the wastes.

*They're jogging, keeping a pace. Naked, warriors I think, the way they're carrying spears—maybe atlatls. Weapons. They're traveling light, canteens tied against their hips. No baskets, bags.... They're painted.... Oh! Like him. Like the Chacoan who sits in counsel in the cave. He's not with them, he's with me. He brought me here, wants me to observe!*

*They're hideous! Painted, tattooed, faces lined with color. Ferocious, made to look as cruel as possible. That means a war party on their way to...?*

*What are they doing out here? There's nothing.... Nothing out here to conquer. No villages, no other people I can see. They're making good time, heading toward—way up there to the north, a strip of green....*

*Oh gad! I know where we are. The men are heading for the San Juan River. The dark green line cuts this wasteland east to west. It will take them hours to get there. I can go back to the cave and rest. I can get something from him....*

*But way up there, just coming out of a canyon, a long line—looks like ant people. They're coming into sight now. The line must be a mile long. People with burden baskets—men and women bent forward to counter the weight of—golden corn. Their baskets are filled with kernels of corn!*

*It's like the pictures I've seen of caravans, only there are no camels or horses, just human beasts of burden. Not many guards. This is a pack train bringing food to—south to Chaco, of course!*

*We wondered how Chaco could maintain a large population in that bleak region. In the Mississippi drainage the powerful conquered the outlying tribes and forced them to grow corn.... Cahokia Corn Culture! That's what I'm seeing here. The San Juan drainage, it's a breadbasket. They're bringing food from the north. Trade? No! Subjugation. They control a vast network of roads, and all roads lead to Chaco Canyon, we've learned that; discovered and mapped them. They conquer and enslave, get their food that way! And those warriors—highly mobile enforcement gangs. They keep subject people under control. He wants me to understand. He's proud of their system.*

*The warriors are passing the long procession, never slowing or breaking their fast jogging pace. They have someplace to go and nothing on the road will stop them. Far ahead... looks like another pack train. He's letting me keep pace with the warriors. It's so quiet out here. They chant as they run, 'hung-a hun hung-a hun hung-a,' over and over, the same low,*

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*rumbling cadence. It's terrifying, they're terrifying! Where are they going? What does he want me to see?*

*The pack train ahead is... they're carrying logs! Big ponderosa or spruce trunks. Dozens of men on each side like casket bearers—rope slings, padded shoulders, the thing must weigh a ton! And behind them, human beasts of burden loaded with bundles of poles. Of course, building materials! They had to import materials to build their massive pueblos—Bonito, Chetro Kettle, the Great Kiva ceremonial center, Casa Rinconada—maybe even Kin Kletso by this time. Of course, they had to have roads! They had to send armies out to conquer and they had to import the food and materials they needed. We misjudged the scale! To keep the head alive, they had to develop this system. That's what he's proud of. And the system depended upon thousands of impressed people to move the goods—and tens of thousands to grow and process the crops. That's not counting the army it takes to force others to.... Of course! If you use terror as a means of enforcement, something so horrible and vile the threat of it alone is enough to control the majority of the enslaved, then you need fewer soldiers.*

*The warriors are looking for a ford across the San Juan River. Wow, the river looks so different—no tamarisk. No Russian Olive trees! Only willows and cottonwoods. Signs of flooding everywhere. Of course! I've never seen the river as it flowed before foreign plants were introduced; before the Navajo Dam was built. The groves of cottonwoods wear skirts of debris—six, eight feet off the ground.... Gad! When the floods sweep down this river, they flush the whole drainage. The water's low now, the men are searching for a place to cross. The mud bars must shift with*

*every storm. I never thought of our silt-laden tame San Juan as a wild river!*

*The road splits again—they're leaving the main road and taking a well-used trail. The main road veers off to the east. What would be out there now? Salmon Ruins, Aztec? Present day Farmington, New Mexico? Probably splits and heads from there to the Mesa Verde.... We're going toward the.... I see Mount Hermano ahead, the Sleeping Ute Mountain. The warriors are headed in that direction.... No, west of the Ute.*

*Specks ahead. Three people maybe. They don't seem to be moving. They're waiting on the road.*

*We're close now. Beyond, smoke. Tendrils of smoke—oh, I see! Villages! Fields, hard to make out, but—the people are on the ground! Dead? No, prostrate, on their knees, heads down: Submissive.*

*They've quickened the pace. We're passing through a populated area—farms—pit houses, deep like kivas—not like the earlier ones with above ground walls and roofs. Some surface structures, jacal buildings. A few sandstone block structures.... This has to be Pueblo II!*

*We're climbing a ridge that comes down from the Ute Mountain.... There, below us at the head of the drainage, that must be our destination. They've built a stockade, hundreds of posts stuck in the ground, a very narrow gate. They see the warriors! People are running in from the fields. They're closing the gate. What is he showing me? Rebels! They're making a stand. That's why the warriors were sent here. The people behind the stockade are screaming and yelling at the warriors, challenging them! The warriors are circling around, chanting, working themselves up, putting on a show, trying to terrorize the rebel camp.*

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*People from the farmsteads are coming to observe—they're staying back on the ridge tops where they can run away if the warriors turn on them. I can go around behind them and chalk my symbols under the big overhang....*

*That was easy!*

*The warriors are moving toward the stockade ... they're gathering sage and woody plants. Oh! They're building a fire. They're only twenty yards from the stockade. They're running in with bundles of sticks and fire—starting fires at the base of the stockade. Several are guarding the gate, not letting anyone out.*

*I don't want to be here!*

*It's so cold! I ache! The darkness—there, that's better! What are those orbs of light floating in the dark? But I'm safe. I'm back in the cave. Did I wish myself back? Did he hear me scream I didn't want to watch the siege and punishment? I need to get warm, snuggle down in my bag....*

*Was I asleep? Mother? Who is that—that man?*

*It's about time you met your father.*

*My father? You said....*

*I couldn't tell you the truth. My mother.... She didn't know. I couldn't let her know. I couldn't let any of them know.*

*You said he just, came and left. Did you know him?*

*I couldn't tell you.... She might have found out. Yes, I knew him, knew him for a long time—well, for more than a year. At summer school in Colorado, I mean I ran into him there and we.... Well, we fell in love—at least I did. I had to lie to everyone, you too. Please try to understand. Go with him. Get to know him! Know your father. It's okay now baby, the old woman's gone. He's gone too....*

*I don't understand? Mother? Mother?...Where did you go?...Mother?*

*You? You're my father? Really my father? And what did she mean? You're gone?*

He jogged along the sidewalk, head down, tired, not paying attention when he ran into her. She was walking to class, enjoying the summer morning, studying the way the tree's shadows crossed the concrete like networks of magical lace. He hit her so hard her breath forced out like an explosion. She got knocked back on her butt, skidding painfully. Pain shot through her wrists and hands where the rough concrete scraped them as she tried to catch herself. He fell over her, stumbling onto the grass as he fell, butting into the rough bark of a giant elm's trunk. Tears filled her eyes as she gasped for breath. It seemed to take a long time before she figured out what happened. Anger pulsed through her as she turned, ready to fend off another attack. He lay on the grass, dazed, blood oozing through his thick brown hair.

There were people around them, talking, yelling for help, giving orders. Someone saw her hands were scraped and bleeding, and helped her up gently by leveraging her forearm, elbow to wrist. The pain from her injured wrists shot through her like knife pricks. She was sobbing, crying, desperately trying to gain control. Through her tears, she watched as they pressed white handkerchiefs, blotched with bright red, against his head. They rolled him over onto his back, but he seemed disoriented. As her mind cleared, she fought the emotions she feared most. Humiliation! Embarrassment! Her life must remain private, in hiding.... Now, people were staring, touching, probably laughing.

She knew it was her fault. She hadn't been paying attention. She ran into him. He seemed badly injured. She studied his face, streaked with dark red where they tried to wipe away already congealing blood. Framed by dark brown hair. Strands had come free of his pony tail and blood-soaked, fell in ropes that ran his neck almost reaching his shoulders. His build athletic—at least he

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looked lean and strong in his sweats and gray T shirt. He was nice looking, young and boyish with a shadow of beard. That made her even sadder.

Someone tried to lead her away. She shook off their attempts and knelt down next to him. His eyelids fluttered, eyes filled with tears and slowly opened, as if the glaring sky was the sun he dare not see. She leaned over him, desperately trying to make right what she had done. Their eyes met. She felt a connection—almost like looking through a telescope; that instant when the eye first focuses on a distant object and sees it clearly—and can't look away. Through her pain, humiliation and guilt, she felt an energy surge through her body and a strange tightening and tickling of parts interdicted. She bonded with him and knew without question she had.

The doctor cut a patch of his beautiful hair away and sewed up the ragged edges of scalp where the bark had bitten into his skull. She stood close, squeamish, watching as if her help were needed. He warned about the possibility of a concussion, noted no indication of one. He examined the deep scrapes on her palms, moved her hands gently as he cleaned out the scrapes and dabbed stinging iodine over them. He wrapped gauze around her hands and then an Ace bandage over hands and wrists to stabilize them and let them heal.

She wore her new mitts like boxing gloves, helpless to do the things hands do. He swallowed the capsules of Tylenol laced with some prescription drug, stared into her eyes like he had always been in there with her, and waited for his headache to ease. The doctor's nurse showed them out to the reception area where he opened his wallet and gave his student I.D. to the receptionist. Then, gentleman that he was, he nodded at her purse, got her approval, and fished around in it until he found her I.D. Finished, he went over to a chair and sat heavily. "I need a minute for the pain stuff to kick in."

She sat in the chair next to his, angry because the chair arms separated them, desperate to connect, to touch, to be part of him.

"I don't know your name.... Mine is—Ja....," she almost said Jane. "Susan. My name's Susan."

"I saw it on your license. I'm Paul. I'm very sorry."

"I like Paul, it's a good name. You know, I think I knew it was Paul before you told me. Isn't that strange?"

"I mean, I'm sorry I ran you over. I hurt you!"

"No, I wasn't watching where I was going."

"It was me, honest, it was! Listen, how are you going to get along with your hands bandaged that way?"

She held her hands up, stiff mitts that couldn't even open doors. "I—I've got to think...."

"It's like... Well, like I've known you for a long time. You know, friends! I did this. I'll be your slave—I mean if it's okay, I'll be your hands."

She looked over at him and their eyes met again. The depths connected. The same feelings of familiarity and comfort ran the links between them. "I live on Vine. Not far. I need to go over and change" She turned her head, as if looking back at the seat of her dress. "Will you—I mean, if you would help me?"

She leaned toward him as they walked. "Stop! Let me see." They were in front of the old Victorian house which had been divided into apartments. "Your head's stopped bleeding I think. The bandage is okay. How do you feel?" She leaned into him, purposefully pressing her breast into him; letting her breath tickle his neck as she examined his bandage.

"Great medicine! Drugs do the trick as they say. Something to take to solve every problem." He touched her arm, gently sliding his hand around so as she squeezed it to her side it stayed trapped until she chose to let it go.



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“I rented a furnished apartment here. Woman is a Prof. She goes away for the summer. You’ll have to fish for my key.”

She pressed her body against his as he found the keyhole, tried the keys until one slid in, and released the lock. Inside, he looked around, made a comment she didn’t pay attention to, and turned into her as she stood like a boxer with hands held up. He caught her eye, she smiled a warm and open smile, and moved into the comfort of his aura. She pressed against him, hands held higher to open herself to him, forced against his force until their lips met, opened and played over each other’s. Parts of her brain seemed drugged and numb. She felt him quivering and breathed in his gasp for breath. The sensations drove delight through her in painless aching, urgent waves. He gently pushed her back, staring into her eyes, seeing into every part of her.

“I need to wash this..., my bloody hair. You need to...?”

“I can’t help. I would love to wash your hair. Damn! I can’t without hands.”

“What? What can I do? Tell me.”

“In there. Follow me!” She led him into frilly woman’s bedroom and let him bask in the ambiance of Victorian luxury; the Professor’s fantasies; the sweet talcum smell; the musty secrets wrapped in dust bunnies on the hardwood under the bed and dark stained, oval-mirrored vanity.

“I can’t do a thing.... You’ll .... Please?”

At first he couldn’t imagine, couldn’t grasp, even with his storehouse of thousands of nights alone with masturbatory fantasies spawned by visions of imagined pleasures, he never imagined doing what she let him do. She stared at him, smiled, and ran her tongue around her lips. He knew there was a possibility of—something so

wonderful, so erotic, so playful his muscles quaked in anticipation.

“You’ll have to.... I mean, I can’t get out of these things myself.”

He felt his body move as quicksilver, thick and yet fluid as he came close enough to begin unbuttoning her blouse. She held her bandaged hands up and away, opening her breast to him. His hands shook as his big fingers found each tiny button, slid it out through its hole and moved down to the next. Her blouse came open, the white lacy trim of her bra and the firm pressure of the filmy material, textures, fabric dynamism; erotic!

“I think it will come off over my bandages. Summer sleeves are lots bigger.”

She hunched her shoulders in to help the blouse loosen so he could pull one sleeve over the fat bandage. The other wide sleeve slipped off without effort. He stared.... “Everything?”

“I can’t help you. Sometimes the hooks are hard to.... Well, you know. Just try!”

He had the hooks undone and the bra straps over her hands in seconds. She watched him, enjoying his reaction. He had his eyes closed, then, as the bra fell to the floor, he opened them slowly, staring at her.

“Oh my God! Susan.... Oh God, you’re beautiful! He moved in and she felt the hot wet of his mouth. Something, some pathways, some wires connected within the core of her body which never connected before. She hugged him to her with her inner arms and useless hands. His hands were plying the mysteries of her belt and skirt.

Jane, I loved him. I loved him from the moment our eyes met. He was a natural part of me, do you understand what I’m saying? He was part of my flesh and soul and I was part of his: immediate, perfect, unquestioned possession. Now you know! I always wanted you to know. I loved him! Your father!

*C. Descry*

I'm so sorry I lied to you. I said you wouldn't have liked him. Now you know! You were a love child, not a biological experiment. You were born of the greatest experience I ever had. He was my first, and Jane, I was his first! That should make a difference to you. I mean just knowing! You're somebody special, and you *are* more like him than me!

Oh Mother, how could you...?

## Chapter 14

*Time is a circle, each part equidistant. Time doesn't go outward, it isn't linear. We are here or then and always now.*

**THE GRAY LIGHT WAS BACK**, glowing in the blackness as ghosts flicker in illusions. The cold numbing, penetrating. Her head so cold her sinuses hurt. She freed her hands and raised them to try to warm her head. Her hair! Where was her beautiful hair? She felt the irregular, uneven chopped remnants, short! Gone! They... Who? Who would take her hair?

*Oh my God! Where was I? Where was I? The siege? No, I was only an observer. He pulled me back before they broke through the stockade. The old hags? Somehow they...? My whole body hurts. I can't remember. I've been somewhere back then, but I can't remember.... Or? No damn it! It can't be! They came here? They...? They're the globes of energy I saw? Do I look like that to them when I go there? That's got to be it! Those glowing things around me. That's them, they came for me, hurt me, took my hair—chopped it off like they do their own. My God! How do I protect myself?*

*My journals...? Good, they're here. I have so much to... pages and pages of writings. Observations that will shake them to the core. I'll be an embarrassment because what they thought, wrote about; concluded was wrong. They won't believe me. Oh yes they will, now that I leave markers chalked on walls, now that I leave my moon and snake in the past for them to find, for me to confirm what I know; where I've been. But*

C. Descry

*the test? I was going to... have to do it! I've got to get that bastard! I can pick my time, the place, the thing that will screw him up forever and discredit him and those who were used as they tried to use him. I've got to have a plan. Think Raven, what can I do? How can I get my revenge?*

*Don't worry, Jane, it will come to us. Relax! Think! Who are we? I'll try to define myself.*

Once in fumbling time  
I stepped on woven strands  
and walked within the souls  
of ancestor's past, theirs and mine

A time of specter's resonances  
spirit's auras  
ghost's glowing orbs  
and past lives dances

I traveled far until I found  
the truth as known to few  
only available to searchers  
those wisdom bound

Oh take this, Gods and men  
what I learned will change your ways  
knowledge is my charge  
expanding the human ken.

*You made it up, Raven? It's like you, that poetry.  
And this? Is this me?*

*Love, a trap a pen  
that's what they feared  
Why they turned from men  
why they jeered*

*That's what they learned  
Love is always slanted  
death unearned  
The seed however planted*

*Women different then  
victims of their nature  
no options, no hope of when  
unable to mature*

*And so we are the first  
to raise above  
to quench our thirst  
to know freed love*

*I made it up. I'm always better at feelings than  
you—you can ever be.*

True, I'm not as emotional. That's how I survive.

*Only when we work together to overcome  
Stewart's lies, the others. We're strong when we work  
together.*

And what was all that about Father?

*I always knew I was born out of love, that someone  
like him loved me.*

You always knew, but now we know for sure and it sets us  
free.

*Our father which art in heaven... He's dead you  
know. He died in Viet Nam. They killed him there,  
called it "fragging." "One order too many," his  
commander said.*

How do you know that?

*Mother told me—but she didn't know I would make  
the connection. She said he was a distant cousin,  
someone she had heard about but never met. I knew*

C. Descry

*she lied. No one grieves that way for a distant cousin.  
I know for whom she grieved.*

You grieve.

*For whom? Stewart?*

Don't be silly! Danny, you never think about him. Why not?

*He's dead too. "Camero poisoning" his friend Bob  
called it. Said he always knew Danny and a car like  
that were fire and gasoline.*

Yes, but you loved him.

*Sure, but not like my first love.*

Oh, so Stewart took it all, more than just your credibility, your  
reputation?

*He took the magic and left me with—well, he left  
me wiser I guess, but the life-shattering thrill was  
gone—gone even with Danny. And I did love him, you  
know that! But Raven, it wasn't the same.*

I know that! Is that why you let me have him?

*Sure. You loved him—we loved him in a gentle  
way, not a wild passionate way, through you tried.*

The wild territories of our love were settled country when we  
got there. He knew that.

*You think he did?*

Of course! You know he had his first love bottled up inside  
him just like you did. He couldn't get enough of... do you think it  
was the magic? Total infatuation? Is that what he couldn't find?

*You mean why he drove that road, picked that  
overpass? Sure, why not? I guess so. Damn! I'm  
through talking about this shit. It makes me sad.*

Yeah, go away I have lots of work to do.

*Raven, you've got to get Stewart!*

I know. I'm working on a plan.

*Did you know they took my hair? My beautiful  
raven black hair?*

Of course I know.

Raven's Chance

*Candlelight is magic. The men sit so still, and it makes them move, or seem to. What I see is movement in their morphic fields. The intertwining of their spirit souls. And I sense terror, their terror, released into time as they drank the poison and felt it taking their lives away. They were concentrating.... Of course, that's why their fields are so powerful. They were joined in their leap, knowing that dead they would continue to live. They knew so much more than we do about the spirit world and time. Did they sit here these thousand years waiting for me? Why would they if they could travel? Of course they didn't. But what did they do while they waited for me? Wait! Of course! There is no time, no wait. Time is a circle, each part equidistant. Time doesn't go outward, it isn't linear. We are here or then and always now.*

*But I'm not sure I want to go back. Why? What can I learn I don't already know or suspect? They break down the stockade and butcher them all, don't they? They torture and brutalize and make an example out of them, right? I don't need to see that. I won't go back to that time and place with you. There is so much I need to know....*

*What about you? You, the quiet one who sits there through time as if you didn't care. Were your times as full of brutality and suffering? I always thought you came from the west. Sinagua? Pai, a desert people? I wish I could understand your language. Where do you come from? Show me! But I won't go if you show me man as a savage animal.*

*Desert! Grass-patch desert. Erosion-raw desert. Colors gray, dun, pale yellow, weak brown stains—interspersed layers of oxides of iron, ochre pigments*



C. Descry

*ranging from orange to deep yellow. Hills and the remaining root-mass mounds of long dead prominences, deltas of washed earth, abraded sandstone pillars cut away by stinging sand. Plants, stunted life forms, craving water, sun and wind burned, nestling together in little pockets within the rocks which clothe the land. Desert harshness responsible for the hair on tarantulas and scorpions—tough scales on snakes, thick fur on kangaroo mice, the thickening hides on men. Desert fruits found ringed or covered with spines, jutting up from crowns of yucca spears, hiding beneath the sands as tubers, clinging roots. Desert hot and cold, bare to the elements. Home to his people. I can peck my marks here, into this protected boulder's face. Full moon. Creepy snake!*

*You live out here? Why not find the river valleys or elevations where rain and snow nourish the land?*

*Safety?*

*Oh, I see. But your people—you—your women? They're tough. I mean hardened, thin, encased in the wrinkled, dirty leather of their hides. They don't look safe—I mean not safe from hunger, sandstorms, cold and heat.*

*Oh! Safe from other humans. That's what you mean, isn't it?*

*So you live in small bands like this, surviving in an environment where nature doesn't want you to survive. And the tradeoff is? Of course! Freedom! No! Not freedom! Survival. Life!*

*And for that you give up softness and beauty? A full belly and.... Does hiding out here in the wastelands deprive you of beauty, love and softness?*

*I understand. You can't know those states—don't know about them—can't crave what you don't know.*

*There must be love?*

*You don't know what I mean?...Why?*

*Oh, interdependency! That bonds you together.*

*Why not love?*

*Because—I'll bet I know. Because you dare not love!*

*A mother knows the child will die, most do. If she bonds with... of course! That love would drive her mad. So she ignores the life within her belly, she births a baby, she cannot let herself bond. She shuts down insanity and survives. And a man? Women die. Children die, friends die. Love would destroy you all. Love is a form of dementia you cannot afford to have.*

*Then you really live your life walled-up in yourself. Surviving, using, following basic drives and instincts. Totally alone, but dependent on others who you learn to use.*

*I see you so clearly! What you are is in me too—it's in each of us, stronger than we can admit. We nurture the insanity because we're safe to experiment with love and the beauty it inspires. Love is our madness, unleashed when we left the deserts....*

C. Descry

## Chapter 15

*“I can work you like an instrument, a fine violin or a woodwind played with breath and fingers. I can touch you like a harp or... I need so much to tangle myself in you and disappear.”*

**COLD! PENETRATING THROUGH FLESH** to chill bone and slow organs. Pain! Penetrating through consciousness, reaching the subconscious, the core, the networks, the axons and dendrites of life. Angst! Thoughts teetering between apprehension and depression, empty pits that bottom in futility. Hope...?

*I don't have hope! I've lost my expectations of fulfillment. Did I ever have expectations? Yes, and that's part of what he took—I lost. He sapped those positive energies. I gave them away—why? Why did I give them so freely?*

She felt strange, as if they were wheeling her on a gurney; floating her in cold water; separating her from her body. The glowing orbs were around her, moving her, probing, forcing her body; needle pains and clamping pressure. And noise, the echoing reflections of empty caves with cold hard walls, the sounds bouncing off her and melding away as shadows. Meaningless sounds, sadness and cruelty; one and the same. Naked, exposed. Violated! Assaults on her innermost being. Floating. Floating in icy cold water. Numb to the core. Hurt, damaged beyond human endurance. Broken into.... Burned through with heat; amperage. They made progress, their own.

The candles. Who took them? I had half a box left.... I must have light!

Don't laugh at me you desiccated men! **she mouthed**, You sit there, so smug and sure! Don't you care I'm trapped in here now

*Raven's Chance*

too? The rock slid! The massive sandstone block, part of the arch.... I guess it slid...? And we can't get out! And the candles...? Oh thank God! The box is on the ground.

Let there be light! Oh I wonder if anyone ever knew what that meant before. Light and heat. The hot wax smell of security. Janie, because you loved, were you insane?

*I think so. But it wasn't love that made me crazy, it was love absorbed and used and never returned. I loved Danny! I gave him... and he couldn't return it. He took love with him when he killed himself.*

I know what Stewart did to you, Jane. It was the same as Danny did to us, only that SOB professor is still alive.

*You poor dead men. I'm trapped in here the same way you are. Only there's only me now! The poison? Would it work, Raven? Could I mix water with it and...? But if I go back? Where would I go? I don't want to stay here with you, my field drifting forever. I don't want to spend eternity mixed with your fields! Tell me! Damn it, tell me! At least give me a clue so I can end this!*

*Nothing!... I could wait here forever—of course they don't know! They can't answer, they don't have an answer. I have to find my own. If I could get warm. If I could think clearly....*

"So Danny, why won't you come to Arizona with me? You could finish your research there. I know the sites. You could finish your doctorate and I could help you."

"Because I—I have a.... Forget it! I just can't. I can't come with you Jane, at least not yet. You know I love you, babe! You're beautiful inside and out! I never dreamed I'd meet a woman like you. I never imagined someone with the body of a goddess and the brain of a scholar. I could wrap myself up in you and live forever in a moment. You've got to know, my beautiful raven-hair girl, I love you."

C. Descry

"I don't understand. What's more important than our love?"

"Ghosts, I guess. Things that happened to me before I even dreamed of anyone like you. I have a dark side—I call it that—I must conquer it before I join you, or I'll hurt you, I'm sure of that."

"I don't believe you! I would have seen that side. Who is she? Do you love someone else? Did you?"

"I did. That was long ago. She was nothing like you. There's no need for you to worry about her."

"So? What do we do?" She wiped the tears from her eyes, cheeks and where they fell from her chin, but more followed. Without him there's nothing but emptiness and—nothing!

"I can show you I love you Janie. I can give something to you will never forget. I can touch your heart and let you touch mine. Now ain't that poetic?"

"You mean make love, not just sex, but love! Right?"

"I can work you like an instrument, a fine violin or a woodwind played with breath and fingers. I can touch you like a harp or.... I need so much to tangle myself in you and disappear."

"Like love everlasting? Like juices mixing together? Like possessing your body until I feel it as my own? I understand! I want that Danny."

"I want to be you! I want to sense your sex, your pleasure, your fantasies as my own. I want to feel what you feel. I want to know a woman—You! I want you to know me, a man, how I feel."

"I can love that way! I do!"

"Oh you beautiful woman, I'm trying."

That was the clue you know! He told you he couldn't love again.  
*I know, Mother. I know now!*

But you still think it was you—something you did? You admit you couldn't give your all either. That your heart was scabbed over. That you were only trying to recall the magic.

*You're wrong Mother! I found a new and better magic. I knew what I felt with him was richer, fuller—far better than anything I had before. Mature love, not the shallow emotional pangs and urges I felt the first time. Mine was really love!*

And he couldn't get to that level? Is that what you know? Or is that what you want to believe? You know you didn't survive his loss. How will you deal with that now? How will you get over it!

*Maybe it is "Better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all." Maybe, I can love again. I don't know. I think I have to try!*

I love you Jane, you know that! I want the best for you. As a Mother, I have to tell you—someone who loves you has to tell you—you can't reclaim the professional standing Stewart stole from you. He poisoned your peers against you. Whatever you do, however you present it, the virus he planted will do its work and discredit you. You can make the greatest discoveries of all time, and they will discount your work and shun you. Darling, accept that! Get past it. Get another direction to your life, get back in the world and find happiness.

*I hear you Mom. But—but I discovered something in my tomb. I found a way to change things! Wait and see! Watch me! I've discovered a potent virus. I'm going to get the bastard!*

C. Descry

## Chapter 16

*He never really lied. Everything he said was based upon some degree of truth.*

**SHE SAW HIM WORKING HIS WAY THROUGH** the students gathered on the bridge. Beautiful golden and orange leaves lay where the storm had swept them into drifts of crunchy color. Drifts of magic he kicked through as he made his way toward her. His hair, shorter now, but he still dressed in the same penny loafers, polished cotton slacks and button down oxford cloth shirt. He had a yellow V neck sweater thrown over his shoulder; held by the crook of his index finger. He used his briefcase with authority, like professors do when they walk through students.

She smiled as he saw her, turned and sat on the arm of the wrought iron bench, not bothering to brush away fallen leaves.

Well! Don't you look great! How was the summer? You didn't write much. Did you enjoy being in the field? Did you complete the dig?

"Great summer. We confirmed the Chacoan outlier site. Amazing! There were layers of San Juan loaf-shaped sandstone blocks, then layers of carefully chinked Chacoan masonry, then on top of that, more San Juan. That confirms the.... Stewart, you're looking great! You wrote your divorce is final. How have you been?"

Free! I missed you. She heard the fake sincerity in his voice. Heard what he really said, as if there were two levels when he spoke. It was his body language. She read it now, now that she had had so many years to analyze him and understand his amorality.

"And the research? You're editing?"

Problems there! No time! I planned to work through the summer and have it done. Didn't happen. I did everybody else's work.

She smiled. There was no way he could work without her. He didn't have the brains or the insights to edit the series. He hadn't accomplished anything, couldn't, without her. And the best thing, he couldn't check her work..

"I'm not sure that with this load I'm carrying this semester I'll have much time...." He paled, seemed to bind-up in the middle, slid off the arm of the bench, turned carefully and sat down next to her, crunching the leaves as he let his breath out.

You're the only student with the gift, the brains to work with me. Oh, I guess I can find other help... But this is so important! This is your project as well as mine. This is your opportunity for greatness. He paused, the hurt puppy, the dying professor dedicated to science and research, the man whose charisma and position would change the profession, if only she would help.

"I know, but I'm carrying some pretty tough courses. I...."

Like what? I can get them waived. You can test out, I'll see to that. And I'll tell you what I can do, will do, for you Jane. I'll set up an independent study program. Guaranteed A's. You know that stuff, no use sitting on your butt in classes listening to my boring, never-do-anything-right-or-original colleagues.

"You would do that for me? I could graduate with my class then?" She *had* the bastard! How would he wiggle out of this one?

Well, 'er—I.... Of course! But it would be unfair of me to let you graduate unprepared. Tell you what! If, and I mean IF, I see by what you



C. Descry

accomplish as you work with me... when I know you're ready, I'll personally put your name on the list, Doctor Alexander!

"You really will? Oh thank you Professor." She had a hard time being sincere, but he never noticed, wouldn't have noticed. He had his agenda and stayed oblivious to anyone else's.

*It's tempting, what could go wrong, Raven?*

You could fall in love with him again, Jane, that's what! Don't risk it!

*I have to, Raven. I want to know for sure. Don't you see, I have to know if what I felt, the reason I gave in to him, let him use me, was really that powerful. I have to know, was it him or me? I don't know now. Was I in love with love or with him? Didn't I try to use him? I know him, now. He attracts people who think they can use him. Wasn't I one of those? Didn't I want a mature man to teach me about sex? Didn't I want a father? Wasn't it me? I have to know.*

He gave her his charismatic smile. You don't mind working here? Staying late?

"It seems strange. I mean, I know you see other women. I heard about Dana and...."

That's nothing. They're promising students. I'm simply helping Dana with a project—letting her work on something important.

"I understand." She kept the bitterness out of her voice. She didn't speak as they walked to his apartment. She seethed, only her plan kept her from revealing her contempt.

I've brought this work home. I wanted it together where I could concentrate on it.

"Everything we've done? Good! I need to refresh my memory, go back and check things. Let's get started."

Well, I—I've missed you. We were so close. I feel distant somehow. I need to trust you again.

She almost laughed, then felt a wave of fear. What if he sensed...? What if he didn't trust her, let her work unsupervised, let her have the access she needed.

You know, you're getting even more beautiful. The sun and hard work did wonders. It's good to be away from someone—lets me know how important you are.

Well, she thought, that's an understatement. He never really lied. Everything he said was based upon some degree of truth.

Can we... I mean?

He leaned over and cradled her chin in his hand, moving his thumb slowly, erotically across her lips.

"You make me...."

No, you make me hot! Come on! He led her to the bed she remembered so well, like a stage or launching platform.

She felt her body react, the blinding power of response, of thoughts, of anticipated pleasures. She felt it but.... She kept a part of her mind free, standing outside of herself, an observer.

He moved around her, touching, petting, unbuttoning, sliding inside her clothing. He was good! She squeezed his arm, sensed his pulse, felt for heat and blinding passion. She felt a mechanical creature, making the right moves, uninterested. She sensed distance; coldness. Yet he was so good, good for her. She moved in sync with him as he undressed her. Then, she felt for him, knowing from experiences he would be almost flaccid; remembering what she didn't suspect then, a girl without comparable experiences, that he couldn't get fully aroused.

She couldn't help herself, couldn't hide her reaction.

He knew her thoughts, recoiled, caught!

*C. Descry*

I—I've been working too hard. I haven't been getting enough sleep. The whole department is on my case. My projects, everything is....

"Shhh! You don't have to tell me, I know. I understand. Don't worry, I'll help you get the work done. We'll have time to be together." She could maul the truth too—well—not as easily as he lied.

He was going to continue working her body, if not his own. She knew he felt obligated: afraid to let her get away without pleasing her, making her respond to him; need him. The thought of his touch chilled her. She felt leaden, used, dirty.

Her energy came back strong as her plan to get even unfolded! She laughed and sang inside. She was free! Free to plant her strain of virus! Free to send him of a fools errand, searching forever for a treasure that didn't exist. She pushed him away, smiled sweetly and dressed.

It took several hours. She worked late into the night. It was so simple. A comment here, a quote added there, the modification of a summary. Finally she was satisfied. It was done. She laughed as she flew swiftly back to the pitch-black comfort of her cave, anxious to meld into the future and observe the results of her strategy.

She saw Stewart sitting on a wide ledge running along the western face of a great sandstone canyon—only the sandstone wasn't red, it was beige, sand tan. "Mesa Verde sandstone," she acknowledged.

He drew in a thick, worn notebook filled with sketches. She moved closer. Moons. Snakes. Drawings he had made in alcoves across the southwest where she had chalked them. Excitement made her tingle.

He sat stiff as he sketched the chalked moon and snake so prominent in the alcove. More proof. A few more sites and they would have to believe him. They attacked his work. Called him a fraud. Laughed him off the podium

at the Pecos Conference where he had presented his brilliant new theory. Now he could prove the conclusions he—well, actually it was Jane—had made about moon and snake clans dominating southwest cultures—and cults, female domination cults. They would have to accept women were in control. He would win back his reputation. He'd show them! Damn them all, he'd show them!

She noted his age, very old. He had been wandering for years, a desert prospector searching for his Lost Dutchman Mine. His sun bleached, worn clothes clung to his emaciated body. His eyes, wildly dancing beads in the depths of dark orbitals. Leather-like skin clung to the bones of his face, wrinkling down from chin to neck as frenum.

She heard him mumbling away what little time he had left, and smiled to suppress a twinge of guilt that crept into her heart.

"You've lived out the plan you had for me, you bastard!"

Her words, blasting his isolation, shocked him. He turned and saw her—the glimmering orb of Raven in her beautiful gauze dress—and half stood. The thin walls of his heart oozed out his precious juice. He grabbed at his chest with withered hands and fell to his knees, staring.

You? He exhaled acknowledgment with his last gasp.

"You discredited me Stewart. You planted a virus in my files... but not like the misinformation I planted in yours. Moons and snakes," a shrill laugh escaped her throat. "My revenge!"

She stood, the victor, tall, shoulders back, proud of herself as he pitched forward, nose rutting the dirt, face down, looking into hell.

Her body ached, but joy gave her strength. The cave was cool and.... She was free of him. She had so much to do. So many things to confirm. She had to go out and

*C. Descry*

complete her research. Map the sites, publish her findings, get her mail and candles. She was almost out of candles.

In the evening she made her way down canyon to the water hole. The last glow of a glorious day was bleeding from the sky. The warm air drained down from the canyon rim. Stars were beginning to show, the sky was deep purple. There might be a sliver of new moon, there it was, setting now. She placed her foot—on nothing!

She knew before she hit the sandstone ledge she had stepped off into space.

## Chapter 17

*She felt a rough hand on her cheek, a thumb and forefinger forcing her eye open, and the pain of a blinding light.*

**SHE FELT AS IF SHE WERE MOVING** on a magic carpet, a board on rollers, a hard chassis vibrating jerkily as it rolled along a corridor which never ended.

She was conscious, aware of the terrible penetrating cold, the pain in her temples and the aching waves of pain which came from every muscle in her body. She kept her eyes closed, seeing lights pass bright then dim above her as she floated by.

She felt a bump that jarred her sore body, heard something hit and scrape, heard a curse, not hers. They lifted her up, swinging her as in a hammock, and dropped her carelessly onto something padded. Covers seemed to fall over her like clouds—no real warmth, but the promise of...?

She lay limp, fearing the pain movement brought. She sensed creatures standing around her, and trembled with her fear of ancient hags.

She lay listening. Heard mumbled sounds... voices not directed at her, hushed mumbling about...?

If the ice bath and shock combination haven't done the trick, we're through with her! Tell me if there's any response this time!

She forced her eyelids open a crack, freeing the lashes from the crust of dried tears, barely exposing her eyes. She made out colored blobs of bright light—then large, blue-green orbs moving about her. She felt a rough hand

*C. Descry*

on her cheek, a thumb and forefinger forcing her eye open, the pain of a blinding light. The hand withdrew, she felt and heard a blinding slap which knocked her head to the side. She gasped from the shock and pain radiating down through her neck and along the length of her abused body.

Wake up damn you! Come back!

## Epilogue

THE RED ROCKS STOOD IN COLONNADES marking the borders of town. Distant clouds built fortifications over remote, wild canyons. Tourists drove through Sedona slowly, looking for Snoopy Rock or Coffee Pot. The October day heralded air of a perfect temperature: body temperature, she guessed. How long had it been? Maybe three years? No, longer. Whole parts of time were blanked out, unknown but desperately needed. Whole parts...? Well, she was here now. She had to know.

The small market had moved, but at least it was still here. No, Freddy wasn't there any longer. He bought a gas station in old town. Yeah, he'd be there. Married too. Has a family.

"Freddy!"

"What? My Gawd! Is it you Doc? Thought ya wuz never comin' back. Where ya been?" He knew. Everybody knew they found her injured on the trail in Prophet Canyon, she'd been in a coma for years. They'd taken her to some sanitarium or nut house somewhere.

"Lots of places! Central America, over at Chaco in New Mexico, Colorado. Hopi Mesas, Out on the deserts toward Nevada."

"I heard ya wuz in the hospital."

"True. I was. I'm okay now. Listen Freddy. You have a wrecker, right?"

"One ton. Good ol' rig. Ya stuck or somethin'?"

"Remember my Blazer?"

"Ya. Old ugly beige Jimmy."

"I had to leave it. I need to get it out now. Can I hire you? Tires will probably be flat. Won't run. You'll have to tow it out. Then can you fix it?"

"Up in Secret Mountain Wilderness?"



*C. Descry*

“Head of Prophet Canyon. There is a—a good county road most of the way. Never had a problem getting in or out when it was dry. Should be easy. I’ll pay you extra.”

“Sounds to me like fun. I kin fix any of them old ones. Why’d ya cut yur hair? It was always so long.”

“Easier to keep clean, I guess that’s why. I’m growing it back. It’ll take years....”

“Them places ya wuz. Must not have been good fer ya. Ya looks, well, ya had a hard time of it, right?”

“I hear you got married?”

“Yeah. Couldn’t wait fer ya.” He breathed out a hollow, wanting laugh. “She got knocked-up. Good enough, I guess. Have success with her help.”

“When do you want to go in?”

“An hour. That okay? Got ta git my man to cover. You goin’?”

“I need to. The truck’s hidden. And, Freddy, if we have time? I want to go back up to the cave I found.”

“Geeze! Them guys looked fer it fer weeks. Said there weren’t no such cave. That you probably camped in your truck.”

“Who? What guys?”

“Ya know, that professor Adamson guy, cain’t think his first name. And a bunch a others. Said they wuz Forest Service, I recall. Never found nothin’. Said yu wuz.... Well, you know, them’s the ones said ya wuz crazy.”

“They wanted to steal my work.”

“Ya, I know. They came back here ‘bout a month or so later. Said they caught ya. Said ya fell and was in the hospital. That’s how come I knowed.”

“Oh.”

The Chevy Crew Cab had been stripped of its bed and made into a wrecker. In low, it could go almost anywhere. Its biggest problem, its turning radius. Freddy had to back and turn, back and turn several times to make it up the

slickrock and over to the draw where she left the Blazer. He didn't see it, kept saying, "Its gots to be already gone," until she pointed it out under the boughs in a clump of great junipers. Red dust on the hood next to the windshield had turned to earth and the earth sprouted grasses. Even when he saw it, it was almost invisible.

"Good hidin' place ya got Doc."

"They ever say they found it?"

"Naw. They didn't. If'n they did, it wouldn't be here now."

"I hid the key in a big hole in the trunk of the juniper over there. I hope it's still there."

"I ain't reachin in ta get it. Widders and stuff in there. Gotta git me a stick or wire."

"You got it! Okay, do you need me for a little while? I can go up to the cave and get my stuff while you work here."

"I kinda thought I'd go up there with ya. You know, I'd like ta, and you seems weak to me. Not strong like ya wuz."

"Okay. But you have to promise me something Fred. The cave's our secret. Never tell anyone about it. Do you promise, or I..."

"I do. And my fingers ain't crossed nor nothin'."

"When I publish my research, I'll note you were involved. You'll get good credits."

"Like I wuz finally an archaeologist like I dreamed?"

"Like you dreamed."

She led, walking as fast as she could, stopping often to catch her breath. She felt smaller, frail. He had to help her up over the edge of a big boulder, and stabilize her on the way down.

"How far we got's ta go?"

"Not far."

*C. Descry*

“Yeah, but them guys searched all the way down there, all around.”

“And not up here, Right?”

“Don’t think so. Ain’t nothin’ up here fer Indians.”

“That’s what they thought. We’re almost there.”

“Ya cain’t crawl in there, could be a lion!”

“Maybe, but I don’t think so. I’m going in.”

She made her way as she had so many times before. In, up, over and up and around until she found the opening she clawed out so long ago. She worried about him. Bringing him here was a mistake.

“Black as pitch in there! Sure there ain’t no lion?”

“No, I’d smell it. Stay back until I find a light!”

Jane dropped down and her foot hit her backpack, exactly where she left it. She made her way along the wall to the ledge where she had set so many candles, felt along the wax until—the box! Candles. Matches. She fumbled one of the candles from the cardboard box. Straightening the wick, she struck a flame, and let the flickering element meet the source it would consume—a short-lived, flaming entity capable of dominating everything in the cave. Steadying her hand, holding the candle on its side, she let flame from the match lick its base until the wax glistened. With a quick movement she stuck it butt-down on the wax covered sandstone ledge, cradling it until it stood erect.

Glowing candlelight ate the darkness, revealing rough, uneven walls; roan colored sandstone backdrops against which moving shadows differentiated themselves. A concave ceiling patterned by root-like fractures, stained by long-dry seeps of mineral-laden water and veneers of carbon from the juniper smoke tongues of ancient fires.

She turned, then, knowing her insanity would be confirmed or...?

They sat as before.

*Raven's Chance*

It took a moment for her to accept that they were there. She moved slowly around the circle of men, in and out of morphic fields, sensing resonances, reliving the gifts they had given her.

“Doc! Doc! I cain’t stand it back in here, dark like it is. I got ta get out. Ya okay? Ya got light? Ya mind if’n I goes back a little?”

“It’s okay Freddie. I’m fine. I’ll grab my stuff. I’ll gather it and be right out.

Thank God he didn’t come in, Jane. Stupid move bringing him up here.

“My friends, you must tell me what I should do. What would repay you men for everything you gave me?”

Their thoughts came to her as words from many mouths; vibrating pleas, resonating appeals.

“I—but then I could never come back.”

“Okay, I understand.”

She picked up her journals, relieved as she glanced through several that they were filled with her notes and observations. Then stood, staring, studying, enjoying the scene she had first seen so many sun circles before.

“Be with your own, in your own time, now and forever.” Tears filled her eyes as she said goodbye. She turned away, knowing if she didn’t go now, she never would.

Raven, come, it’s time.

You don’t need me anymore. I can’t stay here. I’ll come—be with you, the part you hide inside, just in case.

She turned, and pushing the loaded pack ahead, crawled out of the tomb of her dreams. She put the pack down and went back to the place she dug through the rock fall to find them trapped inside. As fast as she could, she closed the small entrance with rocks. Moving back, she found a long stick and loosened rocks above the entrance. They slid down, filling the window, providing a deeper

*C. Descry*

veneer of concealment. Dust boiled out around her as she climbed into the sunlight, coughing and wiping her eyes.

“My Gawd, what happened in there?”

“Spiders, Freddie! Horrible black spiders and snakes. Rattlesnakes! Like you feared. I got my stuff where I hid it. Rocks fell... I barely made it out. Wasn't a cave, as you guessed, Freddie, just a hole I stuck my pack in. Did you see it?”

“Naw. I knew there wuz spiders! I got's closetrophobia! Did ya get everythin' ya come fer?”

“Yes, I did! Everything I ever dreamed of!

## About the Author

**DESCRY'S WORKS** range from mysteries set on the Colorado Plateau and the Sea of Cortez, to serious studies of human dynamics.

*"I do, I observe, I listen. I write in the most candid way possible. I research. I put as much accuracy in my novels as I can. My characters are composites. I don't expose family secrets or those of people I love, but I deal with real issues. At heart I'm a teacher."*

Descry was born in Colorado and now lives in Prescott, Arizona with his wife and two sons. His background in education, archaeology, business, travel, and adventures of all kinds, comes through in his writing. Few authors have such a rich and varied experience base to draw from. He has been called a Renaissance Man, a Social Critic, a Teacher's Teacher. He's been a thorn in the side of the educational status-quo for forty years.

Descry is currently researching a book focused on the Inupiaq Eskimos in Alaska and the dynamics of their land above the arctic circle.

The variety of his writings is evident in:

***Unscrewed! The Education of Annie***, a narrative by a baby-boom generation woman. Descry explores marriage and family, relationships, sexuality and the formative effects of doing battle with public institutions. It is the first candid look—from a parent's point of view—at the parental choice movement and charter schools. Perhaps the most accurate insight yet into women of our times.

***The Spirit of the Estuary***, a history-mystery told through the life of a murdered Seri Indian woman. It is set in the northern Sea of Cortez (Gulf of California) region of

Mexico, and gives the reader a spectacular view of the northern coast and the Colorado River Delta. Reviewers describe it as a work of art and education.

***The Spirits in the Ruins***, a history-mystery which challenges the reader's detective abilities as Arnie Cain attempts to solve the century old murder of a Native American leader. Descry provides insights into the illegal trade in Anasazi grave goods, and a previously untold history of the Ute Mountain Ute Indian people. The first positive Ute history written.

***The Spirit of the Sycamore***, a tantalizing and complex history-mystery that explores discord and harmony in Sedona, Arizona, which is one of the Planet's important spiritual energy centers, and one of the Earth's most beautiful places. Sycamore is a study of a unique Arizona town that attracts rabid developers, greedy public officials, retirees and seekers of spiritual magic and solace.

**Descry** is emerging as a writer who, rather than adopting one style and a formula, uses different ways of communicating. Each of his books is presented through a different voice. His subject matter is as varied as his life and interests.

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