

SURVIVAL AS DEMOCRACY DIES

*THE NEAR FUTURE
NORTH AMERICA*

GARRY HAMILTON



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PROLOGUE

The Near Future

In the distant past huge herds of dinosaurs roamed the Earth. The methane gas they produced caused a warming effect throughout the entire globe. There was tropical plant and animal life from pole to pole. Due to a spectacular asteroid

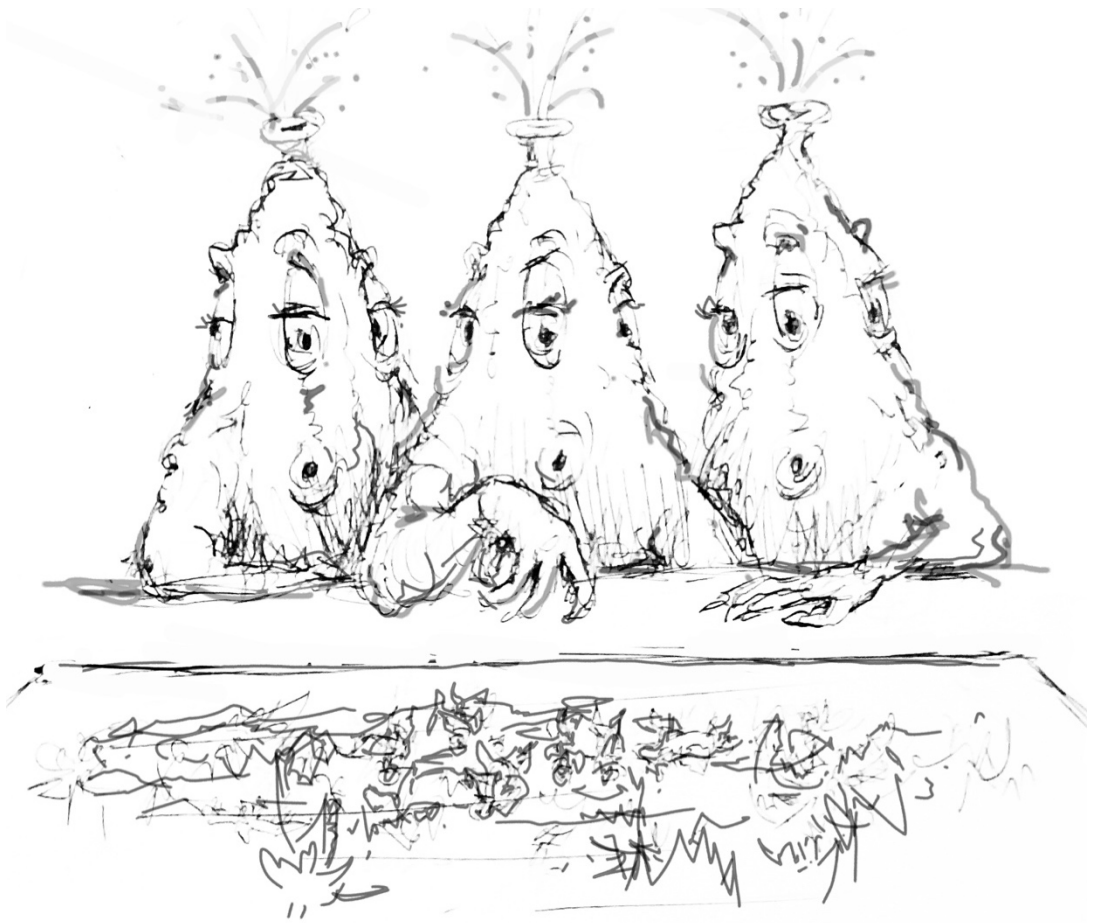
collision this ecological system suddenly ended.

Fast forward to the near future. Prehistory has repeated itself at an accelerated pace. The polar ice caps have melted. The seas around the globe have risen submerging much of the land mass.

There is mass migration of animals and humans around the globe. The

response of many countries of the perceived invaders has resulted in many democracies succumbing to dictatorships.

The USA has invaded Canada. A group of six disparate, desperate individuals have united in fleeing and ultimately defying the invasion. Meanwhile from above the Earth's atmosphere, a



space ship piloted by
three aliens are watching
the rapid changes taking
place on the planet below.

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EAGLE EYE GETS LUCKY

Eagle Eye felt a bead of sweat trickle down his forehead. It meandered down over his brow. He felt a salty sting as it crept into his right eye. He blinked but kept focus on the bushes about thirty paces ahead.

Full concentration, loaded crossbow pointed directly at those same

bushes. He breathed in and out slowly, his breath out of sync with his heart which was beating like a jackhammer so loud he could hear it. He wished he had an AR-15. He wished he had a bazooka, a grenade. He didn't.

What he had was a crossbow. Probably enough time for a single shot, if he was lucky. It had to be a kill shot.

Anything less, and he would be ripped apart, his guts, pieces of him splattered everywhere, like a G.I. Joe doll in a blender. He had a bowie knife in a sheath hanging from his belt. He had Daphne the wolf, hackles raised uttering a low growl by his side. Let's face it, if he had to rely on those two things for his defense, he was a goner.

He was a good marksman. A really good marksman, able on most days if there wasn't too much breeze to put an arrow right in the center of a bullseye a hundred feet away.

That would be true usually for seven out of ten shots, if he had several seconds to aim and there was no breeze.

There was no breeze,
thank God. Would he have
several seconds?
Probably, but no more
than that.

Okay where should he
aim for? What would be
potential kill shots? The
animal would be facing
him, so a shot in the heart
would be difficult. For a
facing shot the massive
sternum and rib cage

might deflect the arrow away from the heart.

Nope. The only shot that might stop an animal this huge was through an eye into its brain, or better still, through its open mouth, also into its brain. He felt a whisper of a breeze, saw leaves flutter slightly.

Suddenly a loud crack of breaking brush as a huge bear suddenly exploded out of the



bushes. It charged directly toward him, its mouth gaping open, spittle flying from side to side. How could a beast this

huge move so fast? And yet for Eagle Eye time seemed to slow down. He saw the bear charging and himself aiming, almost as if he were detached from his body, and observing the scene from above.

He saw himself release the trigger of the crossbow. He saw the arrow travel forward it seemed in slow motion, in repeated images fusing

into each other in sequence, himself diving, almost floating to the side. He heard a brief humming sound as the arrow flew forward, followed by a whoosh of air and flying fragmented foliage rising then falling like confetti.

The bear careened past him, its legs slack, but its body carried past him by the sheer momentum of



the charge. The arrow vibrated briefly, the feathered end protruding out of the bear's open mouth.

Eagle Eye held on to his crossbow as he rose shakily to his feet, his eyes fixed on the bear. It wasn't moving. He turned and gave a thumbs up to the group behind him. Then he leaned to his side and retched.

Behind him mixed reactions. The other five members in the group were trembling with fear. There was nervous

giggling from some. Tears flowed freely down Chip's cheeks. Her hands cradling the sides of her head as she turned her face skyward, a low crooning coming from deep within her throat. The others had no idea of the part she had played in guiding Eagle Eye's movements, or the arrow flightpath. Was he aware? Probably not.

Tiny, his immense hands balled into fists was trembling, his huge body suddenly covered in sweat, his deep set eyes wide open, the whites showing, focused on the bear, a low growl rumbling from deep within his huge chest.

Tammy had her fist pressed to her mouth to keep from screaming. Daphne her pet wolf

trotted back to her,
hackles beginning to
flatten down.

Pops stared straight
ahead, eyes focused on
the bear, then on Eagle
Eye, then one by one on
each of the others.

Holy Crap murmured
Muzak quietly to himself.
He was the youngest
member of their group of
six. Young, but athletic
and street smart. He had

escaped from juvenile detention services, and had been living on the streets from childhood. He had managed in the past to calm down contentious situations through his wit and humour.

A witty retort would definitely not have sufficed for this situation. Although the bear's mouth was gaping wide open in a horrific grin, that grin

wasn't a smile. Muzak was pretty sure the bear did not have a sense of humour. Certainly not in his present state.

Eagle Eye knelt beside the bear's head. He wiped away traces of vomit from his mouth onto his sleeve. He leaned his head back, and eyes closed, silently gave thanks to whatever forces had guided his arrow. He gave thanks to

the bear which was about to provide the group with food.

It had been a long trek through the backwoods in northern Quebec and the group was exhausted. Exhausted and hungry.

But not hungry for long. From the bear hind quarters, Eagle Eye cut off some choice parts. Over a roaring fire the group of six, feasted on roast bear.

Saliva dripping from her muzzle, Daphne their tame wolf uttered a low woof. Eagle Eye tossed a big piece of raw bear meat to her.



UNLIKELY RESCUES

Pops slowed down his
little red car as he cruised
past the crowded square

in East Montreal. Two American POWS were on the prowl looking for U.S refugees or trouble makers.

Actually, they just wanted some action. Heads to crack open with their crowd control batons. They were hoping for someone to resist their interrogation so they had an excuse to beat the hell out of them before

throwing them into a paddy wagon for detention in their new home, a crowded cell.

America had invaded Canada. U.S. military were in charge now. That was them. Right? So why not have a little fun beating up the locals? U.S. military were the law here now. Get used to it.

Pops pulled his car over to the curb and stopped.

He watched as the two military thugs chose their next target. A huge figure, head hunched down was slouching away from them. Although he may have been trying to appear smaller by his crouched over posture, it made his figure look even bulkier, bigger.

His body was broad, massive with unusually long arms covered in curly

dark hair. A shaggy mane of brown hair fell over his forehead covering the thick brow ridge over his deepset dark eyes.

He was dressed in standard light green medical lab clothing which strained against his immense bulk. He knew that he stood out in a crowd. He was attempting to put some distance between himself and the

two uniformed military
cops. The cops picked up
the pace, shoving people
out of their way as they
advanced. An old lady
staggered as one of the
cops elbowed her aside.
She swore at him *Maudite!*
de Sans Design! The cop
balled up his hand in a fist.
He didn't throw a punch
however. A slap on the
back of his head
staggered him and

interrupted his swing. A young man riding on a unicycle was looking at the military cop over his shoulder while riding away. He shook his hand limply from the wrist as if the slap he had delivered still stung. Then with the same hand he reached in his hip pocket and pulled out a harmonica.



While playing the harmonica, he tilted his hat in a wide sweeping theatrical gesture of you're welcome to the old lady. She cackled with laughter, and pointing toward him yelled *Mon Sauveur!* Peals of laughter from the crowd. The cops changed direction and charged

toward the unicycle riding musician.

He zigzagged expertly back and forth in front of them just beyond their reach while playing the William Tell overture on his harmonica, and lifting his hat up and down in time with the music.

His escape was assisted by the crowd who

kept getting in the way of the two cops. Pops by the curb in his little red car observed all that was happening, the unicycle riding musician and the huge mop haired figure who was the cop's initial target. The big guy was headed his way.

Hey Big Guy get in the back and get down,

whisper yelled Pops
motioning to the huge
stranger. Invitation
accepted in an instant.
The stranger dove in
through the back door and
laid prone on the floor in
the back. Pops eased
away from the curb and
into the slow moving
traffic, heading south on St.
Lawrence Blvd toward a

left at the intersection with Rue Sherbrooke.

The entire scene was being witnessed by another pair of eyes. Parked also by the curb, close enough to see all was a despondent young woman in a small pickup truck, beautiful with dark skin and a mass of curly auburn hair. She wiped

away tears and giggled at the sight of the military cops trying to catch the zigzagging musician.

The zoo in the Eastern townships an hour and a half drive from Montreal where Animal handler and custodian Tammy had spent so many happy hours had been forced to close after Canada had been invaded by the USA.



She loved the animals she had cared for. She had managed to rescue her two favourite animals, Eightball a donkey, and Daphne a tame wolf.

Daphne was riding
shotgun next to her.
Tammy sighed, mixed
emotions. The wolf placed
her paw on Tammy's
thigh.

Eightball the donkey,
was in the truck bed.

The unicycle riding
musician was pedaling her
way and the two cops
were about fifty feet
behind him cursing and

puffing, as they tried to follow his zigzag path.

She leaned out the window and yelled *Get in the back*.

Muzak tipped his hat toward the two cops, hopped down from his unicycle, tossed it in the back of the truck, and vaulted over the side and into the truck bed beside Eightball the donkey.

Tammy pulled swiftly away from the curb.

The stoplights at the intersection changed to green and off they went turning left on Sherbrooke, the same route as Pops and the burly stranger in the little red car had taken.

When they were far enough away, she stopped the truck and her passenger hopped out.

He came to the drivers side. *You okay?* He asked seeing her tearstained cheeks. *Yeah, I'm good* she smiled.

They decided to head north together, to escape this godawful invasion. He got in the cab, sitting next to Daphne. Daphne let out a low growl to let him know who was in charge. They headed north on a dirt road on the northwest

side of the Saint Lawrence River, now swollen to twice its previous width from decades ago. Tammy turned on the radio to see if the cops had filed a public warning with their description.

Nothing. The announcer repeated messages they had heard earlier about strange new mutated animals attacking people outside urban areas.

Nuclear power plants now
under water had leaked
radiation causing
mutations to wild life.

Old news. She turned
the radio off.

GOING MY WAY?

Chip munched on her last piece of chocolate bar. The afternoon sun was relentless. She was dizzy from dehydration, and she was afraid she couldn't walk much further.

She had to get away, to hide from the invaders. She had no plan, but she knew she must not get caught. What would they



do to her if they learned
of her unusual abilities?
After her car accident and

the ensuing brain surgery, the microchip that had been implanted in her head did more than just repair local nerve damage. It had given her connections to worldwide digital networks, abilities that the neurosurgeon silently wondered might happen.

He had no idea how impressive and extensive her new digitally repaired

brain had become.

Abilities way beyond
normal human brains.

Abilities shared by artificial
intelligence experiments
with similar chips that
were currently being
developed.

If the invaders knew of
her digital abilities she
would immediately be
captured. God only knows
what experiments they
might perform on her.

She closed her eyes. Beyond her eyesight around a curve in the road, a couple of kilometers away, she knew a motorcycle was approaching. Not because she heard it. She just knew it was there.

It was getting closer. She closed her eyes and focused on the biker. Like an out of focus photo his face, began to form. The

portrait stopped shifting, became clear. Short, but handsome, medium dark skin and eyes, broad cheekbones. She sensed his essence, his sense of himself, his personal history. She smiled with relief and opened her eyes.

The sound of the motorcycle hummed faintly, then louder. A Micmac First Nations man,

in his early thirties about five and a half feet tall, lean but muscular glanced up at the sky from time to time. He was checking for enemy spy drones. He kept the small motorcycle at a speed of seventy kilometers an hour, a speed he figured was the most efficient for gas mileage. He knew that soon the gas would run

out and he would be walking.

Chip walked out to the middle of the pot holed road, and prepared to wave her arms and flag him down. He skidded to a stop beside her. *Going my way?* She teased. Her voice was raspy from lack of water. He pulled out his almost empty water bottle and offered it to her.

Absolutely Pretty Lady.
They call me Eagle Eye.

She finished the water and climbed on behind him. She wrapped her arms around his waist, laid her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.

Tammy had spotted Pop's little red car abandoned after its gas tank had emptied. A bit further on were its former occupants Pops and his

huge rescued passenger
trudging along the
highway, now overgrown
with weeds. She slowed to
a stop and the two
strangers jumped into the
truck bed.

*Thanks, people call me
Pops. From the huge
stranger in a hoarse
guttural voice, I'm Tiny.
Even if I ain't.* Muzak in
the cab stifled a chuckle.
Another ten kilometers

further, they saw two more figures trudging along.

A tall willowy woman, long light brown hair, with a small square bandage over the top front of her head. She was walking awkwardly beside a shorter figure. He had his hand on her elbow helping her maintain her balance. They turned and waved their arms at the sound of the pickup truck. Tammy

pulled to a stop and they piled into the truck bed next to Eightball the donkey and the other two riders, Pops and Tiny.

Tammy, Muzak, Chip, Eagle eye, Pops and Tiny, the entire group had one uniting common goal, to escape northward away from the invaders. There was comfort in a shared cause.

They were not unprepared for this journey. They each had been living hand to mouth since even before the invasion on Canada's southern border. Except for Tiny and Chip, each had brought sleeping bags and backpacks. Among them they had Eagle Eye's crossbow, a first aid kit, metal coffee cups and a coffee pot, a couple of

frying pans and pots. Also a couple of Bowie knives, a compass, a length of nylon cord tested for a thousand pounds, ground coffee and dry snacks.

Some hours later the pickup truck ran out of gas. They abandoned it and as dusk approached, together the small group continued on foot, unaware of the dangers that lay imminently ahead.

AFTER THE BEAR ATTACK

Eagle Eye cut off a tender piece of bear meat and handed it gently to Chip. She smiled, blinked her eyes and sent a thank you telepathically that brought a returning smile. Did he sense the telepathic message or the smile? Or both?

The others licked their lips and fingers and kept eating. Six strangers who had all met by chance. Beside Eagle Eye the Micmac, and Chip the digital chip recipient, there was Pops, the huge stranger called Tiny, Muzak the musician, Tammy the zoo handler, Eightball the donkey and Daphne the wolf. It was an intimate setting eating

greasy portions of bear meat with their fingers off of sticks held over an open fire, a bonding experience.

Sitting around their makeshift fire pit they told each other stories. The fire pit flames danced and from time to time sparked tiny wood sap explosions. It created a mysterious atmosphere in keeping with the unknown journey ahead.

Eagle Eye suspended skewered hunks of bear meat to smoke over the fire. He paused as Tiny looked directly into his eyes, then into the eyes of each of the others in a slow sequence, one at a time.

Trust established, Tiny revealed his past. He had been a hybrid experiment, the laboratory genetic



cloning of gorilla with human. The ostensible reason was to provide transplantable organs for

humans. It was really just the scientist's curiosity of whether they could do it. They did not anticipate the immense physical strength that the product of such a successful cloning might produce. Tiny had broken the bars of his cage, thrown on hospital clothing and escaped.

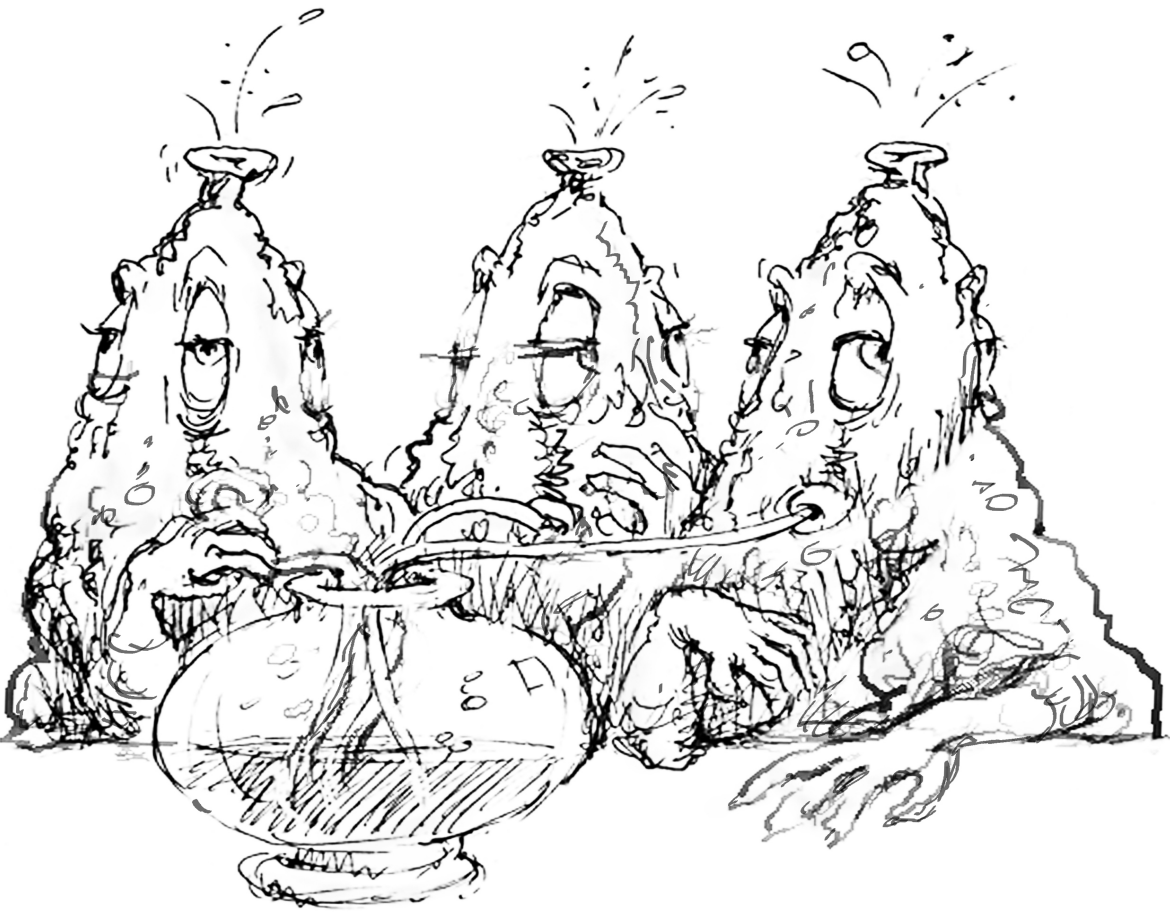
Finally, their bellies full but physically and emotionally exhausted

they all climbed into their
sleeping bags and fell
asleep.

.....

ALIEN OBSERVATIONS

Meanwhile hovering in space in the lower atmosphere of Planet Earth, a disc shaped space craft carrying three aliens from a planet, light years away were observing the little group of characters who were on a route away from the metropolis.



*A route that would take
them northward to mostly
uninhabited land.
Uninhabited by their
bipedal species that is to*

say. There were however many other forms of life in this vast land the group were travelling through.

The aliens were intrigued. They were sipping a communal tea while speculating telepathically about what was going on below. The alien identities were not spoken names but rather numbers according to the most recent birth. Names

were constantly being revised.

For their level of evolution, they are very barbaric toward their own species observed Two. One and Three mentally nodded in the affirmative. What are the odds they will self destruct their planet before evolving further, wondered One. They all did quick calculations.

*One swiveled its third eye
to the viewing screen,
extended a three fingered
two thumbbed tentacle and
increased magnification as
it watched the six bipedal
and two four legged
creatures advancing
slowly through jungle
foliage far below.*

.....

THE BEST LAID PLANS...

As the sun rose the group awakened and prepared for the trek ahead. They ate more bear meat, sipped coffee that Pops had brought. Then they strapped on their back packs and with Eagle Eye leading the way they continued north. From time to time, they paused and hid under

large ferns as invader
drones flew overhead.

The temperature rose in tandem with the overhead sun. Soon they were all soaked in their own sweat. They continued on. This was the pattern of their trek for the next three days. Nights they collapsed on their bedrolls, and ate smoked bear meat.

On the fourth day, rested, their bellies full, their spirits high, the group continued as silently as possible to make their way through what in the past was territory on the tree line, and was now a tropical forest. A forest where there were banana and pineapple trees and a variety of fruits. They would not starve.

Late in the afternoon
Chip stopped and held up
her hand. The others
stopped too, all eyes on
Chip. Her eyes were
closed, her head tilted
slightly back, her computer
brain was collecting and
collating data. She spoke,
at first mechanically, sing
song like, a robotic voice.
*Military zone about ten
kilometers ahead.*
Hesitation. Her eyes

flickered open. She continued with her own natural voice. *If we go to the right, we can avoid the military.* She added there was another even more daunting problem.

They could avoid the military, but ahead there was a deep chasm with turbulent rapids. The chasm stretched too far to go around. It had to be crossed. The group

stopped and made temporary camp while Eagle Eye ran ahead to seek a possible crossing.

Night fell. Would Eagle Eye be safe alone in the dark? Would he wait until daylight to return, or was he already on his way back in the dim light of the arctic night?

Sitting around the campfire, relaxed, but senses alert, they ate

skewered portions of smoked bear meat and bananas and told each other tales. Some tall, some true, some half and half. That is, after all, what humans do. And apparently human hybrids. And humans with robotic parts.

As they talked in the inky darkness created by the shadows of the

banana leaves and palm trees above, their features seemed to dance, to appear, then disappear, in unison with the flames from the fire. Above the trees, the aurora borealis took up the dance and flashed shimmering waves of blue and green, complimentary colours to



the reds yellows and
oranges from the fire
reflecting over the faces of
the tiny group.

Daphne growled a warning. Tiny put his huge finger to his mouth to indicate silence. In the dark haze of jungle leaves and dim shifting light of the night sky, they saw a shadowy figure approaching. Eagle Eye appeared trotting quietly

toward them. Sighs of relief all around.

Chip, usually remote to all, immersed in her inner world, got up, trotted around from behind the fire reached down and hugged him. Mixed emotions for Eagle Eye. Can one be pleased, surprised and embarrassed all at the

same time? Apparently yes.

Chip had not revealed to the others that telepathically she had been guiding him back. Did he know? Maybe. Maybe not. Maybe he was only thinking about that hug.

His report was met with disappointment. A day's

march to the right would evade the military. There was a deep chasm to cross. First, they would look for a place they could ford, or swim across. They were not hopeful. Was there a possible Plan B?

Sitting side by side, conjecturing, a plan was devised. It was risky. It was difficult. But it was all

they had. And it was necessary.

The plan... Eagle Eye would shoot an arrow, with line attached, across the chasm, hopefully, to hook into a tree. Then he would cross on a seat swing on a pulley, and more fully secure the other end.

The others would follow, each on a seat swing and

pulley. *But what about Eightball? Can we get him across like that? Asked Pops. He looks rather tasty,* mused Muzak, his eyes wide in mock innocence while theatrically licking his lips. Tiny's brow contracted in a frown. He was suppressing his anger while wondering if Muzak

needed an explanation of how to treat animals, especially animals that were part of their group.

Some sorts of humour were lost on Tiny, especially when it came to animal treatment. Tammy raised her clenched fist while staring directly into Muzak's eyes. It was a look, simultaneously of

mock anger, and serious threat. Joke! Joke! Jeez! grinned Muzak. He stepped back and held his hands up defensively, palms facing front.

Pops snorted a chuckle. The others grinned. Tiny relaxed as if he actually understood human joking. Muzak played a little riff on his harmonica, similar to a

drum roll ending, for stand-up comedy. Pops shook his head, amid titters of laughter erupting around the fire. There was a sense of relief, mixed with a sense of anticipation. They had a plan.

Next morning, they had a breakfast of mystery eggs Eagle Eye had found in a nest under some

bushes. Each was about the size of an orange, but with shells that were greenish-grey with light purple polka dots.

They packed up their sleeping pads, and camping gear, and started their trek. Eagle Eye led the way.

After a couple of hours of trudging through the foliage they heard a low humming sound, sporadic

in volume but without ceasing. As they continued the sound grew louder, finally becoming a roar. A high waterfall with rushing rapids below barred their path.

They trudged along the river bank looking for any place that could provide a crossing. There were none. What to do?

At the narrowest part of the river they made camp,

protected on their backside by the trunk of a huge deciduous tree. With the tree trunk protecting their rear, foliage on both sides, and the chasm in front, with roaring rapids below, they tried to sleep. On the far side, it was a slightly lower elevation but still a sheer cliff, topped by a mix of tropical trees and large conifers.



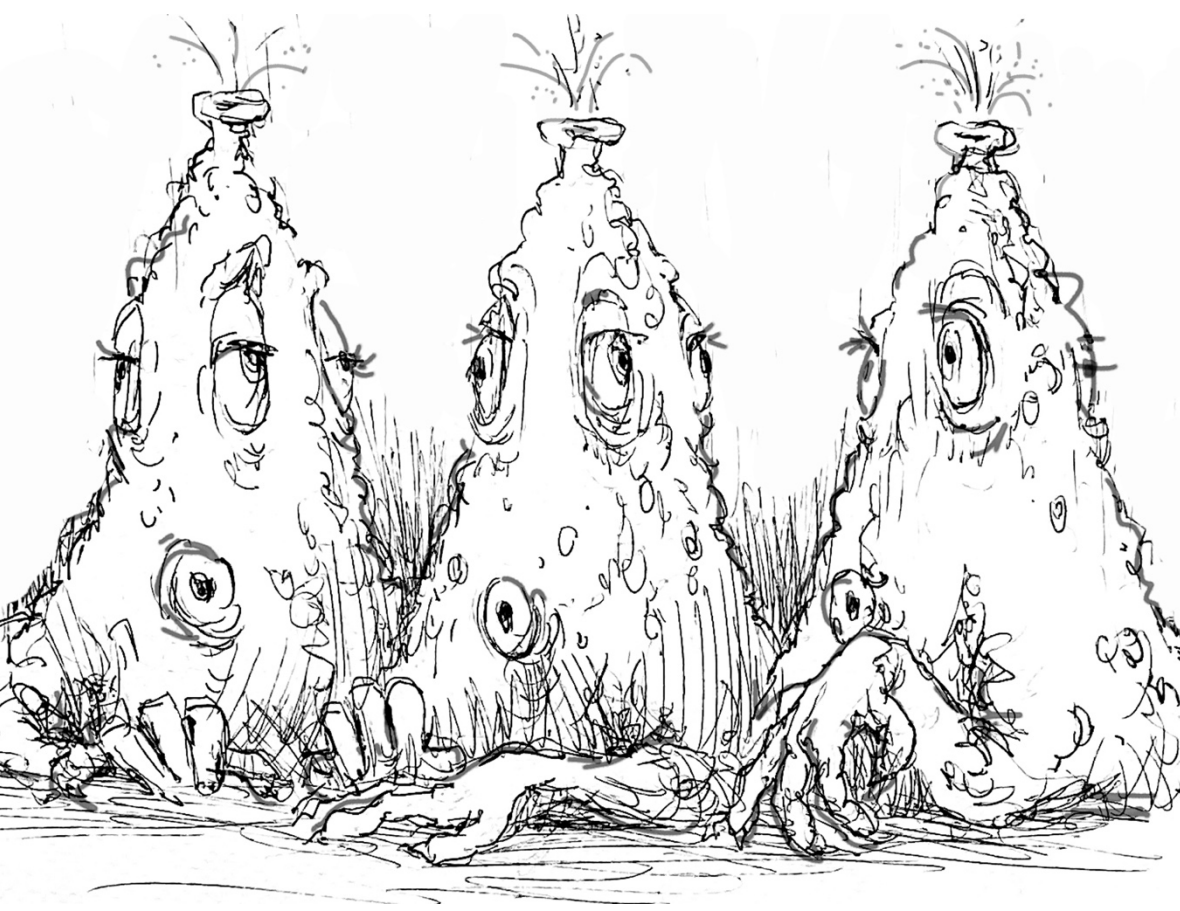
Could their plan work?
Tomorrow would tell the
tale.

.....

The three aliens watched on their magnified screen as the little group of bipedal creatures and two quadrupeds encountered challenges on their journey. It passed the time while they waited for the coming transformation.

Two was en route to transform out of its present neutral to the next state which was female.

Becoming female, she was feeling a bit emotional. These strange creatures below were full of surprises, and courage. Two was starting to grow fond of them.



*By way of explanation,
This alien species do not
impregnate a female egg
with sperm. The members
cycle continuously through
stages as neutral, female,
neutral, male, neutral and
so on. The male stage
acts as a catalyst on the
egg, which will be a clone
of the mother.*

.....

SWINGING IN THE RAIN

Next morning the air was humid with a light rain that reduced visibility to little more than the distance across the chasm. Muzak brewed coffee, and they sipped it slowly while examining the ground around them. The topography did not reveal any other crossing possibilities.

This area appeared to be as short a distance to cross as any.

Would their plan work for transporting Eightball? Tammy laid her head against Eightball's. She stroked his back and crooned softly to him. Daphne rubbed up against her thigh. She wanted some of this action. Silently the group watched and waited. After a few

minutes had passed,
Tammy lifted her head,
opened her eyes and
looked at the others. Then
she explained what she
would do.

She would lightly sedate
Eightball and put
blindfolds on him. They
would attach a forward
pulley with a felt-covered
strap under his belly
behind his front legs.
Another pulley and strap

would go just in front of his rear legs. He would be well balanced. She would hold and comfort him as they swung under the line and crossed to the other side.

What could go wrong? The answer would require a list. But what other alternative was there? Not crossing was not an option.

Not crossing for anyone of them would mean separating from the group. And doing what? Staying in place until they were discovered? Heading back? These were not real options. They had to cross.

The support line, a military creation was just an eighth of an inch thick, flexible and deceptively strong. It was designed to

withstand breaking for up to a half ton.

Chip closed her eyes, focused and fused the line to the arrow by manipulating their molecular structures to combine.

Eagle Eye selected a huge pine tree across the divide as his anchor target. He lay on the ground, his arms propped up, comfortably holding

the crossbow. Calmly he adjusted his sights for distance, wind and humidity. He sighted on the tree, waited for the breeze to calm, breathed out gently, and released the trigger.

The arrow arced upward, the line unrolling behind. Then it began its descent, landing perfectly on target, the arrowhead buried in the tree trunk.

The others gave a little cheer. That was the easy part, murmured Eagle Eye. He wound his end of the line around the trunk of a large pine tree and secured it with a double clove hitch knot.

In moments he had suspended the pulley and harness and seat strap hanging on the flimsy-looking cord. He double-checked everything. He

peeked over the cliff edge, staring down at the white water tumbling and crashing in the chasm far below. He tested the pulley and hanging harness with backup security line and seat strap one last time. Then just for good luck, one more time. The swirling water below roared and frothed like an evil demon waiting to claim him for lunch. His

brown skinned face
became noticeably paler.
He checked the line and
his knot around the tree
trunk again.

He had faced
dangerous situations
before. Each time he was
terrified. Each time he kept
his cool and came
through. He slowed his
breathing down, focused
on the far side where the
arrow appeared to be

securely lodged in the tree trunk. He tested the line tightness again. Finally, no more delays he sat on the seat strap, and blowing mock kisses to the others, he released the pulley stopper and pushed off for the far side, away from the cliff edge.



The line above sagged slightly with his weight. He closed his eyes. The pulley made a sing song hum as he picked up speed.

It seemed to be playing a song he remembered his mom chanting to him. I think I can, I think I can. It was a chant he remembered every time he was faced with a difficult challenge. It was

his talisman. It had never let him down.

The humming stopped. He opened his eyes. He was on the other side. Across the chasm the rest of the group cheered. He stood up from the sling, turned and waved to them. His legs seemed strangely rubbery, as he detached himself from the harness. *Piece of cake*, he called across to the others.

On the other side, they loosened the cord tension on the clove hitch knot, allowing more line to play out. On his side he gripped the line and allowed some play between it and the arrow.

Chip closed her eyes and focused. The arrow shaft and the line grew warm, began to vibrate lightly, then separated. Eagle Eye pulled the line

taut and wrapped the extra line around the tree trunk three times, and cinched it tightly with another double clove hitch. Piece of Cake.

Chip first, then one by one, they crossed. Not without fear, not without curses. Eagle Eye kept his eyes on them, as the others crossed in ascending order of their weight. After Tiny it was time for Eightball to cross.

Tammy laid her face against his and spoke soothingly to him. *Good boy* she murmured over and over again. He knew something was up. He snorted in fear. No choice, she blindfolded him, then put two slings under his belly between his forelegs and hind legs, as she had done for Daphne. With soothing hands holding Eightball's haunches, off

across the chasm they sailed. They almost made it to the other side.

Almost...

From nearby came the piercing screeching of an animal, obviously being attacked. High pitched shrieks, crashing in the brush, roars and yelps. Tammy spoke repeatedly, firmly in a mellow voice stretching the soft vowels, *Beee... Calmmmm Eightball.*

She was trying to soothe a terrified donkey whose natural instinct was to get the hell out of there.

Panicked, Eightball began bucking and struggling against his harness. Tammy held him tightly and tried to soothe him with repeated low murmurs of *Beee...*

Calmmm, all to no avail. His flight response was triggered. Kicking and

bucking, he succeeded in slipping out of his pulley harnesses.

Released he plummeted down to the rapids below. Tammy immediately released her harness and plunged down right behind him. Both plunged almost simultaneously into the frothing white water below. Their downward force carried them both deep below the surface. Then

arms and legs churning wildly, both found themselves at the surface, gulping air and being carried along in the current.

Sputtering in the spray of the rushing waters, she grabbed the donkey's reins and ripped off his blinders. She held on to him tightly as they both were swept downstream.

Eagle Eye had cut the line from its far side mooring and activated its roll-up coil setting. Clutching the coiled line and his crossbow in one hand, he raced in tandem with the two heads bobbing up and down, far below. He was unaware that his were not the only eyes focused on the two struggling figures.

Circling above was a vulture, a mutated creature that seemed closer in kind to birds of an earlier epoch. Just as Eightball managed to scramble up the far shore, the bird swooped down. With outstretched talons, it snatched Tammy up by her mass of tightly curled auburn hair. The bird began its ascent.



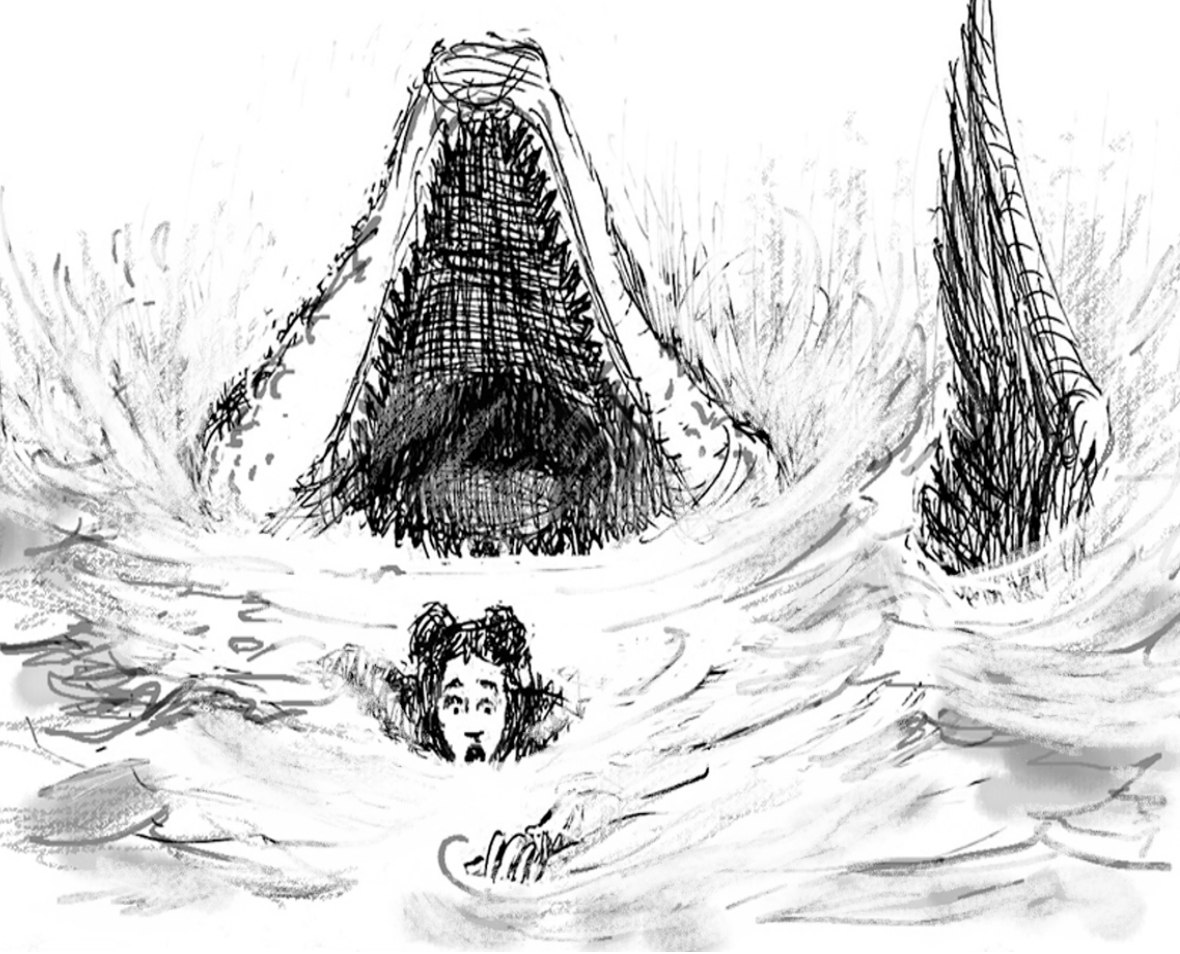
Whoosh! The arrow
flew through the air,

passing through the bird's neck just above the sternum. The bird's talons spasmed open. It seemed to hang momentarily suspended in the air, its ascent interrupted. Then tumbling head over tail, it somersaulted down into the waters below.

Released from its grip, Tammy plunged down once more into the fast-moving water. From the

corner of her eye, she saw what had seemed to be a log on the shore suddenly become mobile.

The log slid off the bank into the water. There were two bumps, like knots on the forward part of the log. Was it a log? *Omygawd please be a log!* Her prayer was not answered. *Damn!* It had a tail and two eyes visible just above the surface of the water.



It was on a path coming directly towards her. Sputtering out mouthfuls of water, Tammy swam for her life. An arrow sang through the air, only to be

deflected off the crocodile's back by its horny hard hide.

Huge serrated rows of pointed teeth appeared as its mouth gaped open, closing the gap behind her. Tears streaming down her cheeks, adrenaline fuelled, Tammy churned her arms and legs through the water. She could smell the foul odour from the croc's open mouth.

She felt the water frothing up right behind her.

She wished she was on shore. She wished she was anywhere else.

Anywhere, except where she was right now.

Then the inevitable happened! With a loud clacking sound, the crocodile's powerful mouth clamped down. A huge mouthful of torn flesh and bones was ripped apart

and disappeared down its throat. Also accompanied by blood soaked feathers. Parts of the vulture, which had been floating just behind Tammy, had disappeared into the croc's mouth.

The huge reptile, bird carcass in its mouth swerved around and swam back to shore. Sobbing and struggling to swim toward shore herself,

Tammy continued to be carried downstream. As she bobbed up and down, she spotted a log. She checked to make sure.

No gaping mouth,
Check!

Leaves and branches,
Check!

A real goddam log,
Check!

It was lodged between rocks that offered a possible route to shore.

Tossed around by the current, but adrenaline fuelled she managed to swim towards it.

Clutching one of its branches, she pulled herself to the trunk. Hand over hand, branch by branch, she succeeded in dragging herself back to shore. Then, half in shock, coughing up water, she made her way along the rocky bank back to

Eightball. The donkey was shaking in terror, not moving from the spot where it had gotten ashore.

Controlling her sobbing, she forced herself to be calm, as she hugged and comforted the animal. Her emotional state would be directly communicated to the donkey. Calm was essential. She faked it as best she could.

As she looked up, from above, a line and harnesses snaked their way down from the cliff edge and landed right at her feet. Hands trembling, she grabbed the line. Shortly, Eightball was secured. While murmuring to him and comforting the trembling donkey, Tammy secured herself.

Pulled by those above, the climb up the sheer cliff face proceeded. Cooing softly in his ear, the trip up was a walk in the park compared to the trip down.

Within minutes they were on firm ground. Exhausted, giddy, relieved, Tammy laid down on the hard ground and sobbed uncontrollably. Eightball plopped down beside her. He nuzzled his

face next to hers. Tears trickled down Pops and Tiny's faces.

The group formed a circle around the donkey and girl, and waited for calm to return. *We should get going,* said Pops. *We could be spotted any moment.*

Eightball was shaking with exhaustion. He was too weak physically and emotionally to carry their

supplies. With the help of Muzak, Tiny strapped most of their supplies on his huge back, and assumed a knuckle walk stance. Muzak put smaller items in a backpack and adjusted it on his own back, as did the others.

They looked around at their surroundings, glad to have this experience behind them. With mixed emotions, following the

route laid out by Chip, they started off.

.....

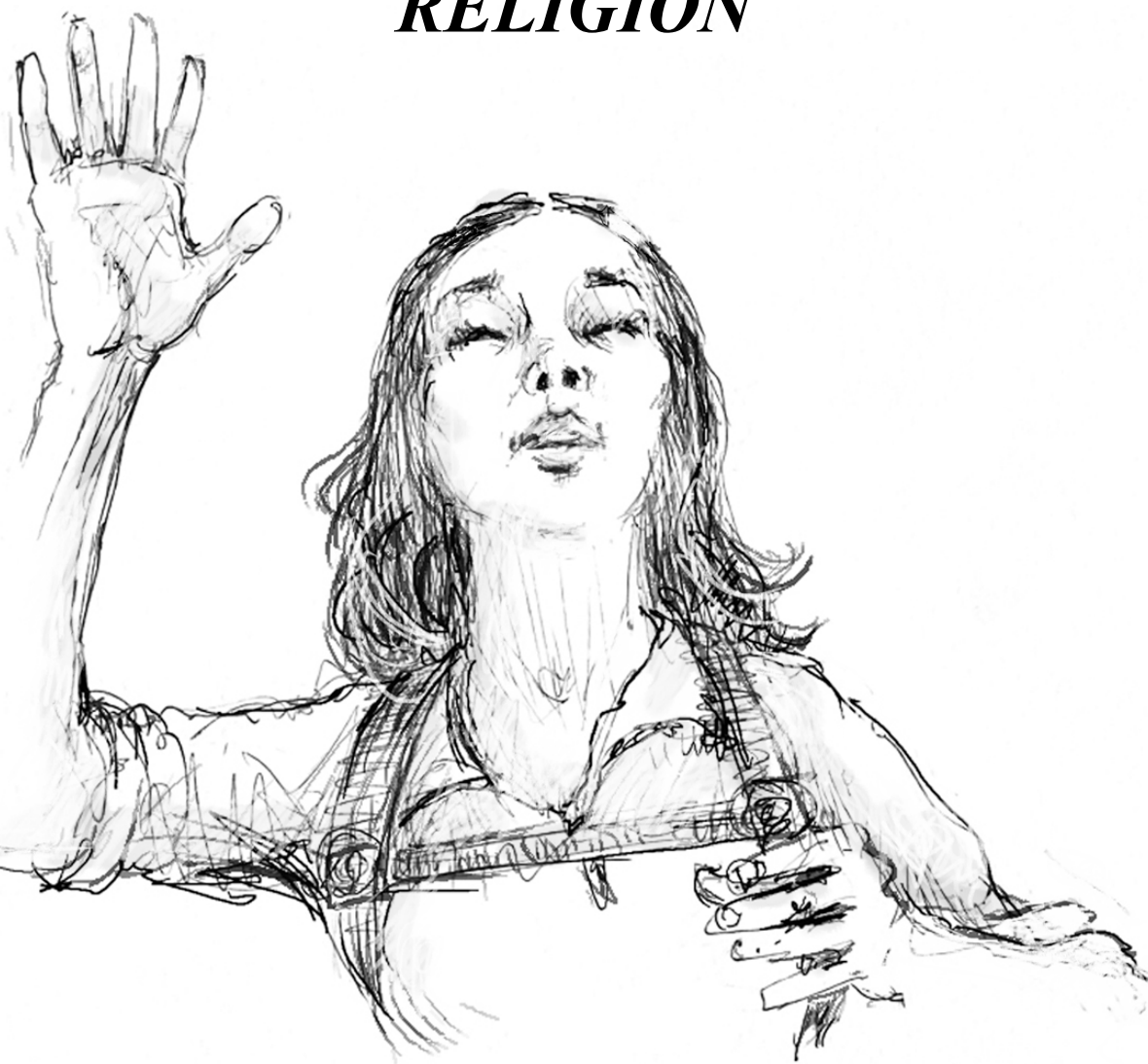
Two had one eye on the craft controls, another on the 3-D crossword contest she was playing with Three. Telepathy made such games a challenge. She tried to not know Three's next move. Impossible. Nobody actually won in these

games. The challenge of trying to ignore what the other was anticipating was the real fun.

She twitched her third eye around to the viewing screen to watch all the events below amongst the little group of creatures below. The other two joined her by the viewing screen.

.....

THAT OLD TIME RELIGION



The group travelled north for five days. Warned several times by Chip to take cover from drone observation, they continued on. Each night they made camp and feasted on smoked bear meat, fruits and root vegetables sniffed out by Tiny and Daphne. Their spirits were high.

On the sixth day Chip raised her hand. She closed her eyes. Both her hands cradling her head just above her ears. Furrows creased her forehead. Worry lines. She gasped. They waited. She opened her eyes and motioned for them to move on. Eagle Eye looked at her closely. He said

nothing, just watched her.
He knew something was
off. So did the others.

She did not tell them
what lay ahead. It was too
awful. And what could
they do to stop it, even if
they did know? The group
advanced cautiously
forward.

Soon a muted, rhythmic
cadence was heard. It was

the faint sound of human voices chanting. Their backs to the group, and kneeling in ten rows of about five, to the row, were a group of about fifty identical cloned soldiers. Their shaved heads looked small on their large broad backed bodies. They were dressed in camouflage coloured

clothing, T shirts and sweat pants, workout style. They did not have weapons.

If the approaching group had seen the clone faces, they would have noted their utter lack of expression. Faces that were vacant, unfocused, devoid of thinking, devoid of empathy.

They were genetically designed and cloned, obedient soldiers. The soldiers were kneeling and facing a stage with high rosebud pink curtains. On the curtains, in dark gold letters in a cursive script that would have been appropriate for an elegant dinner invitation were written several slogans, -

slogans the group were
shortly to hear being
chanted.

In front of the stage was
a hologram of President
Batschitte. From behind
the curtains, a deep
sonorous voice asked.

Who is the Chosen One?
President Batschitte, in a
group monotone, came
the cloned soldier

response. *Who alone can cleanse the World?* Again the same monotone response, *President Batschitte.*

From the direction of the hologram, *You are special. I love you all.* The hologram smiled. On cue the soldier clones applauded. The curtains parted. Lying on an

ornately-carved gold altar was a baby. A tiny baby with light brown skin and wispy dark hair. It giggled and sputtered, a happy baby.

Behind it stood a soldier, unlike the others. Not a tall soldier clone. In fact, not a clone. He was skinny and short. His face was shaped like a triangle

with a pointy chin. His brow was compressed down in a centre V over his nose in a perpetual frown, so that whatever movement the rest of his face assumed, he always looked angry, even when smiling. Angry or evil.

He was engulfed in an oversized costume, as ornate as that of a

doorman at an upscale hotel. His greatcoat was dark indigo with wide lapels and impossibly wide shoulders for his tiny frame. His chest was decorated with medals and badges. In front of his chest, in both his bony little hands, and pointed up, he held a dagger, - a thing of beauty.



It was elegantly designed, black with gold filigree on the handle. The blade glittering in the light, was long, tapering to a sharp, pointed tip.

The little doorman-dressed commander grinned as he raised the knife above his head. He turned his wrists to point the knife downward. His grin widened, revealing irregular wide spaced tiny yellowish teeth. The group watched in horror.

Eagle Eye notched an arrow in his crossbow, but there was too much foliage ahead for a shot.

Muzak clapped his hand over his mouth to keep from screaming.

They were too far away. There would not be enough time for a charge to stop what they all knew was about to happen.

Cleanse the World intoned the tiny hotel doorman-dressed commander. The smile widened on his face. He was enjoying himself.

Cleanse the World came back the pre-programmed soldier clone response.

What they had all feared, happened. The knife descended. Chip clasped her hands to the sides of her head, her eyes squeezed shut, her mouth open in a silent scream as the knife descended. Still hidden in the jungle foliage, the group watched in horror.



The knife plunged
downward.

As it descended, the baby giggled and waved its little limbs in the air, oblivious to any danger. Blood squirted out as the dagger pierced flesh and bone.

Events however did not play out as expected.

The elegant looking dagger swerved slightly to find an unexpected destination.

It plunged straight through the rib cage and into the

heart of the tiny astonished commander.

His eyes bulged in disbelief
His legs collapsed as he
sank to the floor.

Engulfed and prone in
his ornate costume, he
appeared like a mess of
bloodstained laundry lying
on stage. The baby
continued to churn its legs
and arms about. It giggled
and gurgled like a happy
healthy baby does. Chip,

with both hands on the sides of her head, her eyes closed, was sobbing quietly. Control of the commander's physical coordination had required her total energy and concentration.

To accomplish it, she had to enter a truly evil mind. She desperately wanted a shower.

The clones stood up and looked around, unsure

of what to do. The
hologram sputtered on
and off, then disappeared.

.....

*The Aliens watched
and wondered. They and
their predecessors had
watched similar displays
from this species before
over hundreds, even
thousands of Earth years.
Sometimes directly,
sometimes telepathically*

from those who had preceded them. But not often did this dominant species display such malignant pleasure. One forced the evil it just had witnessed out of its consciousness.

Information acknowledged and filed away with other unpleasant truths. The others followed suit.

.....

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

It seemed simultaneous but in actuality it was several seconds later. Tiny crashed through the foliage.

An unstoppable force like a boulder barreling down from a mountaintop.

Soldier clones were cast aside like pins in a bowling alley. Tiny grabbed the baby up and continued



running forward, shortly
disappearing into the
jungle.

This variety of soldier clones was not designed for independent thinking. They milled around looking for direction, for commands. There were none. Laundry mess on the stage floor had been their only immediate commander.

Some kneeled on the floor and began to chant *Batschitte, Batschitte*. Others milled around,

staring at the stage with its prone tiny unmoving laundry mess figure, and chanted *Cleanse the World*.

Amongst them all, with no one to direct them, there was total confusion. The group, as quietly as possible, and at a distance where they would not likely be challenged ran quickly past the left flank of the clones. Those

clones who did see them paid no attention. These figures were not part of their programming.

They left the kneeling chanting clones behind and began the search for Tiny and the baby. For hours they travelled, following Eagle Eye and Daphne as they tracked Tiny's path.

Daphne growled softly. Then they heard it too,

movement through the brush and a baby crying.

As they drew closer to the baby sounds, they also heard the sound of drones. They took cover. The two drones circled, hovered and zigzagged back and forth like the hummingbirds they had been robotically modelled from. Breath mutually held, motionless, the group watched and

waited. Eventually, there were crashing sounds in the brush behind and to the right, and the drones flew off. They would witness a battle between a fearless little wolverine and an unusually large cougar over the carcass of a deer. A fortunate chance decoy.

The group moved on. Within less than a half hour they sighted Tiny

ahead. He stood alert in a small clearing, legs apart, arms raised in a warrior pose, ready to block or strike. The screaming baby lay on the ground between his two huge feet. Blood streamed down Tiny's broad back where he had been bitten.

Circling in and out, back and forth were three huge husky/wolf dogs. Fearless

animals, whose ancestors had reverted to their wild roots, generations ago.

They were hungry and determined. They hunted cooperatively, a pack attack. They knew how to distract from the front and sides while another attacked from behind.

The group ran forward as the lead dog tried to

attack Tiny again from the rear. Whack! Tiny's fist back-handed him on the head, sending him sailing through air momentarily stunned.

Lips curled back, teeth bared, fearless, frightening ready for battle, Daphne raced toward the dogs. Eagle Eye notched an

arrow in his crossbow.

But it wasn't necessary.

As silently as ghosts, all three animals disappeared into the bush. Tiny was crying with emotion, as were most, as they all embraced.

Congratulations and explanations of the role of each were brief. It was late in the day.

They had a new responsibility. They had to plan their next move. The group examined the baby. He appeared to be an Inuit male child, maybe eight or ten months old, naked, but well-fed and healthy. He was bawling with hunger and fear from all the jostling he had endured.

What has happened to his

parents? From Tammy. A foolish question she realized, as she said it. Nobody answered. What could they do other than care for and protect the infant, and hope his crying did not attract hungry predators or searching soldiers? Chip suggested a strategy.



She could digitally distort the baby's cries to mimic a bobcat in heat.

And be prepared for a surprise visit from a horny, very confused bobcat.

Nobody had an alternative idea, so that solution was agreed to. They gave the baby a new palm leaf and moss diaper, and although it was late, decided to put some distance behind them. From time to time they heard the plaintive whimpering cries of a lonely bobcat.

Muzak expressed a certain sympathy for the beast.

Later that evening on high ground with a rock slab behind them and a view on three sides, they took turns holding the infant and cooing softly to it. They mixed a pabulum of boiled finely crushed roots, berries and water for the

baby. No one knew what the future would bring, but they would face it together. And strangely this new little life gave them hope.

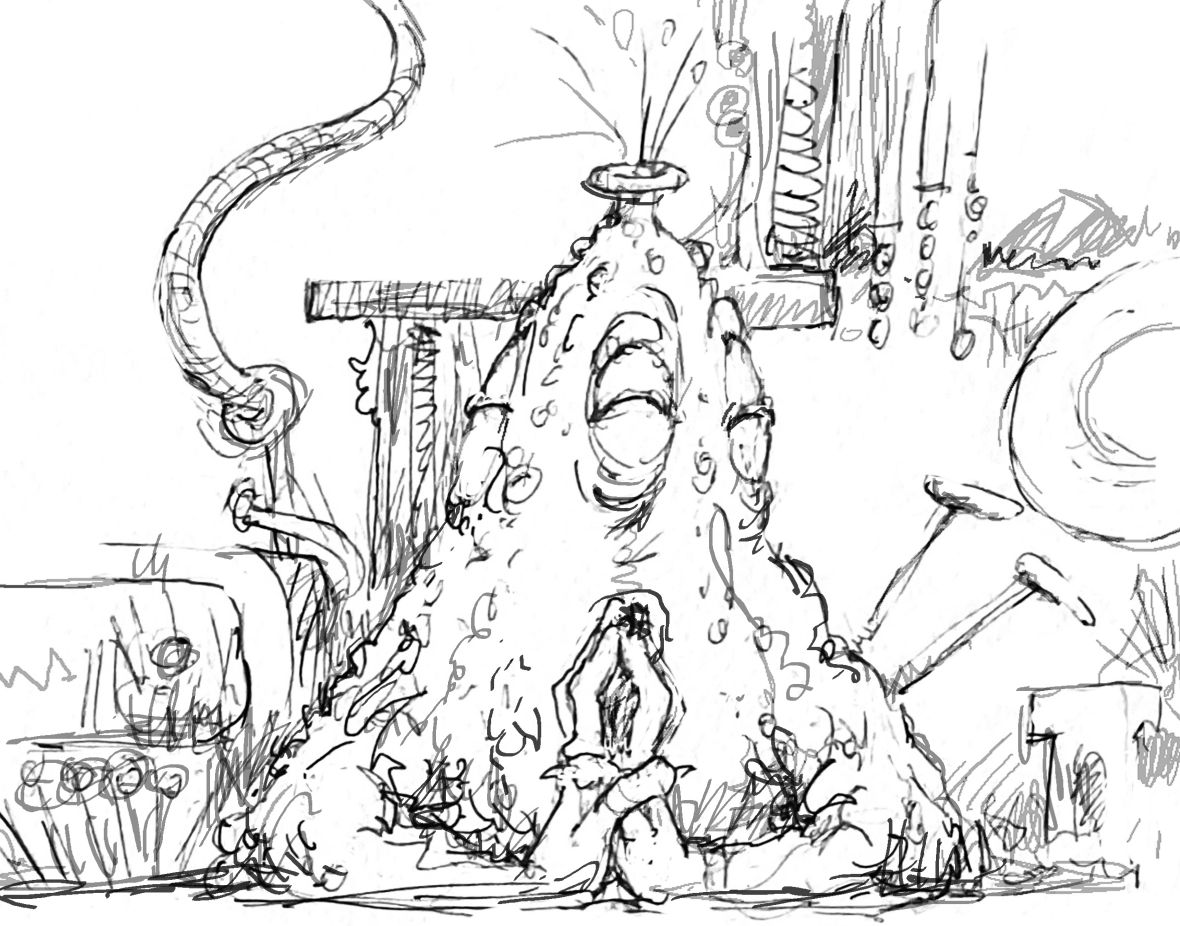
Next morning, they fed more homemade pabulum to the infant and gave him a change of palm leaf and moss diaper. Braced with black coffee, they got an early start. They would

eat dried, smoked bear meat as they travelled. Because of the rescue of the infant, and the stabbing of the military commander, the invaders would know they were in the area.

Drones would be sent out, maybe even helicoptered search and attack soldiers. They had to get out of the area ASAP. From time to time

they heard drones, but the overhead foliage was thick. They were not spotted. They kept moving.

.....



*On the huge screen
near the spacecraft's
controls, Two examined
the tiny baby on the planet
below. She had evolved to*

her female state. She sensed a tiny egg not yet activated, developing in her egg sac.

She closed all three of her eyes. Feelings of empathy for this alien new life coinciding with the potential new life inside herself washed over her.

.....

A VIEW INTO THE PAST

Eventually, the terrain began to slope down. In the distance, in a clearing, they saw buildings.

Cautiously, while observing the sky above, and the foliage around, they approached. There were four buildings, what looked like sleeping and eating quarters, a large

garage, and a building that appeared to be an office.

Shortly they would observe that near the office, was a roofed three-sided concrete block structure containing what looked like, a square cast iron stove with two compartments, separated by an inside hole covering metal flap, which could be raised by an outside lever.

They had found an ancient meteorological station. From it, hydrogen balloons had been launched carrying radiosonde transmitting equipment, too many years ago to count. In the office, technicians had recorded the radiosonde data, elevation, humidity, temperature, air pressure, wind speed and direction from transmitters

suspended from the ascending balloons. Info that was then sent to meteorologists. Info necessary to predict the weather in the olden days before satellites ringed planet Earth.

What made this process possible was the lighter-than-air balloons that carried the radiosonde equipment aloft. Hydrogen was the lighter

than air gas used.

Hydrogen and oxygen were separated out of water by heating the water into steam, with a reactivating chemical.

A hundred meters or so beyond the buildings was a body of water. A lake, an open bay to the ocean? They didn't know. It was broad, deep, slow-moving. Its shoreline meandered north, the general direction

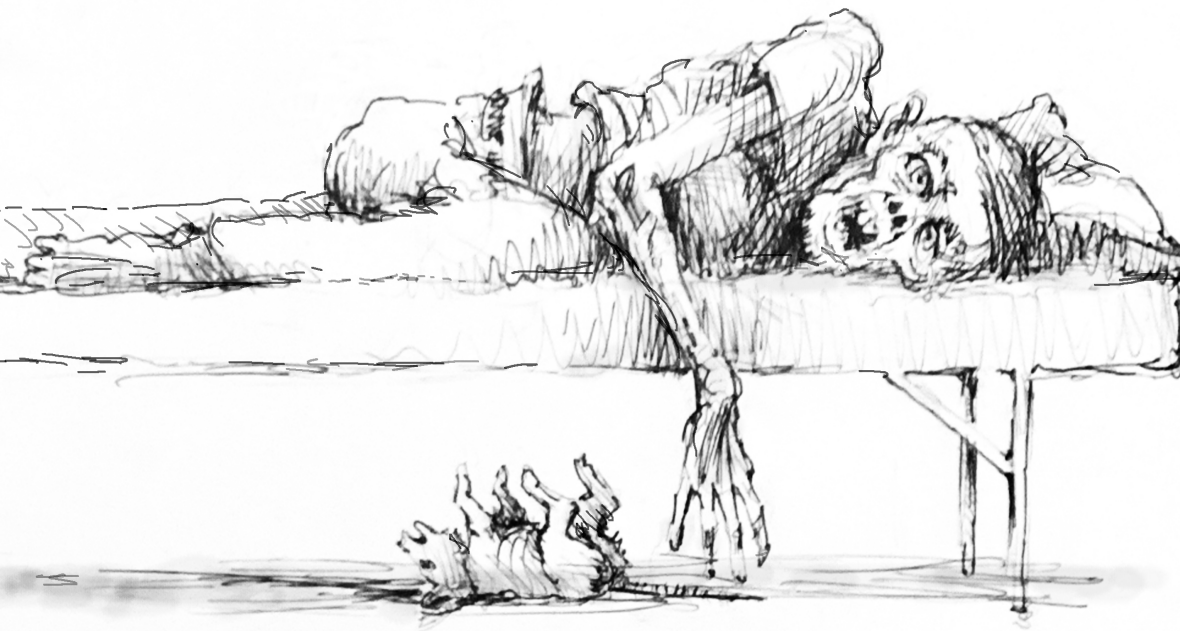
away from the invaders.
So far, the route ahead
was relatively safe from
invaders, until one
approached the disputed
Arctic North Coast.

Chip confirmed in
seconds that this current
location was under
sporadic surveillance, but
not invader occupied, or of
strategic importance. Still,
it was too close to invader

territory to consider settling there.

They considered using the sleeping and eating building to settle in for that night. The door had already been forced open. No doubt anything useful or of value was long gone. But the place could provide shelter. They entered and explored. They soon discovered they were not alone.

The previous inhabitants were still there. Still there, and sharing space with other visitors, small furry, dried-up creatures. In the sleeping cubicles two figures were curled up in fetal positions on their cots. Another was prone on the floor next to a hall toilet. A fourth was stretched out in the hallway connecting the



cubicles to a dining area.
All were shrunken
grotesque mummified
caricatures of who they
had once been.

Next to them were the
skeletal remains of rats.
Radiation poisoning

probably, or virus guessed
Pops. What other
possibility was there?

All the group members
had already had their
multiple virus vaccines.
The meter near the
outside door entry
registered temporary
acceptable radiation levels
They did not feel at risk in
the building. But the musty
odour of ancient death

hung in the air, and in their consciousness.

None wanted to stay. They entered the office transmitting building. After a brief exploration, they spread their sleeping blankets side by side, comforted by the close contact and warmth of each other.

.....



Two blinked her middle eye. Involuntarily Three blinked his in response. He was now in the male state and aware of his future role as an egg activator.

Good times ahead!

*Two was starting to look
damned appealing. She
felt his lust and
telepathically giggled. One
joined in the giggle. This
was after all going to be
telepathically a menage a
trois.*

.....

LOOKING DOWN ON THE WORLD

The next day the group discussed what to do next. Should they follow the coastline? Could the baby survive on the pabulum they had made up? What dangers lay ahead? What were the prospects for a safe remote area ahead to settle in?

Chip had a suggestion. Hydrogen for the weather balloons had been generated using chemicals to heat water, which separated it into its component elements of oxygen and hydrogen. The transmitting radiosonde equipment had been suspended by ropes from the hydrogen-inflated balloons which carried them aloft. As the

balloons rose, the ascending air pressure decreased, and the balloons would expand, eventually bursting.

Chip could manipulate the molecular structure of both balloons and hydrogen, so individual balloons could support and carry each member of the group. Eightball and Tiny would each require two balloons. Also, an

extra balloon for their provisions, and backup balloons.

It would require continuous concentration from Chip to keep them all aloft, at the same elevation, and going in the same direction. Could she manage it, and if so, for how long? They would soon find out.

Morning arrived. It was time to test Chip's ability to

redesign a new reality at the micro level.

She did not disappoint. She was barefooted so her shoes could not accidentally cause a spark on the hard cement floor. She had to be careful. Hydrogen gas with oxygen in the air was inflammable.

She concentrated on its molecular structure and heated the water in the cast iron stove, separating

it into its components of hydrogen and oxygen. From the pipe on the side of the stove she inflated each balloon in turn with hydrogen. Each floating balloon was tethered to a cast iron stanchion cemented into the ground.

Eagle Eye, his eyes wide in wonder watched her in action. She grinned inwardly, then

concentrated her entire focus on the task at hand.

They decided to follow the coastline north, putting more distance between themselves and the invaders. Following Chip's instructions, they put on harnesses attached to lines secured to the balloons.

In a short time, they were all aloft, flying in single file just above the

tree tops. Chip was in the lead, flying with eyes closed, but other senses alert, as she shepherded the others at the same elevation behind her.

From time to time, she winced in discomfort as she re-adjusted the hydrogen pressure for Eightball.

Eagle Eye was in the rear, constantly searching for danger from all



quarters, while words
that rhymed with Chip,
danced through his head.

That evening they
descended within sight of
a small Inuit community.

Aware that they were
being watched, they
deflated, folded and
stacked their balloons.
They erected their pop-up
camouflaged waterproof
shelter, a tent of synthetic
material as light as silk.

Then in front of the tent, they planted a stick with a white undershirt attached at its top, a make do white flag, universal symbol of peace.

Daphne growled. There was a rustling sound from the direction of the Inuit community. The baby howled with hunger. In the warm golden glow of the arctic dusk, a small lone figure appeared.

Slowly the figure
advanced toward them.
Dark-skinned, short,
dressed in a light leather
parka and hiking boots. He
was alone. He carried a
rifle pointed down, while
he surveyed the group.
He held his free hand up,
open palm facing forward.
Hi, he said.
Hi, from all in the group.
He appeared to relax.
Then almost silently, he

uttered a small gasp of relief. Tears trickled down his leathery brown cheeks. He laid his rifle on the ground, picked the crying baby up, and rocked it gently back and forth. He sang softly to it in Inuit, a sing-song lullaby.

He was the baby's uncle. His name was Chimo. His group had fled from the invaders. His sister and her husband



and baby had not
managed to escape.

With mixed emotions,
Tammy told him to keep
the crying infant. He was
family. From the moment
he had identified the baby,
all that was understood.
Smiling through his tears
he thanked them.
Carefully cradling the baby
in both arms, rifle hanging
by a strap over his
shoulder, he departed.
The group had very mixed
emotions as they watched

him leave. Loss, mixed with relief. Relief, mixed with hope. Hope, for them all.

Later he would return to share some supper of roasted sea turtle with them and tell the recent history of his tribe. They were a dozen individuals from a community that had numbered in the high hundreds.

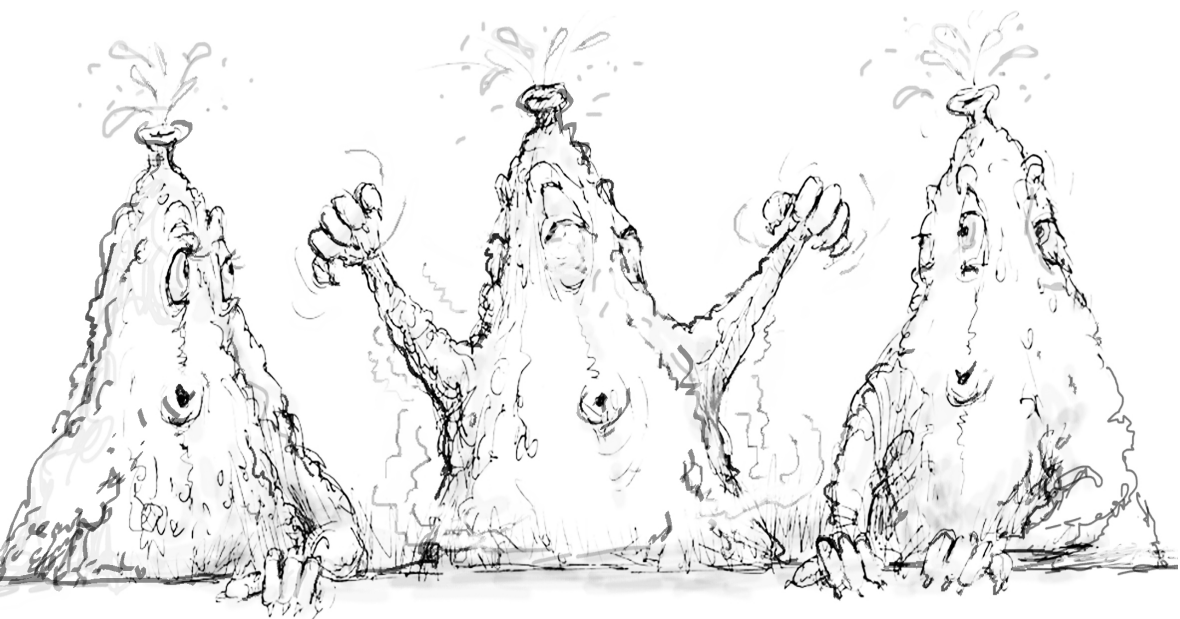
From their community, of those who had evaded the invaders, these twelve alone and the baby appeared to be resistant to the viruses that had killed so many. However, although they were thankful to the group, they did not want to expose themselves to them.

The uncle and baby would stay in temporary isolation. Easy to

understand. All wise
decisions.

.....

*Two watched the Inuit
baby far below being
celebrated. A feeling of
bliss spread through her
consciousness. She
hissed through her blow
hole joined in by the
others as they all felt the
egg inside her become
ready for its next stage of*



evolution. Three expanded and quivered his torso in anticipation of his future role as a real egg activator.

.....



WHERE THERE'S SMOKE THERE'S IRE

The next morning more provisions were provided by the Inuit. Filling a collapsible tub from the

nearby water, Chip extracted hydrogen from it using electricity to create electrolysis.

She re-inflated their balloons. Following her lead, the group attached their harnesses. Chip closed her eyes, concentrated, and gingerly they all rose up one at a time just above treetop level, a safe elevation for travel. Following the coast

northward, they departed.
As they flew they
marveled at the changing
scenery below.

No longer was it
recognizable from the land
of less than a century
earlier. They had seen
photos from a previous
time. Photos of a land of
snow, of giant floating
icebergs. A land where
most animals were white
and wearing dense fur

coats. A land where there were many species of sea animals, now extinct.

Mammals able to hold their breath underwater for amazing lengths of time.

Animals that had existed for millennia, and were now gone forever.

Same land mass, but recently in geographic terms, shrunken and reconfigured. As snow and ice had melted, earth

below had become exposed and fertile or submerged.

Temperate and subtropical plants and seeds had been exposed and taken root. Freshwater oceans had risen around the globe, reducing land mass and redefining coastal configurations.

Below them, there was plenty of game, giant rabbits, moose and deer.

They saw many new mutated animal species, animals that had adapted to a new environment. Caribou that had evolved with short light fur coats and dainty small hooves. There were new varieties of bears. Some were hybrids of polar and grizzly mating.

There was much more below that they didn't see. In the waters were

crocodiles, huge otters,
and capybaras giant rats.
Snakes of various colours,
sizes and shapes
slithered, wiggled and
swam. Palmetto-like
insects flitted and flew
underneath them. They
looked like cockroaches
on steroids.

Looks aren't everything
Tammy thought, as she
watched them. They are
mostly harmless she told

herself. She grimaced. She knew there were much more benign-looking, but deadly creatures, to beware of, killer bees, tics, brightly coloured toy-like poisonous frogs. She thought of Tiny's ugly features and how looks could be so deceiving. Tiny was both ugly and beautiful at the same time. Life is weird, deceptive,

confusing. Sufficient to make one question their own identity.

Late in the day, Chip knew they had to descend. There was a choice to make, an island with rocky shores and a gradually rising hill in the middle, or on the mainland, a steep hill, and except for some palm trees, not much foliage on top.

There was a cave at its crest big enough to shelter in. She pointed to each and then held her hands, palms up to indicate her query. Which was the preferred choice? Pops pointed to the cave on the mainland and the others gave a thumbs-up. Would it already be occupied? Probably.

But better to chance it, and if necessary to evict

the current occupant than to chance crocodiles on the island, or damage to their balloons, which would maroon them there. They flew toward the cave entrance on the hill.

Chip touched down first. One by one she guided the others to soft landings. She felt exhausted from the intense concentration necessary for the multiple passenger trip. But also

she felt pleased with her own expanding digital abilities.

Would these abilities be a barrier to her growing empathy with Eagle Eye? She hoped not.

Soon they had all landed and examined the terrain. They were on top of the hill, above the tree tops of the plain below. Were there occupants

inside the cave? Bears,
maybe? Mountain lions?

Tiny climbed a nearby
palm tree and threw down
some fronds. They
gathered some yellow
dried grass and piled it in
the cave entry. If the cave
was occupied, they would
soon find out. Pops set
fire to the dried grass.
The others waved the
palm fronds back and forth

like billows to direct the smoke inside.

They stepped back and aside in case some huge animal came barreling out towards them. But that didn't happen. What did happen was a response none had expected. Not a huge angry animal charging straight out at them. Nope.

Coughing, *Gawdamm!*
Four figures with steaming

wet clothes draped on top of their heads staggered out. Ratatatatat - tat a spray of rapid fire from a machine gun preceded their exit.

Luckily no one was shot. In a single motion, Muzak stepped forward and grabbed the gun from the lead figure's hands. Simultaneously he kicked the back of his knee.

The figure fell, cursing and coughing at the same time. The other three escapees with wet towels and rags still steaming on their heads and shouting curses, still half-blinded by the smoke, threw themselves in protective positions around him.

Bewildered and a bit ashamed to have committed an undeniable assault, Pops yelled

apologies and gave assurances that no harm would come to them. Explanations were quickly given.

You could have just yelled *Hello*, coughing as she said it, said one of the cave dwellers, a solidly built blonde woman. Why hadn't they thought of that? Assurances from the group of good intent followed. Cautiously they

all sat down together to
exchange histories.

.....

*In the alien spacecraft
the three aliens watched
the events taking place
below. They wondered
how long these strange
creatures, would survive.
Their lives were so full of
challenges, climate
volatility, and threats of
violence from each other.*



*If Two's egg learned
anything telepathically
from Two's observations of
these strange beings, it
would be, to never give up*

.....

PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

The figure with the gun, General Vertue, along with the others was on the run. Hoping to restore democracy to his country, he had attempted the assassination of President Batschitte.

Two other generals and three soldiers had been in on the plan. The three soldiers sitting here beside

him had escaped along with him. Two other generals had been found out before they could escape.

The two had since appeared on state TV to confess to Treason against the USA. Reading from a provided script, they admitted to being traitors to President for Life Batschitte, and their country. *USA- Home of*

the Brave and Land of the Free, added the one on the right after reciting aloud his confession. The addition had earned him a punch on the side of his head.

General, or more accurately, ex-General Vertue described recent events, and what would soon follow. A public execution of the traitor generals was scheduled

for an upcoming televised open-air celebration event. Maybe other previous government officials would be executed also.

Anyone, in fact, who had criticized Batschitte. The execution method was a topic of much speculation and merriment.

Batschitte was a wizard at how to gin up public excitement. It was going to be a real fun time!

Celebrity news hosts were almost salivating with anticipation at the expected adulation and exposure.

It didn't really matter what accusations were made or what was said. Truth and facts no longer mattered to most of their followers. All that really mattered was what they preferred to believe, and

the excitement hanging in the air of public spectacle.

Raffle tickets were sold for a chance to see their very own face on stage behind Batschitte, while he whipped the crowd into a frenzy. The winning face images would roll by behind him, as he spurred the crowd on to targeted vigilante attacks on refugees, and various minority communities.

He did not have a vision for the future, knowledge of history, technology, or an understanding of climate change and its dangers or potential benefits. Irrelevant to the mob. He was their cult hero, their leader, and they accepted whatever he told them as truth. For many their childhood religious indoctrination had prepared them to accept

absurdities as truths. And they did.

.....

From above, the three aliens watched events happening around the little group on the planet below, and wondered what would happen next.

The aliens were starting to grow fond of watching these strange creatures on

the big screen. It was almost addictive.

One passed around some heated kernels of a plant grown in their mini hot house. The kernels expanded under heat and were a pleasant snack while watching the big screen, especially when there was a tasty fatty liquid poured over them. Three brought out the big pot of communal tea and



*they all put their
individual hoses in their
mouths, sucked in some
tea, and reclined
comfortably in front of the
screen.*

.....

THE SUCCESS OF MISINFORMATION

We are truly fucked,
quietly observed Tammy.
*We are beaten only if we
stop resisting,* replied one
of the soldiers. She was
the one who had
suggested shouting *Hello*
was a better way to make
contact than building a
bonfire at the cave entry.

Lieutenant Soo was blond, of medium height, not fat, but strong and sturdy of build. She appeared to be in her thirties. She had blue eyes, regular features and a sonorous contralto voice. Tammy stared at her intrigued. After all that had happened, how could Soo still have hope?

The other two soldiers were earnest and young.

One, a woman with strong cheekbones and piercing hazel eyes, was brown-skinned and slender. The other was a young black man with broad shoulders and the graceful movements of an athlete. Both were quietly observing the group. They seemed less optimistic than Lieutenant Soo.

What is your plan?
Lieutenant Gomez, the

woman soldier asked
Pops. *Just to find a place
beyond the military zone
where we can live in
peace. What about you?*
The third soldier, Captain
Ahmaud said, *Good luck.*
He appeared sincere, if
not hopeful as he said it.

They had cleared the
burning grass from the
cave opening and wafted
the smoke away. General
Vertue invited them to

come inside the cave.
Following the soldiers,
they entered the opening.

The ceiling was high,
maybe twenty feet. There
were cavities in the walls
and various tunnels that
led off in different
directions. Most were
dead ends. Inside the
main chamber was a wide
shallow stream of water
flowing from a crack in the
wall. It spread and

meandered into a crevice that reappeared and flowed downhill about twenty meters away from the cave entry.

They sat in a circle around a fire pit. Lieutenant Gomez brewed tea. General Vertue spoke. *I am pondering what to do. We know some who are in the resistance but contact with*

*them would give them
away.*

*These evil bastards
have got to be stopped!*

*We've seen this before!
Ceasar, in Ancient Rome!
Bread and circuses
misdirection! Hitler, ethnic
cleansing and retribution
against his enemies or
potential rivals. They lie
and put on a big show and
people buy it. The people
don't know what to*

believe. Maybe they just don't care.

He had a point.
Whoever controlled news
and social media
controlled the masses.
Media control in the USA
and now Canada was as
completely under state
and oligarchy control, as
were most other places in
the world.



Conspiracy theories
were a good strategy to
realize an agenda and
control the masses. Their

own country's history of escaping tyranny to create a land free of tyranny was not taught in schools, known, or understood by the general population. This young country had evolved from those escaping oppression abroad to those recreating it in their own homeland.

Witch burning, slavery, lynching, Jim Crow, mob rule, history repeated itself, not with precision, but with the same general template. For the masses, religion and tribalism were enough to persuade normally decent people to do indecent, even horrific things.

General Vertue paused.
We are truly fucked,
repeated Tammy. Chip

seemed in a trance, eyes closed, kneeling on the floor next to Vertue.

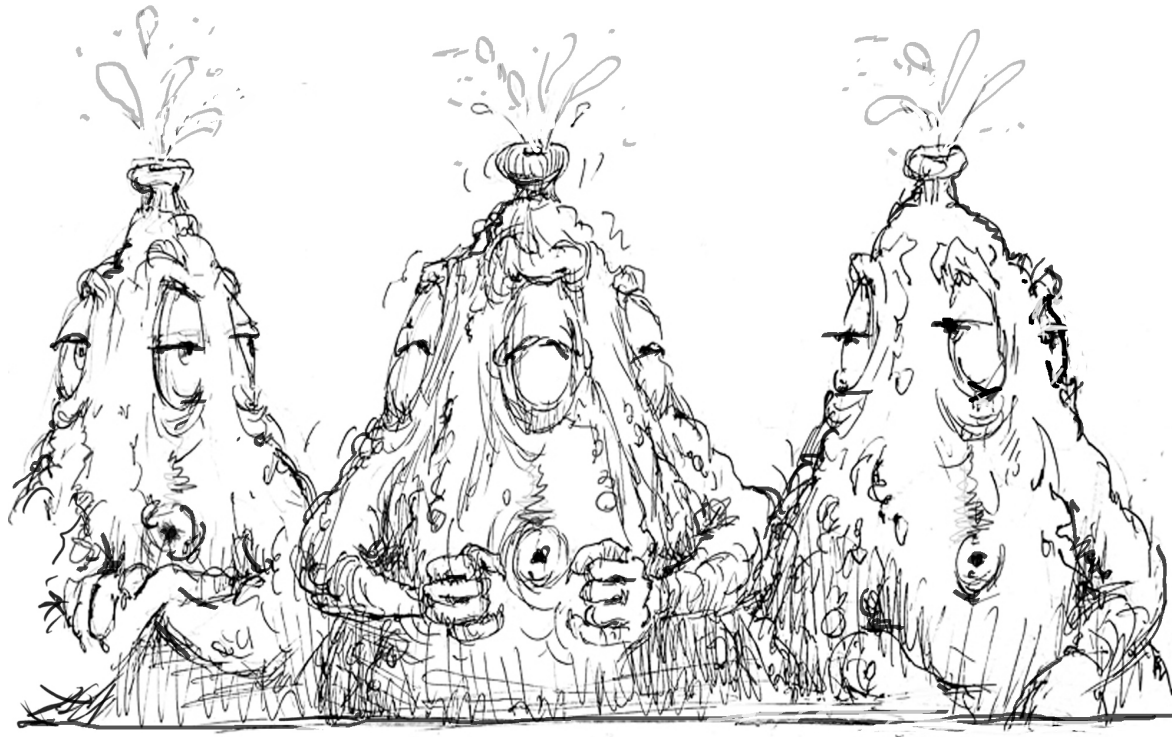
She touched his hand lightly, her fingers fluttering, then still. Her fingertips rested on the back of his hand. A connection that apparently revealed much.

Tell them, she said to the general. *Tell them or I will*. He stared at her, obviously startled. Then

he turned and looked at the three soldiers as if asking for their approval. They nodded in agreement. And so, he told them.

.....

Two watched all this with deep interest. She didn't know the detailed history of these creatures, but she felt the conflict among



them. She felt the single egg within her egg sac expand slightly. Little flutters of motherly emotion coursed through her. Her two companions

*felt it too. Three's torso
jiggled as he expanded his
body while enjoying his
new male state. His blow
hole became a deep green
as it hissed, expanded and
contracted. Showing off
like some males are prone
to do. The others giggled
telepathically in unison.*

.....

PLAN B

General Vertue revealed the fact, and the precise location, of the island where at a furious pace, construction for escape from Planet Earth, was taking place.

The activity going on there had been accepted by the US military and government as an island research station to study

radiation poisoning from the new ozone layer hole over the arctic, and ways to reduce greenhouse warming. The arctic was the logical location for such an attempt.

That had been Plan A. When it seemed Planet Earth might become uninhabitable, Plan B was adopted. Plan B was kept secret. Even from the military. Especially from

the military. It had to be. General Vertue was not aware of the details, but of the general plan.

On an island not too far from the group's present location, Plan B was nearing completion. In the very near future they would all learn more about Plan B. Director Yates was a scientist and a visionary. A very rich visionary. Rich enough to

design and see to completion, Plan B.

He surveilled the contents to be brought aboard the ship. Nothing must be forgotten.

There would be no turning back. This was the last cargo/passenger ship to leave for the moon.

There were still adjustments to make it capable of reaching the moon, and eventually from

there, the mother ship.
The moon with its low gravity had been the obvious choice for the interplanetary space launch.

He had wondered
dreaded and finally known
this time would arrive. A
time past the point of no
return. A time when
humanity might become
extinct or be involved in
perpetual warfare.

But he had a plan. Plan B. A plan for the human species to survive. He had enough committed brilliant specialists to focus on completing his plan, and enough working 24 hour a day, robots to make it happen. He had enough wealth to access and process the raw materials required to build it.

What was unknown was how much time he had

before Earth possibly became a death trap for all. His plan was to construct a huge villa of connecting vessels soaring through space. It was composed of outer rings of tubes, tunnels large enough for human occupation, connected by passageways to a central command hub, the mother ship.

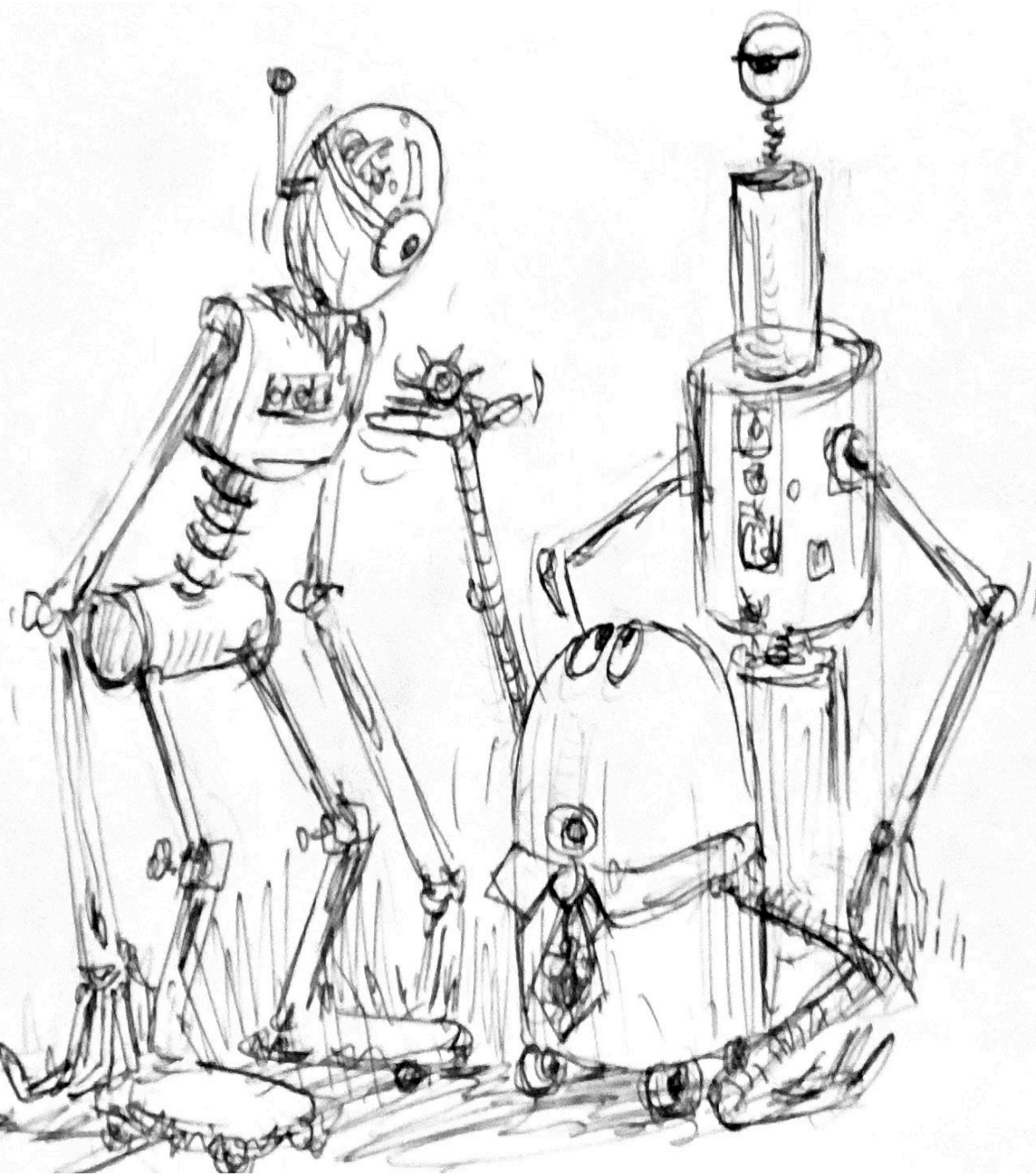
Passageways would also be made to each next outer ring so that continuous expansion of the villa was possible, as long as raw material was available. Asteroids, moons, floating debris, space had plenty of that.

The villa was a complete Ecco system. Gravity aboard was replicated by centrifugal force as concentric rings

of tubes each rotated around the mother ship, at a speed that mimicked Earth's gravity.

Yates had included a supply of human eggs and sperm from a cross-section of healthy humanity.

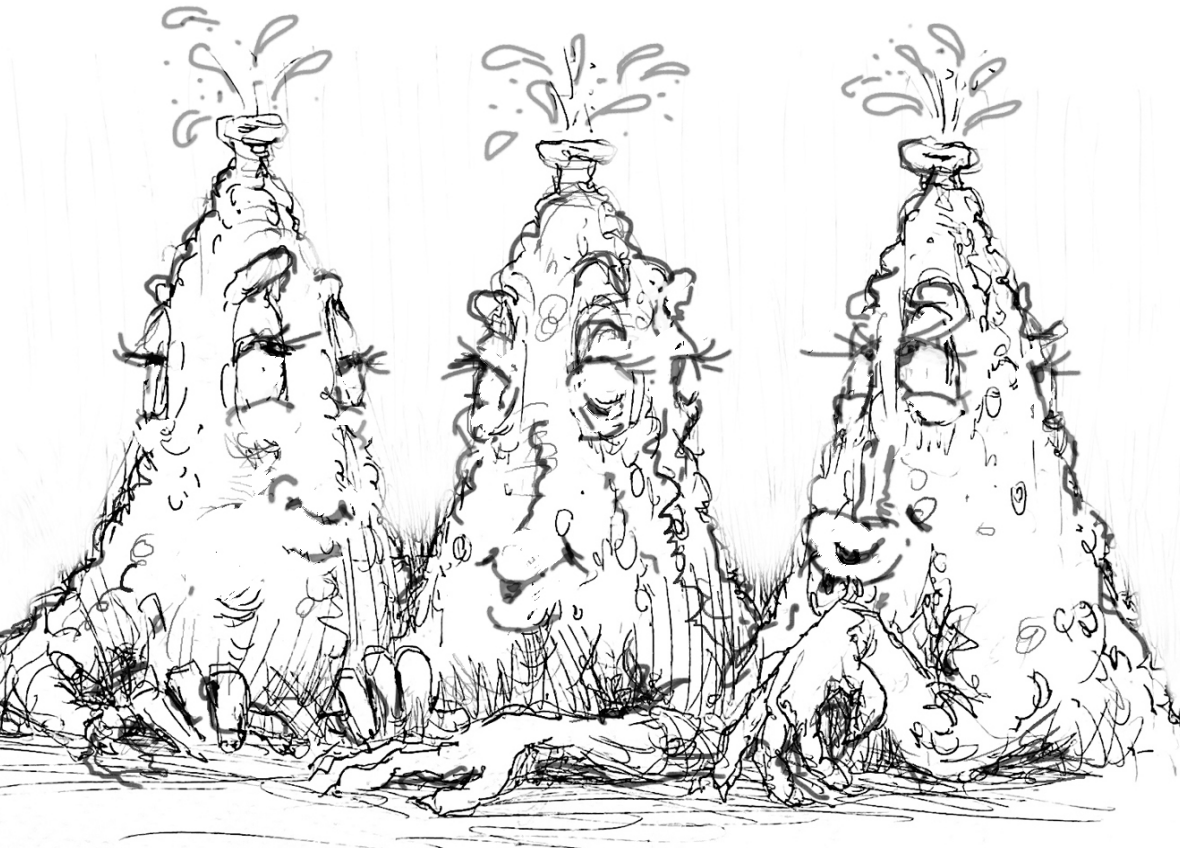
Replicating robots would be included to do much of the work on a new planetary home, once found.



He hoped to seed more than one habitable planet. But his permanent home would probably be on the villa. Enjoying the irony of turning a ludicrous fable into fact, he had named it, Ark. Invitation aboard was limited to his family, friends, the scientists and workers on the project, and his personal selection of outstanding people in their field.

The mother ship was in orbit in space just beyond Earth's atmosphere, awaiting the arrival of the last tube component.

.....



*Three was ready for
some action. More
importantly, Two was also.
Three expanded his torso*

in rhythm with the quivers of pleasure which were vibrating throughout his body. He was ready to activate Two's egg. His blow hole had turned a deep green in anticipation of its penetrating, vibrating role ahead.

The Alien's method of procreation was different from that of the beings

they had observed on the planet below. Different, but with some similarities.

Three's blow hole turned darker and extended to twice its previous length.

It began to vibrate rotating in clockwise then counterclockwise movements. Two's blowhole became darker. Moisture glistened around

*its circular opening which
had swelled to twice its
previous size like an
expanding donut. A soft
rhythmic crooning began
to flow out of it slowly,
rising then falling in
volume. The three aliens
began to sway, a slow
rotating dance their
flexible bodies
simultaneously elongating*

*up then compressing
down in the manner of an
ancient Earth toy, a slinky.*

*Three waited next to
her. All three of his eyes
closed, his blow hole
extended, waiting for her
telepathic invitation. The
moment of activation
arrived. With a sucking
whoosh, Two and Three
joined together. Swaying*

*forward and back, they
created the beginning of a
new life.*

*One swayed from side
to side and vertically up
and down, physically
alone, but telepathically
experiencing the same
waves of pleasure that
were washing over Two
and Three as they joined
together in the various*

positions that suited their rubbery flexible anatomy.

The entire event was not an orgy technically, as there were only two physical participants.

Nevertheless, in this telepathic group, it was a threesome. Party Time!

It took place over several days of time by

Earth standards and left the group, the two physical participants, and the telepathic third participant exhausted, and in a relaxed state of bliss. And with a new developing life aboard.

.....

NEW HOPE

Back in the cave, Vertue revealed his plans. Chip had already scanned his thoughts, so why not? The island where Plan B was underway was two weeks' march away.

Vertue was known and respected by staff there. Director Will Yates knew of him. They would

attempt the trip to the construction site before final departure of the spaceship to the moon.

They were not hopeful of arriving on time, or finding a watercraft to reach the island. Pops looked at him. There was silence.

Pops turned his head and looked one by one at

each of the members in his group. They all knew they had extra balloons. Extra balloons and the unspoken question Pops was asking of them. Chip made it easy. Yes. she nodded.

We have four extra backup balloons, from Pops, turning to look at the soldiers. Vertue's head

snapped up. *What do you mean?* He had assumed the group had arrived by foot.

Pops explained. With consent of the group confirmed, he offered the spare balloons for transport to Vertue and his soldier companions, conditional on if Chip could handle the additional

monitoring. Perhaps they could all reach the spaceship before final departure.

They all slept in the cave that night. More accurately, they tried to sleep. Unexpected opportunities lay ahead. Life was so unpredictable.

Next morning their heads were exploding with

wonderment at what lay ahead. After an early breakfast of Canada goose eggs and coffee they prepared to depart.

Now they were twelve in number, Pops, Eagle Eye, Tiny, Muzak, Tammy, Chip, the animals Eightball and Daphne, and new to the group, General Vertue, lieutenant Soo, Lieutenant

Gomez, and Captain Ahmaud.

Chip waited until all the harnesses were safely secured to inflated balloons. On her command, they all unclipped the carabiner hooks tethered from their harness lines to the fallen log they had been wound around.

Chip closed her eyes and concentrating deeply, elevated the others one at a time, to just above tree top height. She kept them hovering at the same height until all were in line. With full concentration on each member, she flew them forward. They flew along the coast towards

the coordinates she had noted from Vertue's mind.

The chief concern apart from maintaining consistent altitude for all was attack from vultures or other large birds.

Vertue and the other soldiers were armed.

Armed and aware they must not shoot if balloons or figures were in the

background. That evening they descended and made camp. There was a new sense of optimism. They had realistic hope for their future.

They continued to fly for two more days without incident. On the third day, from their elevation they were able to see in the distance, the island where

Plan B was underway.

Pops was flying point.

There it is! A little cheer from the rest. On the fourth day they arrived at the island.

The island rose out of the water, with steep cliffs on all sides. It was several miles wide, and several miles long, irregularly circular, with inlets and

fiords around the circumference. One by one they landed near the gate in a perimeter wall. They didn't fly over and explore. That would have risked being shot down.

If they had flown over it, they would have observed that there was a sprawling building the size of several football fields in the

middle. At various locations surrounding it, at a radius of about a mile, there was an electrified barbed wire fence. At about quarter mile locations signs were erected. They carried warnings that no one would ever read. Three lines in descending order.

Global Warming
Studies Facility,

Danger
High Voltage,

Trespassers will be
electrocuted.



There was a gate in the perimeter barrier. It was about twenty feet wide, disappearing on each side into a cement wall about

ten feet high, topped with razor wire.

They landed as a group in front of the gate, deflated and folded their balloons, and took off their harnesses. The soldiers laid their rifles on the ground. They knew they were being observed.

Who are you? a sing-song mechanical voice inquired from a speaker in the wall. General Vertue

loudly recited his name,
rank and serial number.

The other soldiers did
also. Each member of the
group said their name and
nationality.

*We know about Director
Yates's plans, Vertue said.
We mean no harm, only to
offer any assistance we
can.* Silence. Minutes
passed.

Chip closed her eyes.
Data between her and the

building guards
communication network
and ultimately Yates
flowed back and forth. The
gates rolled back to allow
a fifteen feet wide
opening. They passed
through and started
walking toward the
building.

In the distance, they
saw three unmanned
vehicles speeding toward
them. Shortly the vehicles

arrived. The first two had four rows of benches, each wide enough to seat two. Eagle Eye jumped on board and most of the others followed. The last vehicle was a flatbed with fold-down rear ramp.

Perfect thought Tammy. She walked on with Eightball and Daphne. Tiny jumped on behind her.

.....



*In the alien spaceship Two
blinked her middle eye.
Involuntarily Three blinked
his in response. Their*

union had created an emotional bond they would both enjoy forever, whatever sexual state they occupied.

Three also was intrigued by the events of these humans below. They may not be an advanced species but they were inventive. Although lacking in telepathic communication, they were

capable of deep loyalty. In spite of their strange appearance, some could be likeable. He joined Two and One in a group giggle.

.....

SHOW AND TELL

The group were taken directly to the building. The doors slid open. They entered. The soldiers were directed to a waiting room A and the group to waiting room B. Shortly a robotic voice from no definable location instructed the group in room B to lay down any weapons and take off all

their clothing. They did so, sort of.

All clothing, repeated the voice. Tammy and Lieutenant Soo had kept their panties on. Eagle Eye grinned. He stole a peek at Chip. Her eyes were closed. She seemed oblivious to the effect the voluptuous curves of her upward-pointing breasts and round buttocks had on him. On him and others.

But of course, she was aware of the inward thoughts of all those near her.

She forced the thoughts whirling inside her head into a mental background folder. A folder of archived reference information. Reference only. Her eyes flickered open and she smiled impishly at Eagle Eye. He clasped his hands over his

genitals and concentrated on diverting his thoughts to anything other than their present focus.

He recalled old song lyrics, nursery rhymes. Finally, he began mentally reciting the alphabet backwards - Z.. Y... X... W...

One by one they were directed into a steam room where they were decontaminated, while

their vital signs were being monitored and recorded. When they emerged they saw their clothing, harnesses, supplies and balloons had been individually irradiated and compressed for storage in clear soft vacuum sealed plastic-looking cubes. Eightball looked fluffy and refreshed. As did Daphne. No more mites or little pests.

A space in the wall opened and a utility cart hovering about two feet in the air came floating out. No evident source of support or locomotion. Clothing was stacked on it. White, one-piece form fitting long johns, with a velcro trap door. Each suit was perfectly sized and fitted for each of them, even for Tiny. They could identify which to select

because, in simple cobalt blue Helvetica, centered on the front, was each one's name.

They dressed and were directed into an elevator that descended rapidly down for hundreds of feet.

The elevator doors opened. *Welcome* said Director Will Yates waiting at the opening. Like the group, he was attired in long johns, except that his

were light blue. Two men and three women, also in light blue, stood just behind him.

My senior advisors, the director said, by way of introduction. Their names were on the chests of their clothing. Yates was a micro manager, capable of keeping track of, analyzing and anticipating everything of significance for the future of Plan B.

He immediately wanted to know everything the group knew. He was humane, but also pragmatic. Could they be of value or of risk to Plan B? He led the way to a circular-shaped conference room. In the middle was a round table. The room was glassed in on the entry side which had a half moon opening,

curved side up, flat side on the floor.

The group, the general, and the soldiers followed Yates and his advisors into the room. They all sat in a circle around the table, the group and new military friends next to each other, the advisers and Yates beside and facing them.

The questioning of the group began. Yates

asked most of the questions. From time to time, deferentially, an advisor would ask for a clarification.

On the back wall a horizontal meter had been counter-sunk into the wall surface. As each person spoke the meter registered blood pressure fluctuations, minute temperature variations, voice cadence and

hesitations, facial tics, and a variety of other physical changes. A bar running horizontally at the top of the meter varied from green to red.

For most responses it remained in the green zone, occasionally venturing to the middle.

When an obviously ironic or sarcastic remark was made it zipped to the middle and vibrated. A

laughing face emoji appeared. At first, Pops found the process unnerving. Then, as his and the group's responses were confirmed, it was strangely comforting.

Interrogation was over after three or four hours. They were then led by a tiny robot on wheels to separate cubicles, each the size of a large closet. Once they had arrived the

robot left. The cubicles were side by side in a row. The proximity to each other was comforting. Each cubicle contained sleeping shelves and stacked shelving at the end for personal items.

There was a vertical row of buttons beside the sleeping shelf. The function for each was indicated by an icon. They were not confined. There

was a button to open or close the door. Exhausted, each of them fell asleep.

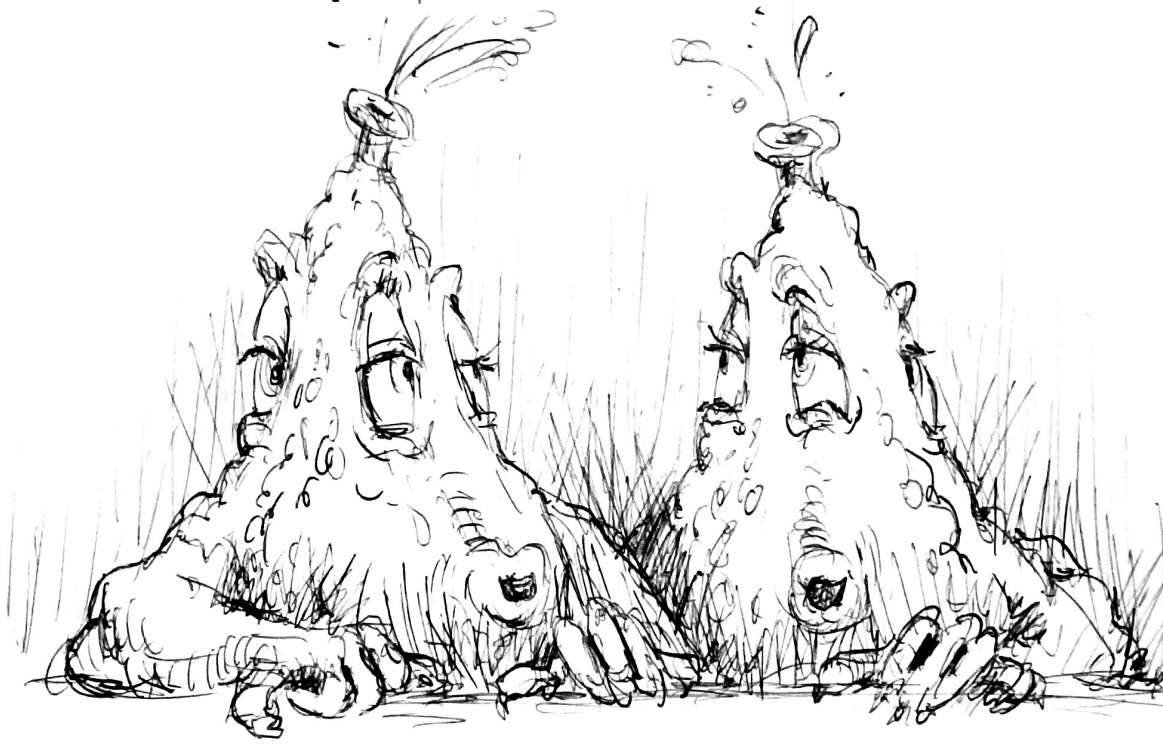
.....

*In the alien spaceship
Two felt her activated egg
moving and expanding as
she watched what she
could, and wondered.
Wondered because the
building housing the
construction for Plan B
was blocked to her ship's*

*ability to spy on humans
below.*

*Quite a technological
achievement for this
species she thought.
Maybe this small group
would eventually qualify
for acceptance in the
Intergalactic Species
Federation.*

*Three also, felt the egg
inside Two moving.
Moving because of his
involvement.*



His torso expanded and quivered with satisfaction as he blinked his middle eye in unison with her.

.....

***TO GO OR NOT TO GO...
THAT IS THE QUESTION***

They were awakened six hours later by a buzzer at the top of the wall button list. A metallic voice directed each to follow the red line.

Immediately from the passageway ceiling, a beam of light projected a red line with directional arrows onto the floor.

The red line directed them back to the conference room. Eagle Eye smelled the aroma of fresh coffee brewing. Under the wall meter, a glass table held utensils and a variety of breakfast food. Some, like scrambled eggs, were recognizable, some were not. Also, there were various coloured liquids,

and as his nose had told him, thank God, coffee.

Already seated, Yates and his advisors were eating breakfast. The visitors lined up, helped themselves to food, then brought their plates and utensils, and joined the others at the table. As they finished eating, a robot on wheels with long spindly arms removed their dirty dishes.

The newcomers waited. They knew their acceptance or not on the flight had already been considered, and decisions for each were already made.

I wish I could offer you all to join us on board, Yates spoke softly but firmly. This was not a negotiation.

The wall meter registered green.

He directed his gaze to each as he spoke.

Pops, although you are in excellent shape for your years your age disqualifies you. I am sorry. Pops nodded. *I expected so.*

He attempted a smile, but it was closer to a grimace. *I will miss you all so much,* he said quietly, almost to himself. The meter above registered green.



Yates continued, *You others all qualify, except for the animals. I am sorry.* Tiny stared at him.

I never thought of you as an animal Tiny. The meter zipped to the

middle, then hovered a bit past it in the red. *You are welcome to join us Tiny, no disrespect intended.*

The meter went back half way between the middle and green, then all the way to green. A wide grin spread across Tiny's face.

Then in his hoarse voice, *Red then green, one out of two ain't all bad.* Was Tiny learning humour? Tammy looked

Yates in the eye, and enunciated each word clearly, no mistaking her meaning. *I am staying with Eightball and Daphne.* The meter stayed at the start of the green. *Why not sleep on it?* Yates suggested.

No need, from Tammy. Green again. Seated next to her, Lieutenant Soo took her hand. *If you stay,*

I stay she said. Green again.

Looks of surprise all around, except from Muzak. He nodded to them both in turn, then grinning, gave a silent thumbs up.

General Vertue looked directly at Yates. He saluted and said, *At your service, Director.*

The other soldiers beside him saluted also.

Good. We are on schedule for departure to the Moon in forty-three hours. He glanced at his wrist minicomputer. *And twenty minutes.* Green, and green again.

Later that afternoon, Yates, his advisors, and the rest of his crew, along with the newcomers, gathered together in the conference room.

Before them was a giant TV screen. It showed a crowd in front of a stage. Hanging from the ceiling, a US confederate flag covered the entire stage opening.

Music played. Full orchestra, dignified pace at first, then increasing in volume, rising and falling in majestic sonorous harmonies. The star spangled banner. Two

blond girls wearing fur lined bikinis covered in sequins and twirling batons danced and did acrobatic flips across the stage. They waved and exited stage right.



A drum roll rumbled. From the top of the stage, two feet in ox blood-coloured, tasseled loafers appeared, then slowly descending

two legs, then full figure,
rotund belly in blue suit
and long red tie.

President for Life
Batschitte descended
slowly to the stage floor.
His arms outstretched, a
smile on his face. The
crowd roared their
approval. *Batschitte!*
Batschitte! Batschitte
beamed. *You are special.*

I love you all, More roars
of approval.

The Confederate flag
behind him rolled up from
the bottom and
disappeared into the
ceiling above. In its place
was a black wall. In front
of the wall, confined by
wrist and ankle bracelets
were two figures, slumped
forward on sturdy metal

chairs. There was a black hood over each of their heads.

Here are the traitors!
Batschitte pointed to them as he said it. *Traitor, traitor*, chanted the crowd. *Omygawd*, gasped General Vertue.

They were clothed in orange prison uniforms. Their bodies sagged in

place, held up by their shackles rather than their own strength. *I'd like to punch 'em in the face* from Batschitte. He grinned widely as the crowd roared its approval. *But that isn't like, enough! What'll we do to them?* Various horrific suggestions were shouted back. *Let's let God decide,* said

Batschitte. In his hand he held aloft upside down, a bible with Batschitte Bible stamped in gold on the cover, \$69.95 in the bottom corner. A cart was rolled out by a pretty girl in a red, white and blue, with fur trim one-piece bikini costume. Mounted on the cart was a circular disc with a middle pin that



allowed it to rotate.
There was a flexible
stopper on the side that
could slow and eventually
stop the spin. The disc
looked like a giant pizza

divided into triangle slices.
Each slice contained a
different fate.

There was beheading,
shot in the head, poison,
drowning, electrocution,
burning at the stake,
tossed out of a helicopter,
live dismemberment, and
half a dozen more options.
All were tried and true
methods of handling non-
believers, political
opponents, dissidents,

traitors, people who looked different, or neighbours who just pissed you off. The exact instant when the stopper stopped the spinning disc at a particular spot appeared to be a chance occurrence.

It was not. God would not really decide. Batschitte would. As he decided everything.

Batschitte liked all the options, but he didn't want to get blood sprayed on himself. That eliminated his favourites. He ripped the hoods off of the two ex-generals so the crowd could enjoy watching the fear on their bruised and battered faces.

What's your favourite choice before I spin, you scumbag losers? He asked both figures with a

big grin. *Get out of jail free* whispered the figure on his right.

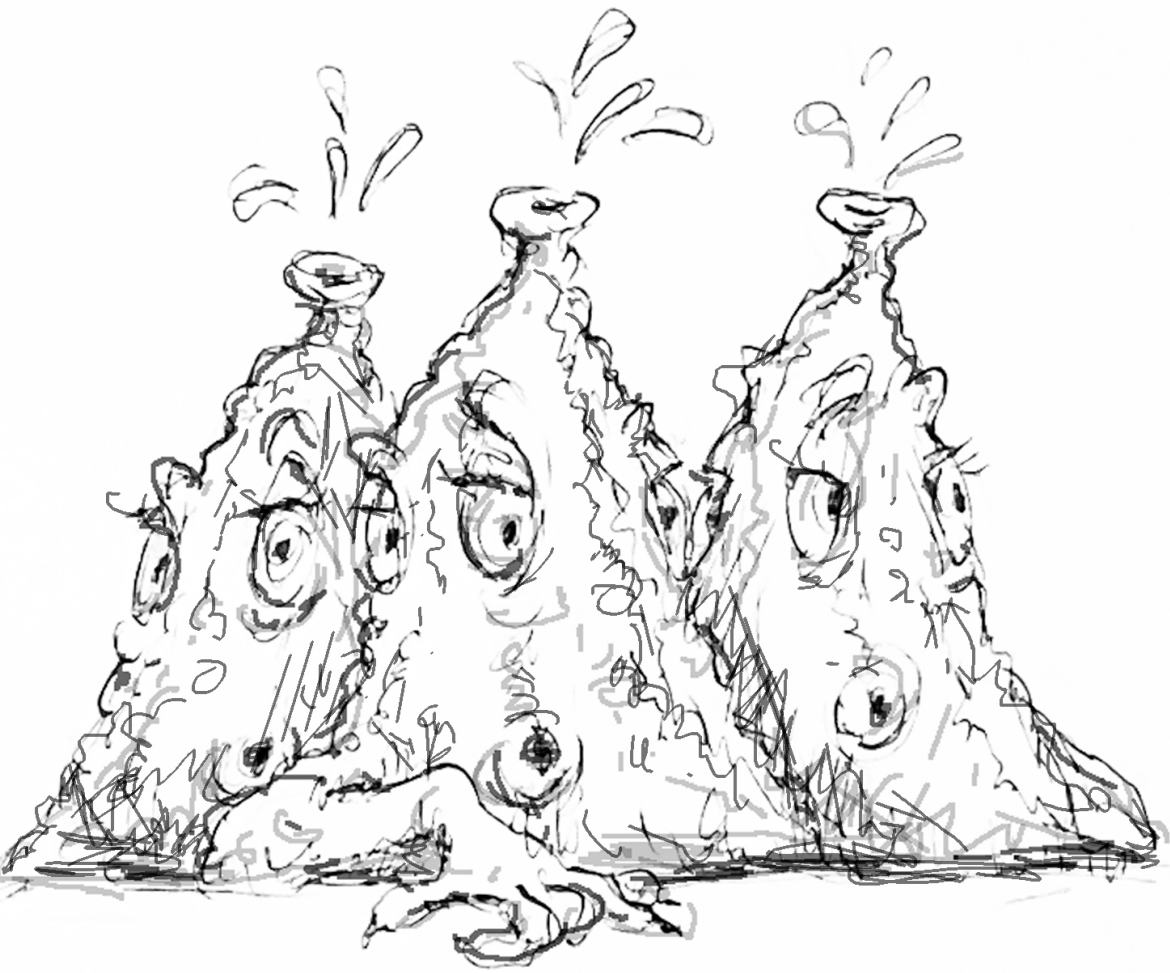
General Vertue put his hand over his mouth, his fingers splayed out over his open eyes, as if hoping he could shut out the scene before him from his sight.

Batschitte spun the disc. He had already decided on electrocution, in increasing stages.

Vertue watched. He gasped back a sob. He rose from his chair. He turned his back to the TV and walked out of the room.

One by one the others in the TV room got up and left behind him.

.....



*In the spaceship Two
felt her tiny activated egg
twitch as awareness
began to form in the tiny*

being. She knew that its welfare should be her chief interest. Still, as she watched the events far off being orchestrated by Batschitte, she felt a strange sense of sorrow. I am beginning to lose hope for the future of the species on this planet she thought. There were no contradictions from the others.

.....

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Departure time had arrived. The group had split in two, those aboard strapped in for multiple G forces of the blast off and the small group staying behind and with very mixed emotions, standing outside.

Along with their animals, Tammy, Soo and Pops

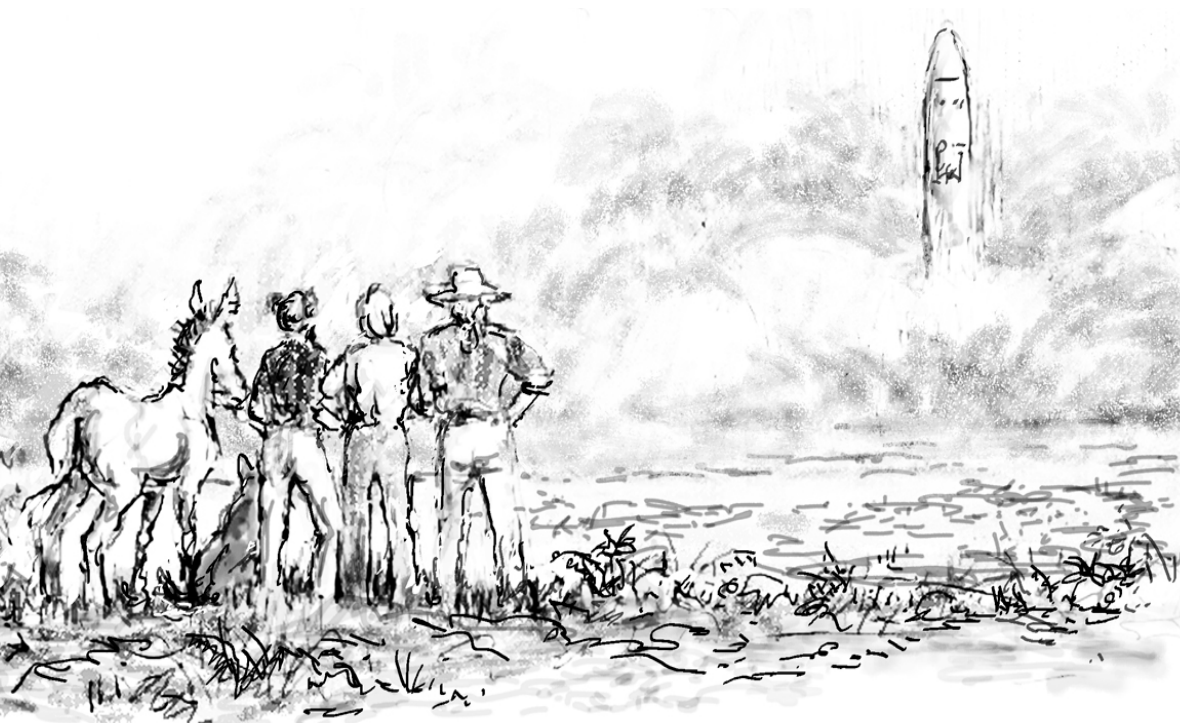
stood side by side and watched. They were in a field a quarter mile away from the launch area with a clear view of the astroturf space that would shortly transform into an opening.

As they watched the ground under the astroturf groaned loudly, split into two identical rectangles, their common edges separating and heaving

slowly upward, lift bridge technology. A humming reverberation grew louder as the ground parted, both sides rising vertically.

At ninety degrees the two sides gave a final grinding groan and stopped, like immense book ends, immobile in place. The nose of the slowly rising space ship came into view. Because of its great length it

seemed to be moving slower than its actual speed. Finally, it stopped in its take off position. Pops, Tammy and Soo watched from their safe vantage point. This was a pivotal moment in their lives. They wondered, hoped, and watched. Wondered what lay ahead for friends they would never see again.



Hoped those same
friends would survive their
perilous journey in space.
Hoped they themselves
would survive their
perilous journey on Earth.
And they watched.

This was a visual moment that would live in their memories forever.

A moment predetermined by decisions already made. No going back. Done.

First, clouds of smoke, then in the middle of the smoke, fiery red flames. Shortly, a booming roar, hardly muffled by the small rag sound protectors they had stuffed in their ears.

The air in the landscape seemed to dance and shimmy, to vibrate in concentric waves rippling out from the centre of the blast.

A vertical cylindrical shape like an enormous cigar, lit end facing down, edged up in the center of the billowing clouds of smoke.

The cylinder seemed to hover briefly. Slowly the

spaceship rose, reaching
ground level it paused, as
if making up its mind
whether or not to go for it.
Then, decision made,
flames erupted from
beneath, a loud boom as it
accelerated straight up.
Quickly shrinking the huge
ship became a cigar, then
a dot, then nothing.

Hands clasping hands,
hands hugging shoulders
and stroking hair, skin and

fur. The three humans and two animals were comforted by each other's presence. They knew the journey that lay ahead for their departed friends was perilous.

The journey that lay ahead for themselves was also perilous. Dangers of a different sort from their departed friends. In the tall tropical forest, hidden above were snakes, fierce

felines and poisonous insects. On the ground were wild pigs, bears and mutated carnivores of unknown origins.

Although they did not accompany the rest of their group on the spacecraft, Director Yates had equipped them with survival tools. Each had a solar-powered laser pistol with various power settings Each had tracking

and communications cell phones encrypted to be undetectable to the invaders. It was a means to communicate with each other or the small circle of scientists resisting the invaders and loyal to Canada.

They had a protective electric shock cable they could circle their campsite with and an instant pop-up camouflage tent.

In addition, he had given them an inflatable pontoon boat with solar powered outboard motor, medications, anti-virus pills, antibiotics, and wound healing creams that genetically replicated destroyed human cells. If the Earth did not become uninhabitable due to climate change creating forest fires, floods or volcanoes, their survival

chances were certainly better than before.

They walked to the shoreline where their gear was waiting, inflated the boat, piled in and set off for the mainland.

.....

The aliens watched the launch of the spaceship successfully zoom up beyond the gravitational pull of its home planet.

*They wondered if
sometime in the future
they would be considering
offering these strange
creatures membership in
the Federation of
Intergalactic Species.
Would this species evolve
to a less violent nature?*

.....

BEDROCK REVISITED

Adam Byrd scratched and massaged the long bony protrusion on the back of Alpha's head. How prophetic Byrd thought, that someone with a name like his should be the adoptive parent of a real honest to god pterodactyl.



Alpha's eyes creased shut. A goofy grin revealed rows of razor sharp teeth. Byrd smiled too. Before the great

climate warming had occurred, in the arctic, anthropologists had discovered the remains of extinct species. Bones, rock impressions, sometimes even fur or scales, or stomach contents. Most often only teeth, bones and bone fragments.

But that was the past. With the Earth's dramatic recent warming, Canada's

arctic layers of melting permafrost had exposed perfectly intact, mummified prehistoric creatures. Including even many that predated the dawn of mankind. Additionally advances in gene technology had led to the cloning of some of these same creatures, previously extinct for millennia. Advances that

had led to the creation of Alpha.

Byrd was a member of a research facility headed by Dr. Chang. The research facility was in the arctic of course. That was where the raw material for cloning experiments was constantly being discovered as melting ice revealed extinct species.

Chang's clinical specialty was genetic

manipulation and cloning. She was aware of how her research could be misused if the military was aware of just how successful she had been. The thought terrified her. But her curiosity as a scientist led her to continue researching. It was a balancing act.

Her reports indicated enough limited progress on cloning to continue

funding from the new invader government and no more. Drone flyovers with cameras by the military were sporadic.

Her team was small but highly specialized, and fiercely loyal to her. They shared a common goal of doing groundbreaking research. Could they do it without endangering humanity even further? Maybe. Maybe not. But

how could they abandon such exciting scientific exploration?

When Alpha hatched, the first face he saw was Byrd's. Byrd was his security, his adoptive parent. Byrd felt the responsibility and awe of this example of the arrival of a new world order.

A world order of new possibilities, but also new threats. A world where

extinct prehistoric
creatures could once
again exist. Pandora's
box had been opened.
What did it portend?

Alpha snorted with
pleasure as Byrd strapped
on his saddle with harness
straps before and aft of his
wings.

*How about a spin around
the block?* Byrd crooned
softly.



Alpha spread his wings slightly as if in anticipation.

To infinity and beyond,
he whispered in Alpha's ear. Byrd would lie prone on the creature's broad

back with a safety strap from the saddle attached to his chest harness.

This daily outing was necessary for the pterodactyl's emotional and physical health. For Byrd it surpassed his wildest childhood dreams.

Off they flew. Byrd let Alpha pick his own route. Why not? Below was a variety of foliage, banana leaves, ferns, conifers, tall

grasses. Occasionally staring up at Byrd in addition to known species, were many strange new faces, mutations.

Alpha circled, then began his descent. He had spotted lunch. Hard to choose. They both looked delicious. Donkey or wolf?

Just in time Byrd's eyes much weaker than his flying steed's, took in the

scene below. With voice commands, he directed the huge creature to land, but not to attack. Alpha plopped down in his usual clumsy landing style in front of the three startled humans and their two animals.

Just in time for Alpha, and himself Byrd realized. The three humans had drawn and aimed their laser pistols at Alpha.

They slowly lowered and pointed them to the ground. Byrd dismounted and hands raised, walked slowly toward the strangers. They waited and watched, as he approached.

First identities on both sides were shouted out. Finally, intentions and brief histories were exchanged. Intuitively both sides felt

they should apply cautious trust.

Byrd turned and spoke a command firmly to Alpha. The huge creature tucked in his wings and settled himself on the ground. He stared at Eightball and Daphne.

A drop of saliva dribbled down the forward edge of his lower beak. *Rest!* Commanded Byrd. Alpha snorted a high pitched

whistle and closed his eyes. Eightball kept his eyes on the pterodactyl and continued to tremble. Daphne watched. Her hackles began to flatten out.

The four humans sat down together and talked, and planned. So much to explain and yet in this rapidly changing world nothing seemed impossible anymore.

Tell us about the research facility, said Pops. Byrd did. He also gave them directions to reach it in three days march. He would meet them on the morning of the second day to guide them in.

Lastly, he warned them of the dangers that lay ahead. Most importantly, he told them about the river of hot lava that was

coursing down from a volcano ahead, if they stayed on this path, and the detour they should take.

.....

*In the alien spaceship,
Two shivered and blinked
all of her three eyes as the
new life in her egg began
to expand. The two others
shivered in unison and*

empathy. Three his torso puffed up with pride, according to tradition, passed around sparkly doughnut-shaped munchies.

He expanded his body in keeping with his male state and caused little vibrations to jiggle up and down his soft body. He was showing off. Of course, the other two knew it.



*Two observed that the
three bipedal creatures
had been warned about
the volcano flow. Her
resolve not to interfere*

*was no longer a concern.
All her attention was now
on the new life inside her.
Motherhood, so emotional!
Thought Three, his
attitude surely altered by
his new male state.
Simultaneously, I wonder
how he will handle it when
it's his turn, thought the
other two.*

.....

The three humans and their animals continued for about a mile to a grassy plain. Then as advised by Byrd, they bore right and headed for the right side of a steep hill they saw in the near distance. Plumes of smoke were drifting up from it. Dry ash was floating and falling all around them. They continued on.

Byrd had explained there was lava spilling out of a volcano ahead, and flowing down on the side to their left. The right side of the hill was hot but passable, for now. They picked up the pace. Soon they were at the base of the volcano on the far side from the lava flow. The heat was stifling, but the sooner they got around to the other side of the

volcano, the better. They wetted towels and tied them on the heads of the animals and themselves. Eyes half shut from the fumes, they coughed and sputtered, and hurried on as best they could past the fuming volcano.

Was it ten minutes in this outdoor oven or ten hours Tammy asked herself, as she pulled on Eightball's reins. *Cough,*

cough, you OK? Pops asked the others. They had emerged from the worst of the volcano fumes. Eightball sneezed out ash dust in reply and Soo broke into a girlish giggle, uncharacteristic for her. Tammy grinned. *Yup.*

They continued on to the designated meeting place selected by Byrd. Could they trust him? Was he really what he

said he was? Or was he a spy of the invading military? If so, what would they do differently?

Nothing, they decided.

The meeting place was a couple of miles further. It was by a stream shallow enough to ford, identified by three tall pine trees surrounded by low foliage.

They arrived, at the three pines. *Good spot to camp*, said Pops. He

looked too pooped to continue anyway. The girls grinned and Soo raised her arm, rolled back her sleeve and flexed her impressive bicep. *Are you sure you don't want to keep going?* She asked. Pops puffed out his chest. His eyes twinkled. *You have to think about the animals.*

Yup, the animals from Tammy with one eye in a

half-closed wink, the other eyebrow arched up, her face in a hypocritical grin.

They chose a clearing with good visibility all around and without any big bushes in it. They circled their campsite with the electric shock barrier provided by Yates.

Pops checked for flat ground without any critter holes. He erected the tent facing the stream, and

made a fire pit in front. Tammy looked after the animals. From their camping gear she pulled out and expanded collapsible buckets. She filled them with water from the stream. Murmuring in a gentle sing-song voice to Eightball and Daphne, she gave them water to drink, washed them down and patted them semi-dry.

Soo returned from the stream with a fish about a foot and a half long. A salmon or a trout, maybe. Whichever, it was fresh and would be delicious skewered over the fire. Pops licked his lips.

Later in the half-light of the arctic evening sitting around the campfire, their bellies full, looking up at the stars they speculated whether or not the

spaceship carrying their comrades had departed from the launch site on the moon. Had the rings of space stations that attached to the mother ship all been joined on? Were their friends OK? Would they ever see them again? Not likely, they knew.

.....

*Two and One and Three
were distracted from*

*celebrating the new
growing life in their group
as they watched the
spaceship carrying
members of this strange
species while it hurtled
through space. Their
history does not suggest a
good future for the original
inhabitants of any planet
they colonize, they thought*

.....

JUNGLE DANGERS

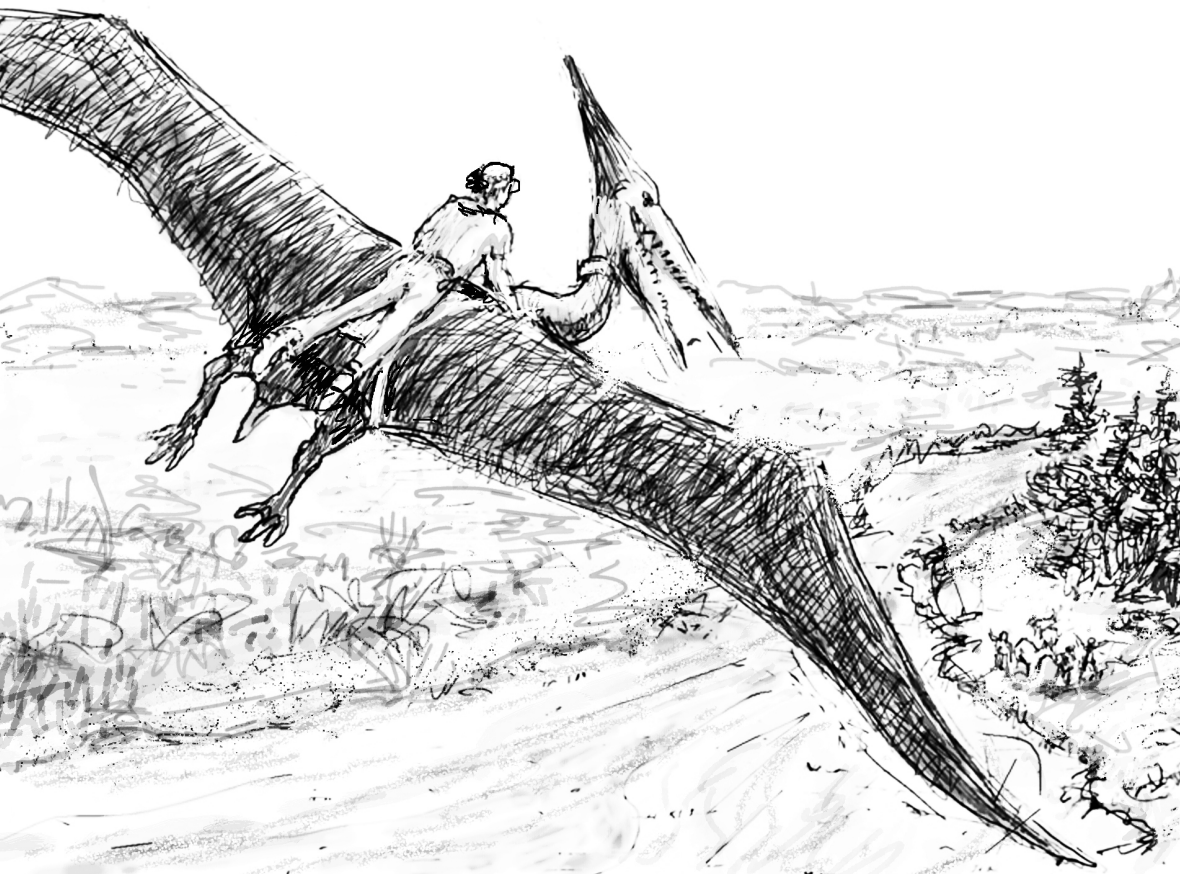
Next morning, after a mystery breakfast of rehydrated food pellets provided by Director Yates and leftover fish, they sipped coffee and watched the sky. They were sitting on collapsible stools around the fire pit at the base of three tall pine trees. They were waiting. Waiting for what?

Empty-faced soldier clones with guns? A human passenger flying in on a giant pterodactyl? Either scenario sounded preposterous. That was the new reality.

Daphne uttered a low woof. Then off in the distance, the humans heard it too. A vibrating whooshing sound like a giant bellows.

Byrd's eyes darted back and forth scouring the land below, but always returning to the three pines in the distance ahead.

Alpha was flying directly towards those pines. A good landmark, Byrd thought. As he gripped the straps on Alpha's back. Byrd saw them ahead and below.



Three figures sitting
around a campfire facing
the river. They stood and
waved. After Alpha's usual
clumsy landing on the far

side of the river, Byrd waded through the shallow water to greet the new acquaintances.

Outside of his fellow workers at the research facility, these were the first new faces he had seen for real, in how many years? Three, four?

He greeted each by name, like old friends. They grinned back. Behind the camouflaged

tent tethered to one of the tall pines, Eightball heehawed.

Daphne trotted towards the newcomer. She sniffed Byrd's crotch. A wolf truth meter measuring what? Nervousness? Passivity or aggression? Testosterone presence? General health? Breakfast menu?

Satisfied with Byrd's crotch CV, she let out a low woof trotted over and sat down beside Tammy. Byrd described the local geography, the animal, insect, plant and natural dangers that were all around. He described the safest route they should take to reach the research facility. Lastly, he told them about the accomplishments at the

research facility. The prehistoric creatures they had successfully cloned. The ones that had escaped or been released. He admitted they could clone them but they couldn't feed all of them. Yes, some were very dangerous. But that is nature. Nature is dangerous.

The others stared at him. He lowered his eyes

and looked away. *Tell us about the dangerous ones* said Pops. Byrd did so, a bit sheepishly, but hiding nothing. He described the sabre tooth tigers, the great cave bears, dire wolves, the eight foot tall families of apes that now roamed the wilds. He told them also about the jungle that lay ahead on the route to the research facility. It could not be avoided. It

was dangerous. How dangerous? Snakes hanging from branches above.

On the ground below, carnivorous plants and poisonous insects.

Various carnivores, mammalian, lizard, reptile and winged. At least they had a list of what to watch out for. *Maybe we should turn around and face the*

military, suggested Tammy.

Later Byrd waded across the river and climbed aboard Alpha. The others gathered up their gear for the trek ahead. They watched as the pterodactyl and human rider rose up over the treetops, and disappeared in the distant sky.

They set off on the trek ahead. After a couple of

hours march the grassy plain stopped abruptly. A wall of dense jungle stretched into the distance on both sides.

The route to the research facility required them to pass through it. They were forewarned of the possible dangers. They got out their laser pistols and set them to low to act as machetes to clear vines and foliage.

Soo leading, then Pops,
and bringing up the rear,
Tammy and the animals.
They entered the jungle.

Around them they heard
chirping, distant animal
roars, wolf howls, crashing
of animals on the ground
and in the branches
above.

Occasionally what
sounded suspiciously like
elephants trumpeting. As
they saw daylight through

the vines ahead, there was a sudden yelping from Daphne. Tammy swung her laser and chopped off the stem of the huge purple plant just below its closed petals. Daphne's right rear leg was trapped in the carnivorous plant's closed thorny spiked petals.

Tammy cut them away and freed the leg. All the fur was gone and most

skin. Blood oozed out from open wounds all over the limb. Daphne's eyes were closed. Unconscious, in shock, she whimpered in pain.

Tammy searched through her medications donated by Yates. She applied cream on the leg. Nothing. She put her hand lightly on Daphne's heart. Nothing. She opened Daphne's mouth and

began rhythmically
breathing into it. After
several minutes, nothing.

Oh Gawd she moaned.
She laid her head beside
Daphne's and sobbed
uncontrollably. Pops put
his hand on her shoulder.
*We have to get her body
to the research facility,* he
told her. From a blanket in
their supplies and a
slender tree trunk as a
ridge pole



they jury-rigged a
hammock to carry the
wolf's body.

With the ridge pole over
each one's shoulder, Soo

in front, then Pops behind,
they trudged on. Sobbing
Tammy followed close
behind Pops.



LOVE IS IN THE AIR

They emerged from the jungle only to see what looked like a new threat.

This is really too Fuckin ' Much yelled Tammy as if complaining might change things.

It didn't. Charging directly toward them was a sight not previously seen by humans for several thousands of years.

Three huge woolly mammoths thundered across the ground on a

collision course with three puny-sized humans.

Soo and Pops gently lowered the hammock with Daphne to the ground. They set their laser guns to full power. But for beasts of this size would that really be enough? Probably not. However, Pops and Soo both saw something that caused them to pause at the same

instant. They lowered their weapons.

Bouncing along on top of the broad backs of two of the mammoths were two humans. All three of the mammoths had riding boxes strapped on their backs. Two carried humans. One box was empty. The huge animals slowed their pace and stopped about fifteen feet from the group.

The two leading animals knelt down forward facing. Each of the humans got out of their boxes slid and stepped down onto one of their animal's front legs, then jumped to the ground.

Byrd introduced Dr. Chang. She looked almost as old as Pops, and like him still very fit. White hair flowing in soft waves behind her neck.

Medium short height and slender as a young girl. Age had not diminished her natural beauty. With her strong cheekbones and huge almond-shaped hazel eyes, she was as beautiful as she had been as a young girl. And much more interesting.



Introductions completed they mounted their new steeds. Chang and Pops in the lead, in the middle were Tammy, and Soo and Daphne's body growing cold. Behind them trotted Eightball. In the rear alone and watchful was Byrd.

Sitting cheek to cheek next to Chang, Pops couldn't believe his luck. I am an old geezer, not

nearly as smart as her,
and I probably stink with
sweat he reminded
himself. His brain
however, couldn't stop
conjecturing. Should I
shave off my beard?
Maybe just a neatly
trimmed van dyke style?
A sappy grin came over
his face, as his mind
wandered off to impossible
foolish fantasies.

Within several hours the research facility came into view. It was on top of a steep hill, in a clearing



where tall trees had once stood. They had been chopped down, planed and used to create a tall one-story building, the research center.

There were other buildings in the clearing including an open-air barn as big as an aircraft hangar. Inside it were stalls of various sizes with curtains hiding whatever was inside. There were

eight separate small cottages for the staff.

Near the cottages was a communal washroom with showers. Next to it was another large building, the kitchen and dining area.

Around the perimeter was strung a protective electric shock barrier. From his high perch on the mammoth Byrd remotely deactivated the electric shock barrier. One by one

they entered the clearing. They dismounted. The newcomers looked around.

Safe, secure, isolated. A far view of the land on all sides. But if it should ever happen, an easy target for attack from the skies.

Tammy followed him in, while Pops carried Daphne's body into the research lab, as Chang

instructed. He laid the corpse down on a table. Chang stepped forward and examined the wolf. She looked at Tammy and said softly. *I cannot bring her back to life. I can clone her. A puppy exactly like her, If, that is what you want. Exactly like her? Yup. But a new life, a puppy.*

Tears streaming down her cheeks,

Do it please. Yes! Do it.

Byrd took them on a tour. He introduced them to the other four staff, Rob the handyman groundskeeper, Jacob the Cree hunter/animal caretaker, and Chang's two research assistants. He explained that if the presence of the group was known by the military it

jeopardized everybody's existence. They would dress like staff, and stay out of view. He took them to their individual hut sleeping quarters and showed them the common shower, washroom and the communal kitchen and dining area.

Dr Chang prepared to clone Daphne, and the three exhausted

newcomers laid down on their new cots and slept.

Hours later they entered the dining area. Roast ostrich and fried plantain were on the menu.

Dr. Chang was sitting on the first chair near the head of the table. On the other side facing her were Soo, and Tammy and the two research assistants.

The space next to Chang was empty. Next

were Jacob the hunter and animal caretaker, Rob the handyman groundskeeper and Byrd.

Pops entered. *Whoa, who is that?* screeched Soo. In spite of her tears, Tammy had to smile.

Pops had shaved and trimmed his beard to a three-quarters-inch length. He had trimmed his moustache, even his eyebrows and his top

chest hair. His usually wild uncombed hair had been shampooed and tied into a ponytail.

He enjoyed being ribbed. After all, I do look quite dashing he thought. Dr Chang smiled at him, *I don't believe we have met*, she teased. His heart skipped a beat. The beard trim evidently was a good idea. The space next to her was empty. Was

anyone else going to join them? Chang gestured toward the empty seat.

Sit. As much a command as an invitation. Shivers ran down Pop's back. He sat.

What exactly are your plans? Chang asked looking directly at him. Just to sit here and stare into your eyes he thought. His brain switched back on. Omygawd, just answer

her question. No clever quips. Just give her a straight answer.

Just to keep moving on. Find a place where the military can't find us. A place where we can live in peace. It sounded lame, pathetic even. He took a tentative sip of wine.

Tell me about yourself she persisted. She was a scientist. That meant a forever curious brain,

didn't it? Nothing more than that?

In my younger days, artist, writer, college professor for studies that maybe had relevance once. But that was in the past when the world made sense. In the present, fugitive and volunteer for any resistance movement to reclaim our country. I would regard that as a promotion.

I would too, she said quietly. He smiled. Now they were talking for real he thought. He took a long sip of wine looking directly into her eyes over the rim of the wine goblet. Next to your field, basically, I am a Neanderthal, he admitted. Glad I found out before you dragged me away by my hair, she chuckled.

Trifecta! Beautiful, smart and fun too! He gulped a

bigger sip of wine, then responded. *With you, always a very gentle Neanderthal, no uninvited hair pulling.* Good answer they both thought. *Tell me about yourself,* he said. She did.

From childhood, her true love was her scientific research. That would never change. It didn't prevent her from enjoying

life to the fullest (wink, wink).

Pops almost choked as he chugged down a big gulp of wine. Supper ended. But for Pops and Chang, the evening was not over.

At Chang's invitation, Pops entered her cabin for a nightcap. The moon was full and shining through a large window. No inside lights were

necessary. Chang turned on some music, tunes and melodies from a previous era when the world was more innocent and life was less complicated.

Pops took her hand in his and slid his other hand behind her waist. She laid her cheek against his shoulder. Together they danced a slow fox trot. Although it was their first dance ever, it felt very

natural as if they were
repeating an ageless
pattern.

A sultry voice crooned
softly.

*It seems we've stood
and talked like this before.*

*We looked at each other
in the same way then.*

*But I can't remember
where - or when.*

*The clothes you're
wearing are the clothes
you wore.*

*The smile you are
smiling you were smiling
then,*

*But I can't remember
where - or when.*

*Some things that
happened for the first time*

*Seem to be happening
again. And so it seems
that we have met before,*

*And laughed before,
And loved before,
But who knows where
- or when?*

For both, the lyrics
seemed to sum the
moment up perfectly.

The song ended.

Well Hello! Chang giggled
while stepping back and
observing the emerging
bulge in the front of Pops
pants. She pulled him

closer. Pops twirled her in time with the next song and turned his head toward the small one person bed, eyes twinkling, eyebrows raised in a semi- lecherous smile, *More fox trot or the horizontal tango?* She smiled, her eyes fixed on his, as she reached behind and with a forceful tug pulled the window curtains closed.

Hours later Pops got up from the cot for one that Chang had shared with him. He went to the communal washroom, peed and showered. He picked up a yellow flower from near the perimeter barrier and humming another tune from Chang's selections returned to her bed.



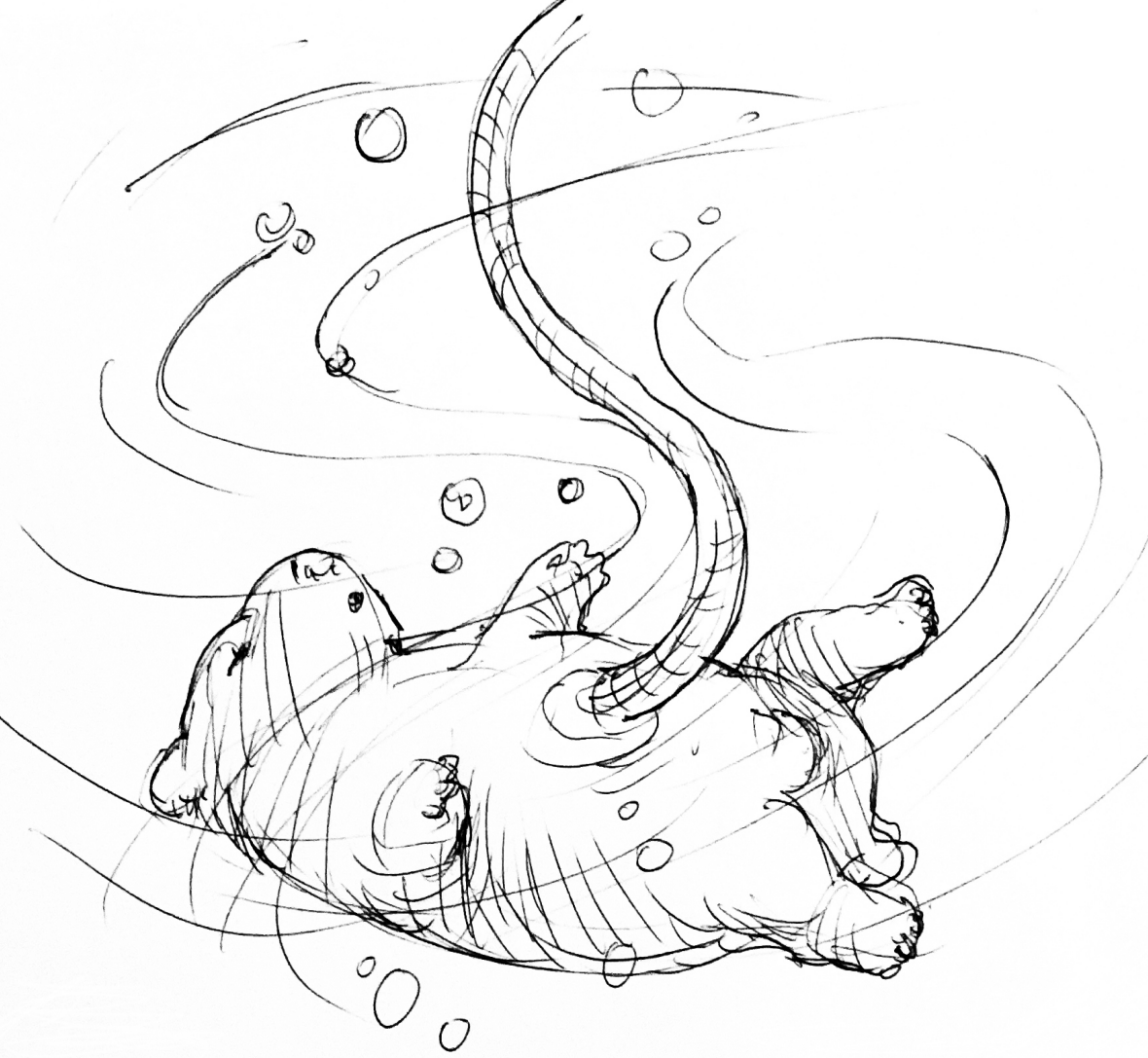
.....

Interesting how they fit together with those matching parts thought Two. And they remain the same sex forever from Three who was very much enjoying his new male state. Well after all they are an alien species from One. In unison they blinked their middle eye and giggled.

.....

***A DAPHNE BY ANY
OTHER NAME...***

It was breakfast time, but Tammy was not hungry. She was in Chang's research lab. Tammy stared at the glass container. It looked like a giant fishbowl, about six feet high, about four feet in diameter, and cylindrical.



Her gaze was fixed on the tiny creature floating inside in a clear light yellow liquid. It was

tethered to a clear hose curling and uncurling from its center as the fetus meandered and drifted around in the liquid. The other end of the hose disappeared into the back wall of the cylinder.

Tammy blinked back a tear. Not the original, but a dear life just the same. So tiny. A continuation of all the features that had been her Daphne.

Daphne Two. Yes, that is what she would call her, Two.

Life was cruel. But sometimes cruelty was blunted. Not eliminated, but blunted. She decided to head for the dining room for a drink.

Maybe two drinks. In the dining room, Pops was drinking coffee and humming some dumb

tune. Something about a lady in red.

Pops was dancing with her, cheek to cheek. With that bristly beard? Thought Tammy. Wait a minute.

That was scruffy Before Pops, not new makeover After Pops. Tammy tried to visualize. Gave up.

Pops was sprawled in his chair gently caressing his coffee cup like it was Aladdin's lamp. Or a

perky nipple, overflowing with pleasure points.

Was Pops OK? Tammy wondered. She poured herself a glass of red wine and with hands slightly shaking, lit a cigarette. Something she hadn't done for a couple of years.

With Daphne's death her emotional world had been shattered. Slowly she was recovering. But it was not an on/off switch.

She took a deep drag on her cigarette.

Soo entered the dining room. She strode over to Tammy and temporarily claimed the cigarette. She inhaled a deep drag and returned the half-smoked butt to Tammy. She took the half glass of wine from Tammy and went into the kitchen. Moments later she returned with two coffees, one black, one

milk and two sugars. She handed the milk and two sugars to Tammy and sat down beside her.

One of the research assistants, Marylou, a pretty blonde entered the dining area and went straight into the kitchen. It was her turn to make breakfast for all. Dr. Chang came in. She smiled at them all, poured herself a coffee and

stretched out semi-recumbent on the sofa in the lounge area.

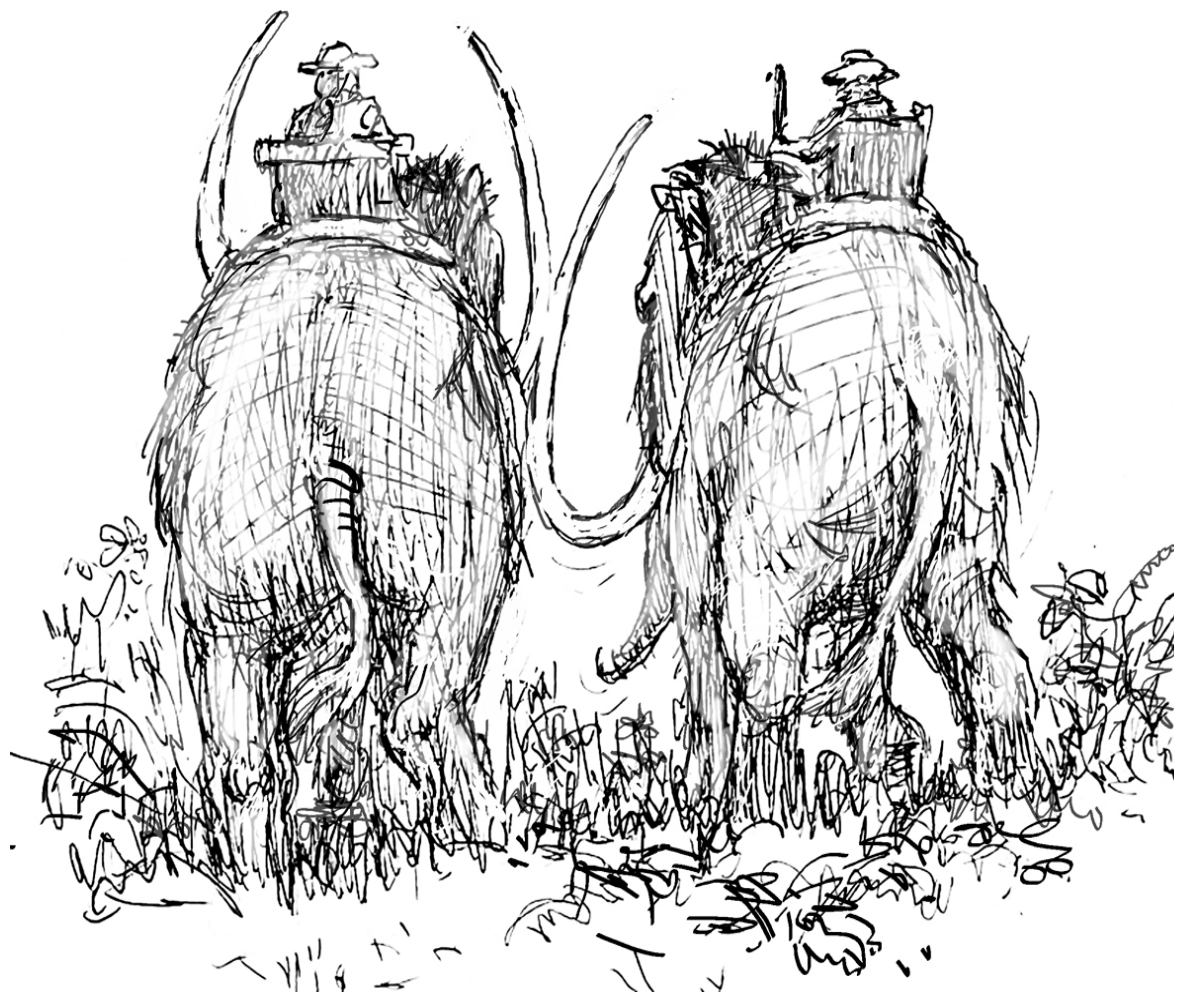
Serenely, eyes gently closed, she sipped her coffee.

One by one the other people in the facility entered the dining area. They helped themselves to coffee, and sat down, waiting for breakfast to be ready. It was a pattern they would all follow for

several months ahead.
Coffee, breakfast, morning
chatter.

After breakfast Jacob
the hunter asked if anyone
wanted to join him.

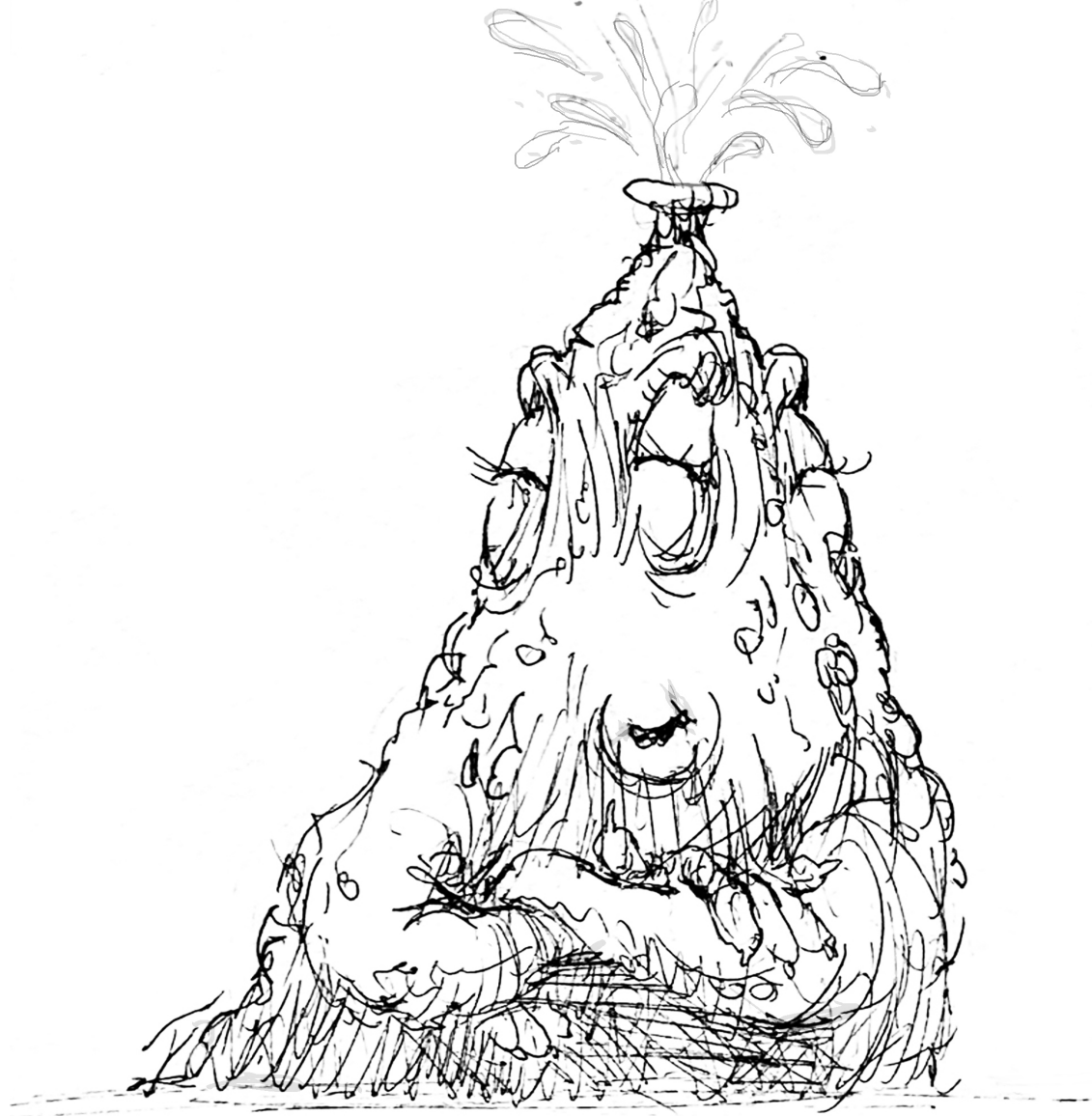
The mammoths needed
daily exercise and
browsing on grasses and
bamboo plants on the
plain. Pops said sure and
off they went together,



hunter and ancient
apprentice.

.....

*From the spaceship Two
watched the fetus that
would evolve to Daphne
Two reach its final stage
before leaving the security
of its liquid fishbowl like
home. Simultaneously she
felt her own activated egg
evolving, stretching,
twisting, becoming aware.
Waves of empathy and
quiet pleasure washed*



*over her and transmitted
to One and Three.*

.....

THE ART OF WAR

Months passed.
Eightball had died of old
age. Tammy had decided
not to have him cloned.
Life in this wild
environment was just too
dangerous for a donkey.

Daphne Two was
almost grown. She was
as smart and devoted as
the template she had been

cloned from. They called her Two.

Tammy was in animal heaven. She learned the behaviour and innate nature of the mammoths, the Pterodactyl, and the other cloned creatures from her own observations of them, and explanations from hunter and nature observer, Jacob.

Pops and Chang found each other a surprisingly

delightful fit. In almost every way they were polar opposites, except one. They both were intrigued by what subjects they might explore, even if along very different paths.

She was a type A personality. Too curious to sit still for long. A scientist, grounded in reality, and interested in measurable fact finding and their potential for new theories.

Pops was a dreamer, a creative artist and writer, delighting in exploring the aesthetic potential of a subject, and speculating about one's purpose in life.

In some aspects they were aligned. They both had a deep sense of curiosity and desire to grow. While her search was outward, his was inward. Together like Yin

and Yang, each filled the void in the other.

The sex was the best either had ever had. She got into the mood gradually, having her back, her shoulders, her neck stroked and caressed. Experience had taught them both to listen to the other, to pick up on the cues that grunts, groans, sighs and shifting positions revealed.

To follow instructions when provided often with scientific precision or dramatic hyperbole, a reflection of the innate character of each of them.

They savoured their time together, each enjoying vicariously their partner's delight as much as their own.

Life at the research facility was good. They had all fallen into a

routine, each member of the group finding fulfilment in their own way.

Of course it could not last. Chang received the message. It was not unexpected. It was a matter of when, not if. She called all the others to a meeting in the dining room. This news affected them all so they must decide each for themselves what to do.

Chang started by thanking them all for their loyalty, their service, their friendship. Then she read the message.

The military command was disappointed in her lack of progress in cloning animals.

A convoy would arrive shortly, under the command of Captain Clink. She was to continue as chief scientist

but under control of Captain Clink. She surmised a permanent military outpost would be stationed at the facility.

They all stared at her. Silence. Then curses. Then a roaring babble as everyone spoke at the same time. Chang slammed the table with the palm of one hand to get their attention. The room went instantly silent.

This requires time, thoughtful analysis, cool heads, she said, stating the obvious. But we don't have time. So, let's give each of us five minutes of uninterrupted time to speak. We must make decisions of what to do by this afternoon.

They spoke one after another. It was surprising, but on some things they all were in agreement. The

research, the records, the successful clone methodology must not fall into the hands of the military.

None wanted to stay. The question that remained was, beside fleeing, exactly what other action should they take. They knew they would be hunted for, after they abandoned the facility. Whoever opted to remain

would be interrogated, and ultimately tortured. The facility would become a useful outpost for the military. A base from which to hunt them all down. The decision for what to do was unanimous

The cloned animals would be freed and driven away. Heartbreaking for Tammy but it had to be done. Alpha, Byrd's pterodactyl would stay

with them of course. And the three woolly mammoths, and four more that were almost adult. The entire group would have enough animal transport to not have to trek on foot.

The buildings could not be set on fire. There was too much danger of causing a forest fire. But they could be exploded from the inside. The

perimeter barrier providing protection from wild animals could be removed, and taken with them.

The obvious tactical military move was to booby-trap the whole thing. That meant murdering Captain Clink, and the cloned soldiers sent to interrogate and ultimately murder them.

They were at war. That is what war is after all, murder on a mass scale. They agreed reluctantly that they had no other option if they were to have a chance to escape, they too would engage in mass murder.

Enunciating clearly and firmly, Chang arranged all. Her two assistants, Jacob and Rob remained silent as they followed her

directions. Pops, Tammy and Soo stayed out of the way. There was no comfort could be given, no sugar coating for what had to be done.

This action Chang was directing would haunt her like a curse forever. But if they were to have any hope of escape, it had to be done. She remembered the words Pops had spoken to her during that

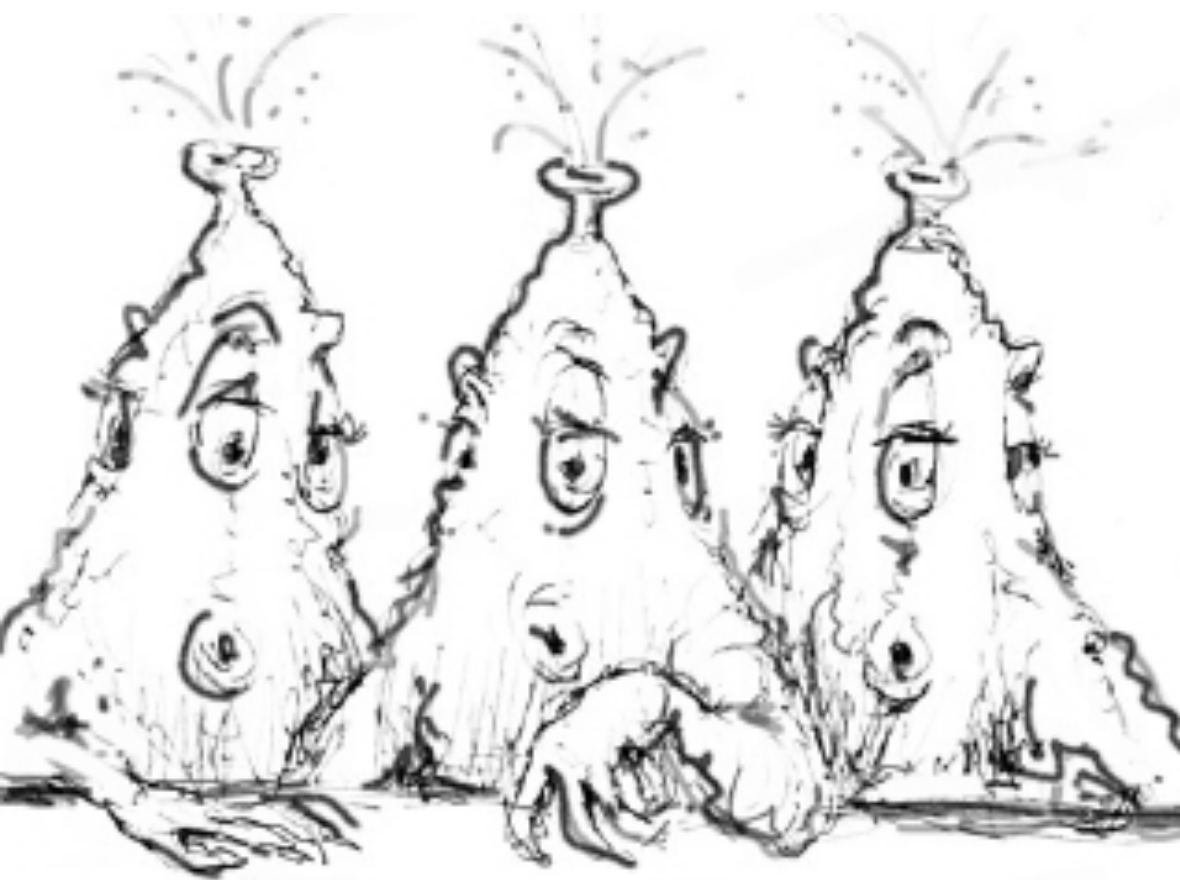
first supper together. She also remembered she had agreed with him. *In the present, I am a fugitive and volunteer for any resistance movement to reclaim our country. I would regard that as a promotion.*

They departed. Byrd flew ahead on Alpha to explore the escape route. Hours later, miles away in the secure blanket of the

jungle they heard the whirring of helicopter blades. From the carrying boxes on top of the woolly mammoths, they watched as helicopters descended into the vacant research facility. Shortly after they heard explosions, saw plumes of smoke billowing skyward.

.....

Two blinked her middle eye. She felt the egg sac inside stretch and jerk as it moved to a higher location in her body, closer to her neural center.



A telepathic link was forming to connect the awakening awareness of the evolving life inside her, a link to herself, and her two companions.

Simultaneously she saw the changing geographic location of the humans below. They were on the move now. The buildings in their previous location were no more. The tiny neural connections in her

*body seemed to
synchronize with the new
fireworks on the planet
below. Curious about both
events, her companions
watched, conjectured and
joined in a group giggle.*

.....

The small group of
travelers turned as one to
look back, as they heard

consecutive explosions rip through the air.

On the hilltop where the research facility buildings had once stood, plumes of grey smoke drifted upwards and disappeared into cloud cover. No helicopters rose from the blasted area. Feelings of relief over that fact from all the fleeing watchers. The resistance had begun. They were it.

It was necessary to get away as far as possible before search and attack parties were sent out. They did not know if other resistance fighters existed, or where they might be. Their plan, for now, was simple. Don't get caught.

Their route ahead was checked from above by Byrd on board Alpha. The trail to follow had been suggested by Jacob the

Cree First Nations hunter. He knew the land better than anyone else. He also knew where other Cree might be. Since the great warming, these waters had washed inland and reconfigured the coastline with new inlets and fiords. They continued northwards on the west side of the huge body of water that had once been called Ungava Bay.

There were enough recently forested areas for a small group like theirs to hide out without discovery. Woolly mammoths were common. Theirs 'would not be regarded as unusual by spy drones.

When there was not enough light to continue, they found a clearing where they could pitch their camouflage tent, and remove the travel boxes

from the backs of the mammoths. They set the electric shock barrier around the perimeter of the campsite.

It was not luxury but it was better than being shackled in a chair, while being interrogated with electric cattle prods by Captain R.I.P. Clink.

They sat around the fire pit eating roasted hunks of wild peccary, and drinking

a wine made from pears and apples. They told each other stories and Tammy, Soo and Pops recalled similar campfire evenings, telling tales and laughing with people they had loved, and would never see again.

Pops described those friends, and the spacecraft they were passengers on, in search of new Earth-like homes. He told about the

evil, and the bad times they had all faced together. He finished by describing the good times, the camaraderie, the laughs they shared.

Chang's eyes glistened as she listened. There was silence, then they drank a toast to lost friends.

Next morning, they awoke to find they were not alone. Dozens of eyes were watching them from

the other side of the electric barrier. Chang had not cloned these creatures, so how had they come to exist? Maybe she would never know. But there was no denying the evidence. There they were.

About a dozen hominids, from outside the electric barrier were silently examining them. The strangers were about

eight feet tall, powerfully built, ape-like bodies, but bipedal and carrying primitive weapons. They were naked and covered in light brown fur, thin enough to see through. Their foreheads were sloping but their skulls were large, their expressions curious rather than threatening.

The weapons were sharpened spears, their

pointed ends were black, probably hardened in a fire. Some spears had sharpened antler tines attached with leather thongs. Other hominids carried bone clubs made from the top portion of an animal femur.

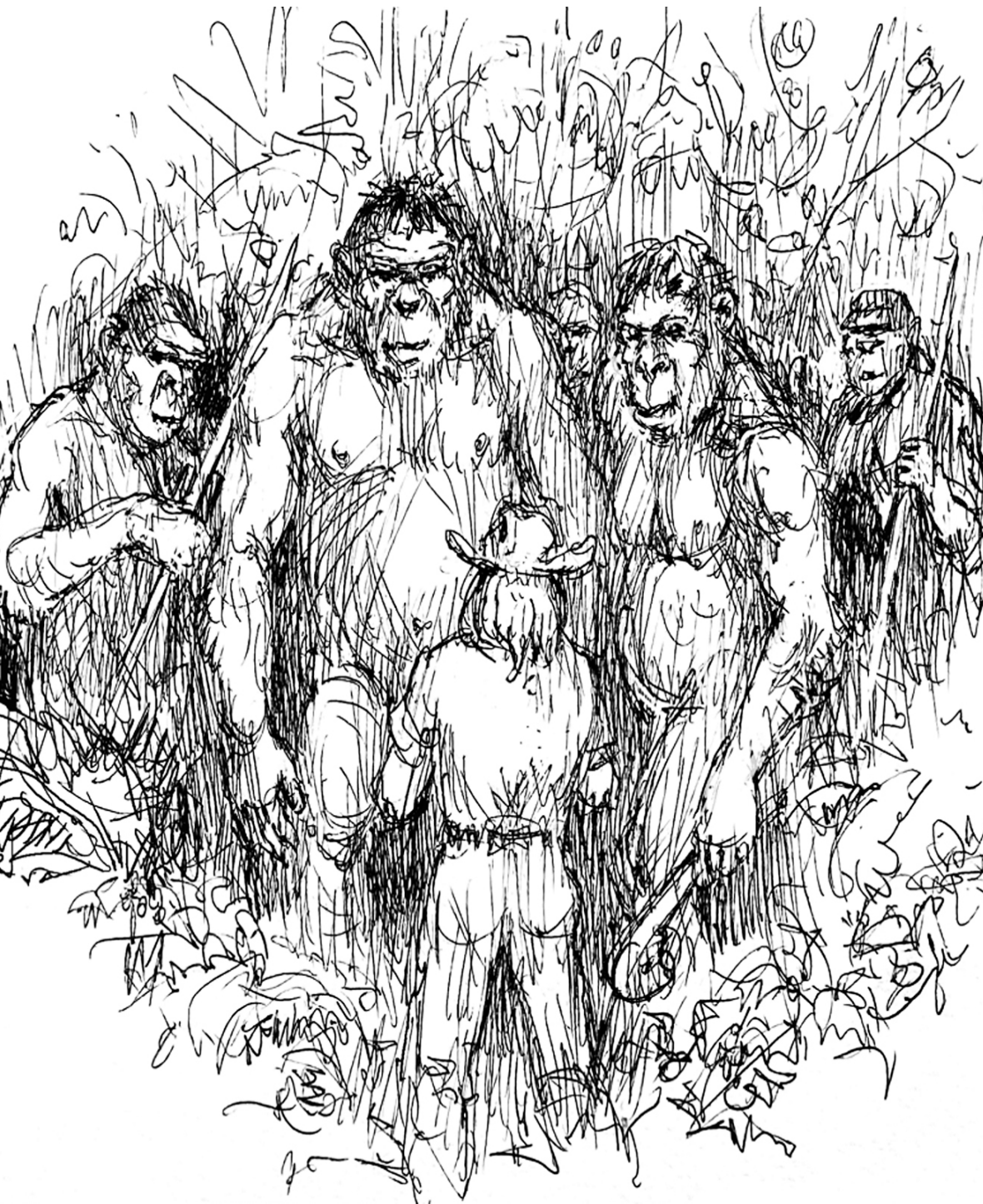
All low tech, but efficient weapons. None had been launched through the barrier. Pops surprised even himself.

Maybe because Chang was looking on, or maybe just because it seemed the best thing to do. He picked up a big piece of roast peccary, turned off the electric current in the perimeter fence, and exited the safety of the electric barrier.

Tammy set her laser to full power, pointed down but ready. She watched. Jacob clicked off the

safety of his rifle, as he also watched. Pops walked slowly toward the huge hominids, holding the roast forward in his outstretched arms, a peace offering. He set it down in front of them and stepped back.

The roast was picked up by the biggest ape, and pieces of it ripped apart and distributed amongst the group, in what seemed



to be a hierarchical order, biggest and oldest first.

The roast was too small an amount to be other than symbolic. But the symbolism appeared to be understood. The lead one looked down at Pops, grunted, then turned and shambled off into the foliage. The rest followed him.

Pops stepped back through the gate into the campsite and reactivated the electricity. He looked unusually pale. Chang was excited. Not as Pops expected by his display of manly courage, but by this species she had never seen before. Of course. She was a scientist after all. *Dam!* muttered Pops.

Tammy was excited also. What magnificent

creatures they were!
Surely relatives of humans
on the evolutionary tree.
She watched as they
disappeared into the
jungle.

None of the group were
aware that they would
meet the huge ape
hominids again very soon.
Or the frightening
circumstances of that next
meeting. They broke
camp. On top of their

mammoth steeds, the fugitives continued northward. On the fifth day, they were spotted by military drones. They expected armed soldier clones would be brought in by helicopter before long. It was to happen the next day.

On the march again, the group mounted on their mammoths approached a clearing. Ahead was an

ape hominid, a young female, maybe left to forage for berries while the older ones hunted. She glanced at them and kept munching. Evidently, she did not feel threatened. The group dismounted from the mammoths and led them into a bamboo grove to graze.

Tammy was clearly fascinated by the young ape. Did it share a

common ancestor with
homo sapiens? With
herself? As the group
watched the young female
ape hominid munching
away, they heard the
whirring of helicopter
blades. Quickly the
helicopter touched down
by the jungle edge and ten
clone soldiers jumped out.
They were carrying guns,
short-handled long

barreled, designed for close contact attack.

One of the clones saw the young browsing ape hominid and immediately opened fire. He riddled her body with enough shots to kill her many times over. His ability to identify an enemy might not have been very accurate. Or maybe he just liked to kill. *Fucking Asshole!* screamed

Tammy. She pointed her laser pistol at the soldier and full power, shot him in the head. Like a squished tomato his head exploded. He flopped down as if all his limbs had turned to spaghetti.

The others in the group dropped to the ground and took cover as the clones opened fire. The group was armed too. Not like the clones with short-

range military weapons, but handheld lasers and hunting rifles that were designed for long-range accuracy. They returned fire and saw clones fall.

There was a short period of quiet as all combatants looked for barriers to get behind, while searching out enemy locations. Breezes rustled the leaves and branches of foliage. The smell of

gun powder wafted
through the air.

Suddenly the jungle wall
behind the clones split
open. About a dozen huge
screaming ape hominids
charged the soldiers.

Several hominids were
shot, but others managed
to reach the clones before
they could escape. The
battle was short. It was
bloody. The shot clones
were the lucky ones.



A death, quicker and
less painful than being
dismembered alive.

Nature is cruel. War is cruel. This was both.

The motionless blades of the helicopter came to life. They rotated with increasing speed. The helicopter rocked back and forth as the pilot gunned the engine.

Two soldiers managed to climb onto the struts as the helicopter tilted then lifted erratically upwards.

It got about thirty feet up before, Byrd above it on Alpha dropped a net weighted with rocks into the blades. There was a moment of wild vibration, of rocking in all directions of the craft before it plummeted to earth, and exploded.



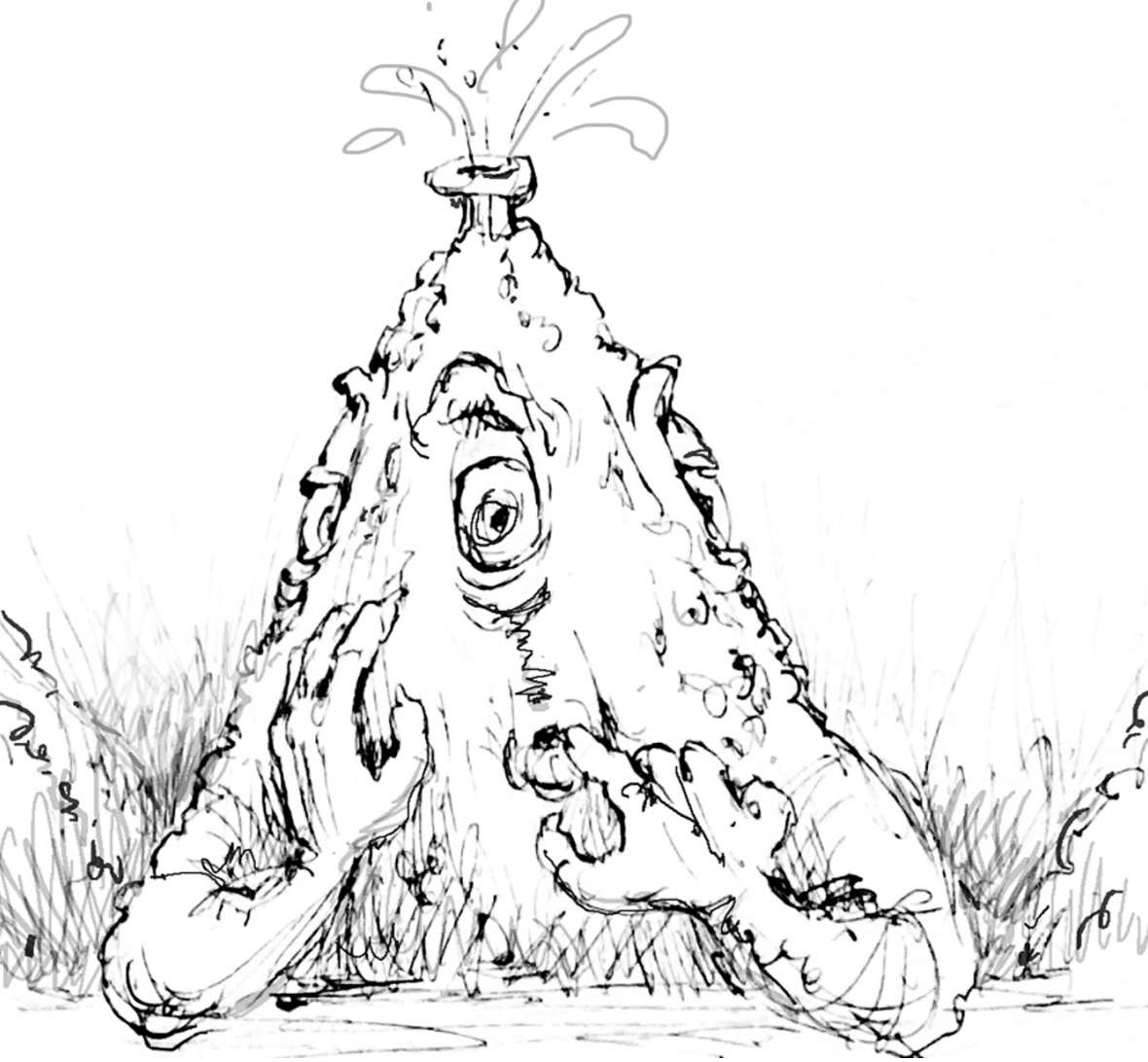
The clones left behind were all dead or about to be. The few able to speak groaned *Kill me...* Their request was granted. Cautiously the group approached the ape hominids. They were still agitated, the wounded still in shock. Tammy spoke softly to them.

From her backpack, she brought out the cream that Yates had given her. A cream that could in damaged flesh regenerate cellular regrowth. She spread it on the wound of a wrist where part of the hand and two fingers had been shot off an ape hominid.

The hominids watched in amazement as the damaged flesh slowly began to heal, to regenerate. She kept the hominid hydrated from her water bottle and talked to him gently in a soothing sing-song voice. It would take time. Eventually, bones and flesh would regrow.

The other wounded sat
their huge bodies down
beside her waiting to have
their wounds attended to.
This is what I am meant to
do, she thought.

.....



Two wondered if the
carnage she and the
others had just witnessed
would harm her evolving

egg as it entered its telepathy stage. Maybe we need parental controls she speculated.

Agreement and disagreement from the two others. With telepaths that meant censoring their own knowledge.

Hiding truth from their own consciousness. Sometimes truth was

awkward. Sometimes truth
was painful. But truth was
truth. Decisions, decisions.

.....

PAIN MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

High atop their woolly mammoths, the battle scene thankfully behind them, the new fugitives continued to travel north for several days.

Soo and Tammy were startled to hear their cell phones humming their call tunes. They knew communication on these

phones was limited to them, and a small number of scientists that Yates had trusted. No one else. That was it.

Soo put her phone on speaker and handed it to Chang. After introductions and bona fides for Scientist Dr Leary were established, a long group conversation followed. In the USA some scientists had collaborated with the

military. Others were under house arrest. Some including Leary were hiding out in the Arctic, four or five days march away.

They communicated with each other on cell phones via Yate's digitally encrypted network.

Dr Leary explained the reason for his call. They needed Chang's expertise in developing a virus that

would be activated selectively on military clones. *No! Chang was appalled. They are human beings too. Haven't we suffered enough with viruses? Hear us out please,* was Dr Leary's reply.

A genetically manipulated virus that diminished aggression in those infected. A mood changer, a virus that will

make those infected cautious and gentle. *More like a medication*, he suggested.

An unrequested medication Chang answered as she pondered. *I want to sleep on it.* She wanted to do more than sleep on it. She wanted to discuss the ethics of it with Pops and the others.

Was responding to tyranny and murder with a relatively benign germ warfare a moral response? If not doing so doomed many to possible death, or at best a horrific future, was that justification for doing it? What to do?

The overwhelming opinion of the group was it had to be done. Chang was ambivalent. But she could not think of an

alternative. Developing the virus appeared to be the only hope for a civilized future for humanity. The research center where Dr Leary was developing the virus was in an abandoned naval base just four or five days travel away.

Now that the decision to collude with Dr Leary was made, Chang was anxious to arrive and get busy.

Byrd flew out and charted their route from a bird's eye view. Or more accurately, a pterodactyl's eye view.

Four days later the group arrived at the naval base. There were several buildings. All had huge fern leaves covering the roofs as camouflage.

The biggest most imposing was a huge open

hangar, the front closing doors recessed into the ceiling and long since inoperable. In the back, there was a mechanic workstation, some antique trucks both diesel and electric battery charging, and several snowmobiles.

There was another large building which did double duty as a sleeping quarters, and kitchen and dining area. The third

building was the one Chang was anxious to visit. It had been the command center.

Dr Leary limped out to meet them. He carefully stubbed out a strange smelling hand-rolled cigarette and dropped the butt in the chest pocket of his medic shirt, then held out his right hand awkwardly in greeting.

His left hand held a cane, his arm stiff to support his thin body. He motioned them to follow, and brought them to the command center, the work area. This would be Chang's domain. The others left them and went to the dining area for snacks and rest.



Dr. Leary proudly explained to Chang an overview of his progress to date.

In what had once been a conference room, now on two side walls there were rows of cages on an upper and a lower shelf. The cages were about two and a half feet high, and about four feet deep. Inside each cage was an animal with a normally

aggressive nature. There were wolverines, honey badgers, weasels and huge rats.

In the hall entry, hazmat suits hung from coat hooks. The washroom had been converted into a decontamination room. By normal scientific standards, it was a crude, even dangerous environment to work in.

Leary and Chang were scrupulous in observing safety to the extent it was possible. Chang was brought up to speed on details of the progress so far.

Encouraging she thought. But foolhardy to chance releasing on the public in the short time frame before they were discovered. Still, as a scientist, she was anxious

to immerse herself in the work.

Tailoring the virus to decrease aggression was time-consuming but the easy part. How permanent would the effects be? Impossible to know for certain. Detecting and reducing or eliminating side effects, and targeting the cloned human soldiers was the hardest challenge.

There was not enough time, and not a big enough animal sampling group to be certain of anything.

Was humanity more threatened by leaving an unstable sociopath in a leadership role, or by releasing an insufficiently tested virus on the public? Weeks passed by.

Drones sporadically flew over but did not appear to

spot the buildings covered by leaves and foliage.

Pops and the others discussed a range of delivery systems for the virus. In water systems? Dropped from the air as dust or vapour? In military cafeterias? They knew that once out it could not be contained.

As well as the soldier clones it would surely be passed on to the general

population. How selective in choosing a host was it? Would non-cloned humans be harmed? They were all familiar with the histories of actions that resulted in unintended consequences. They had reduced the virulence of one virus specimen to the point that Chang was no longer worried about serious cases in the general population or side effects.

However, she was not sure if it was sufficiently strong enough to weaken the aggression of the clones. Was it all for nothing? Tammy slipped a piece of breakfast bacon to Peppi the previously vicious wolverine that was rubbing his snout up against her calf. He purred like a happy kitten, and snuggled up against Two, lying under the table.

Next to Tammy were Pops and Chang. They were in the lab sipping coffee, and waiting for Dr Leary to arrive.

Leary limped in. There was a big grin on his face. He rested his cane against the table and sat down on a chair facing them. He took a big drag on the joint of marijuana that he used to manage the pain in his hip, while he explained the

brain wave that had come to him. Together they came up with a plan.

THE RESISTANCE ATTACKS

Production of the virus in bulk proceeded. It was modified further by Dr. Leary's brainwave contribution. The effects of the modified virus would be temporary. Also most welcome by many recipients.

Everyone knew the role they were to play. The

hard part was the waiting.
It would take a week and a
half for all to be ready.
Could it be done before
they were discovered?

The distribution area
would be mostly on the
border between the USA
and Canada. New York
City, Boston, most of the
East coast, along with
most of Florida, Louisiana,
California, and parts of the
South were long ago

reclaimed by the ocean.
In the southern USA much
of what was above water
was too hot to live in.

Byrd was brought into
the planning early on. His
role in distribution would
be critical. He listened
intently as Leary, Chang,
Tammy and Pops
explained their planning,
and the role he was being
asked to volunteer for. As
a child, playing video

games he had dreamed of being a player in saving the world.

He had never expected to have a real live role in such an event. He had also never expected to be airborne on the back of a flying pterodactyl. After hearing the plans, he thought whatever happens to me during the rest of my life, I will die a happy man.

The logistics of timing and final distribution of the virus were under the control of General Carma, a trusted confidant of Dr. Leary and the rest of the resistance. The delivery of the virus in vials, to be held for later distribution by their resistance volunteers was the first stage. The second stage would be five days later, a

synchronized release of the entire amount.

There were only about one hundred volunteer resistance fighters, but they were expertly trained, and loyal to the original constitution of their country. Their hope was to succeed with a minimum of bloodshed. That was their hope, and if lucky, their expectation.

Byrd clinging on Alpha's back, flying below radar height, had carried the precious cargo the resistance needed, to waiting delivery vehicles in border cities. From there, bags full of vials were delivered to resistance fighters in major cities across the USA and occupied territory north of the border. They would wait for a signal before the

synchronized release of the virus. It took five days for all to be in place and ready. Chang and Leary had estimated the time required for virus dispersal, plus a day for unexpected problems. There were none.

On a Friday at noon central standard time, the modified virus was released simultaneously across the country into

water reservoirs and in the air as powder from tiny low-flying drones.

The impact spread quickly. It was fast acting. Within one day across the nation, soldier clones began abandoning their posts. They sauntered into lineups at pizza restaurants and karaoke bars, no jostling or lineup crashing.



Some wept and made
declarations of love and
affection to their

comrades. Others simultaneously to getting the munchies, could not stop giggling over the lamest knock-knock jokes. There was gentle banter and tone-deaf singing throughout most bars and city centers. Gradually a sense of peace spread throughout the country.

What is happening?
Screamed Batschitte
watching all on a 60 inch

TV screen. His vigilante gangs were at stand-by ready and waiting for orders from him. There were crowds of followers with tiki torches to light, and repeating military rifles at the ready. They were waiting for orders, waiting for selected neighbourhoods to terrorize.

They had guns. They had explosives. They had

plastic wrist ties. They were ready. They were waiting.

They did not have long to wait. Orders came from Batschitte soon, on TV broadcast throughout the land. All networks picked it up. At least it appeared to be him. It was his voice, his unique comb-over hairstyle implant, his typical flamboyant gestures. But his

message was totally unexpected.

Far away in a lab in the Canadian Arctic, Tammy sat in front of a webcam and a TV screen. She was grinning, gesturing, and speaking in a cadence broken and louder than her usual manner. Chang monitored the keyboard as she made sure the app they were using to replicate Batschitte's face

and voice continued working seamlessly.

TV Batschitte continued. *Lay down your weapons! As Jesus said, Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* This was followed by a nervous uncharacteristic brief giggle.

On TVs in homes, bars and restaurants around the world, millions of startled and perplexed

viewers listened and watched. TV Batschitte continued. *We are all one people, one nation together. We must love and accept one another, regardless of colour, religious belief or sexual orientation.*

As of immediately, I am stepping down from my role as president.

General Carma will be assuming supreme

*command of the
government until
candidates for general
elections can be put in
place within one year.*

*Once again, we will
have a government of the
people, by the people, and
for the people, as our
founding fathers intended.
I am ordering all military
and government personnel
to obey the chain of
command under the*

leadership of General Carma.

In bars in rural areas and in small towns, in big cities and throughout the country there was shock and disbelief. WTF was the most common reaction.

Preachers and TV talk show hosts were stunned. They were afraid to challenge him, and completely mystified by his

sudden conversion from racist A-hole to gentle do-gooder.

What to say? How to react? Their world as they knew it was shattered. TV Batschitte continued. *I am ordering all jails to be opened immediately and all prisoners of non-violent crimes be set free. Thank you, and God bless America.*

In bars across the nation that statement got the biggest response by far. Cheers of support from citizens who had previously hoped he would burn in Hell forever.

Batschitte watched in horror as his hold on empire crumbled before his eyes. He took a big bite out of the double cheeseburger that had been presented to him as

comfort food. It was one of his favourites, a double cheeseburger with double cheese and double bacon. In this particular case, it was a very special cheeseburger. One with double ingredients designed just for him by Dr Leary.

Sitting in the presidential suite, Batschitte ran the same TV sequence over and over again, the

sequence where he appeared to announce the freeing from jail of all non-violent prisoners. The crowds went wild cheering his name

The double doors to the presidential suite suddenly burst open. Army General Carma, flanked by two huge military police soldiers marched in. They came to attention in front of Batschitte.

The general read aloud from a legal document accusing Batschitte of Treason Against the Constitution of the United States of America. There was a pause. The soldiers pulled him to his feet and grasping his tiny hands, shackled his wrists behind his back.

As they walked him out of the room, he turned his head and took one last

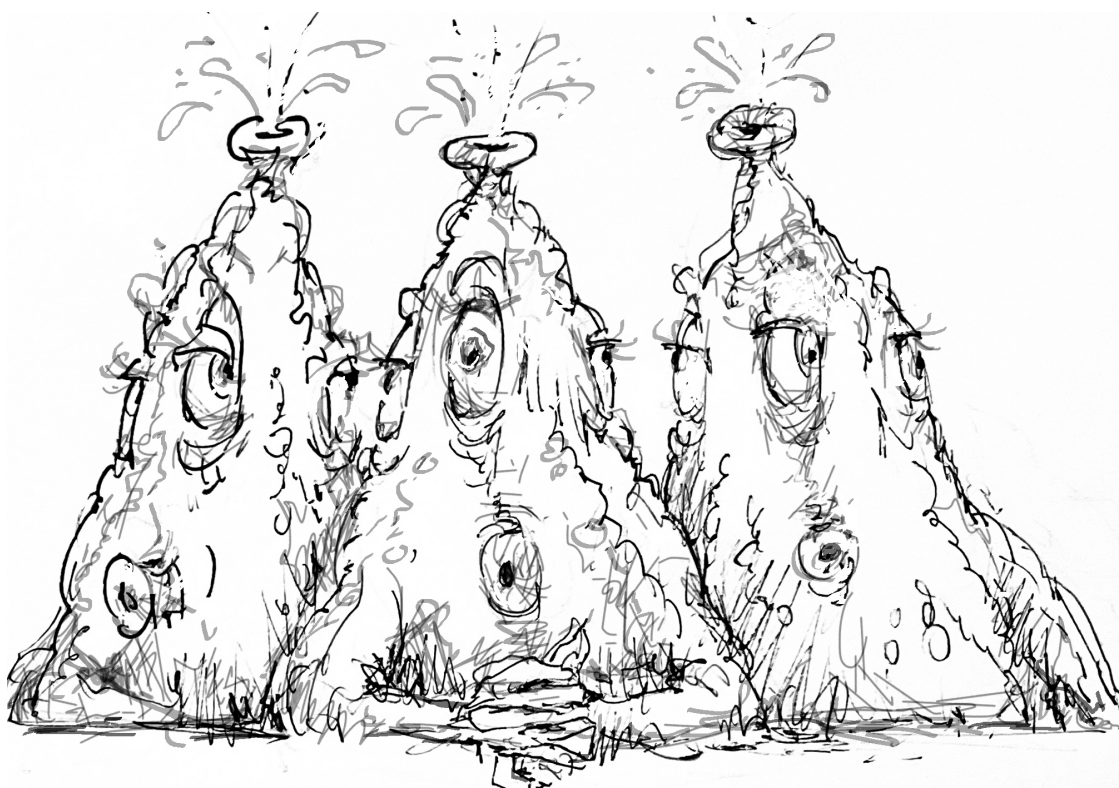
look at the sequence
where TV Batschitte had
freed all the non-violent
prisoners from jail.

Batschitte! Batschitte!

Roared the crowd. A tear
trickled down his cheek.



Look at the size of that crowd! That is like the biggest crowd ever!



*Two had had enough.
She was afraid to overload
her egg with too much
knowledge of evil,
hypocrisy, and violence.
With a sad group giggle*

*they closed the viewing
screen and set course for
a distant location where
life was still cruel but less
advanced.*

.....

APPENDIX

*I am in my 80's, so
some of my references
may be lost on kids in their
70's, and younger. Here
are some Chapter sources*

*The Best Laid Plans of
Mice and Men Go Aft Awry
- Robert Burns (Scottish*

*poet) Loosely translated -
Shit Happens*

*Singing in the Rain -
sung by Gene Kelly in the
movie of the same name.*

*Where there's Smoke
there's Fire - common
idiom.*

*To Be or Not to Be, That is
the Question*

- Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Bedrock Revisited -

*Bedrock is the home of the
Flintstones from the old
TV cartoon series
imagining dinosaurs and
early humans co-existing.*

Much Ado About Nothing
Shakespeare's play of the
same name.

Love is in the Air - popular
song from the 70's by
John Paul Young.

*A Rose by any Other
Name is Still a Rose* -
adapted as a song and

*idiom from Shakespeare's
Romeo and Juliet - A
Rose by any Other Name
Would smell as Sweet*

*The Art of War - 5th
Century BC, written by
Chinese Warrior &
Philosopher Sun Tzu.*

REFERENCE SOURCES

I used Google for much information, including

Climate Change, also called Global Warming,

*Tropical climate and its ancient fossil evidence in the Northern Arctic,
(Eocene epoch)*

Sea level rise and coastal reconfigurations due to melted fresh water ice bergs,

Which also is the cause of the desalination of the ocean,

First Nations tribe names and territories,

Virus contagion and vaccines,

*Cloning, and hybridization
of animals and plants,*

*Computer enhancement of
humans via surgery
(cyborgs),*

*Giant apes from the past
(gigantopithecus).*

I didn't list specific sources
as this is a work
of fiction and the sources
acted as inspiration

not factual reporting.

In my own distant past I worked at a meteorological station at Fort Chimo, since renamed Kuujjuaq in Ungava Bay in northern Quebec in the Canadian Arctic.

I separated hydrogen from water, and inflated weather balloons, tracking them as they rose. From

the radiosonde
transmitters hanging from
them I recorded data,
made charts and
transmitted the collected
weather information to the
Canadian D.O.T.

I am indebted to digital
guru and full disclosure,
my younger sister
Mary Pearson, (Just
turned 80)
who assisted me through
my multiple computer
screwups in composing
this book on my laptop
computer



As for the Aliens I am committed to keeping my sources secret, as I am sure you will understand.



Garry Hamilton's
background includes:
Newspaper Cartoonist
at the Montreal Star

Art teacher at Sheridan
College, ON
And
Dawson College. QC.

1st Vice President
Canadian Society of
Painters in Watercolour
2014 - 2018
Currently
Columnist/Cartoonist at
Townships Weekend
newspaper QC.

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ALL 3 IN FULL COLOUR

SH*TS 'n GIGGLES
AND A FEW WTF TEARS

.....

WANDERING
WATERCOLOURS

.....

THE ARTIST'S EYE

.....

On **AMAZON**

search

book title "garry
hamilton"

with quotation marks.

Following are some
excerpts

SH*TS 'n GIGGLES

AND A FEW WTF TEARS

IS INTENDED AS AN
ESCAPE FROM THE
TSUNAMI OF GLOOM AND
DISASTER EVERYWHERE
ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

THROUGH THE
ELEGANCE AND FUN OF
RHYMING POETRY,
A REPRIEVE.

BEST READ WITH A
GLASS OF RED WINE.
(OR WHATEVER FLOATS
YOUR BOAT)

AND WHEN THE NEWS IS
REALLY BAD
(WTF TEARS)
THERE IS RELIEF IN
LAUGHTER, IN MOCKERY



SHITS 'N GIGGLES

AND A FEW WTF TEARS

GARRY HAMILTON



Peering down from
cumulus settee,
Harp held precariously
On my knee.

I strum a plaintive melody.
Harp wiggles and giggles
helplessly,
Harp playing not my
speciality.

Wondering
where my friends could
be,
Musician buddies
Who preceded me.
Blues rocking
memories,

What used to be.
All of you and me,
No harp giggling
foolishly.
My wings vibrate
playfully.

Wings?
How did that come to
be?
Traded for my balls?
Really?
I'd like to renegotiate.

Wings be gone!

Balls reinstate.

No response. I hesitate.

*Maybe one wing for one
ball?*

Your call.

Suddenly

Flash of lightening,

Thunder booming

Occasion momentous
looming?

Unexpectedly,

Appears a face,
Right next to me.
White beard, white hair,
Quite elderly,

Head held high,
importantly.
He stares intently at a
list,
Then me.
Who can he be?

Ledger and pen held
carefully,
Scratches his head
thoughtfully.
Examines his list,
Peers again
At me.

“Full name, two L’s or
three?”
Sternly his inquiry.
Confused I answer
truthfully,

None, Sorry.

"Hmm" he murmurs
ruefully.

"Psmith with a silent P?"

Says he.

Nope not me.

"Then who in Heaven's
name

Are thee?"

Mike Muckraker
Murmured quietly.

No Ls you'll see.
Wrong ledger obviously,
He slams it shut.

Stares quizzically
At me,
Scratches with pen
laboriously,
Then Poof!
Disappears quite
suddenly.
Goodby wings,
Hello ball sack,

Welcome back!

Flash of lightning,
thunder booming
Change of location.
Downward zooming,
Snakes and ladders
Locomotion!

Descending faster,
down I go
What lies in wait
Far below?

I hope I'm wrong.
I fear I know.
Temperature rising,
Red eerie glow

Flames roaring dancing,
Rhythmic moaning,
Black smoke ascending,
Blinding me.

Worst fears become
reality.

What's that ahead I
hear?

Can't see.
Shivering with fear,
That's me.
Wondering
despondently
What can it be?
Rhythmic moaning
Getting near.
What terrible scene
Awaiting me?

At first faintly,

Softly lilting, a melody,
“Baby it’s cold outside”
Sung soulfully.
My heart leaps with
familiarity.
Can it really be?

Smoke clears gradually,
Toasty warm near a fire
I see,
Blues playing blissfully,
Swaying happily,
My buddies.

Singing, waving to me.

Here with my gang,
Balls intact I plainly see
That in fact,
I'm 'zactly where
I ought to be.



CUMULUS HIPPOPOTAMI!

Look up there in the sky
Doing the rhumba
Bouncing by
A chorus line of
Cumulus hippopotami!

You never know
From deck lounge chair
What you might spy
Up there,
Drifting by,

While staring red eyed,

At the sky,
Especially when
(Slow puff) ...
You're really high.

Look!
Trump in diapers
Floating by!
Tiny turds trailing
Behind,
Oh my!



CRAPSHOOT OF IF's
What if all the votes
Were really counted for Al
Gore,

Would hurricanes still
Be striking every shore?

What if Comey had acted
right,

And Hillary, not Trump
Had won the fight?

Would there be
A saner world for you and
me?

Civility and democracy
Beating out autocracy?

What if Bush about Iraq
had not lied?

Would so many
Innocents have died?

What if Trump or Musk's
dad

Had not been horrid
fathers?

Really bad!

Would their sons be
So obviously defective?
in a crazy Bullshit world,
Effective?

If all these If's had been
reversed,
Would the present still be
so cursed?
Unfortunately for you and
me
All these If's, ended
tragically.
Crap Shoot of If's
That's destiny.

.....

NEXT

WANDERING WATERCOLOURS

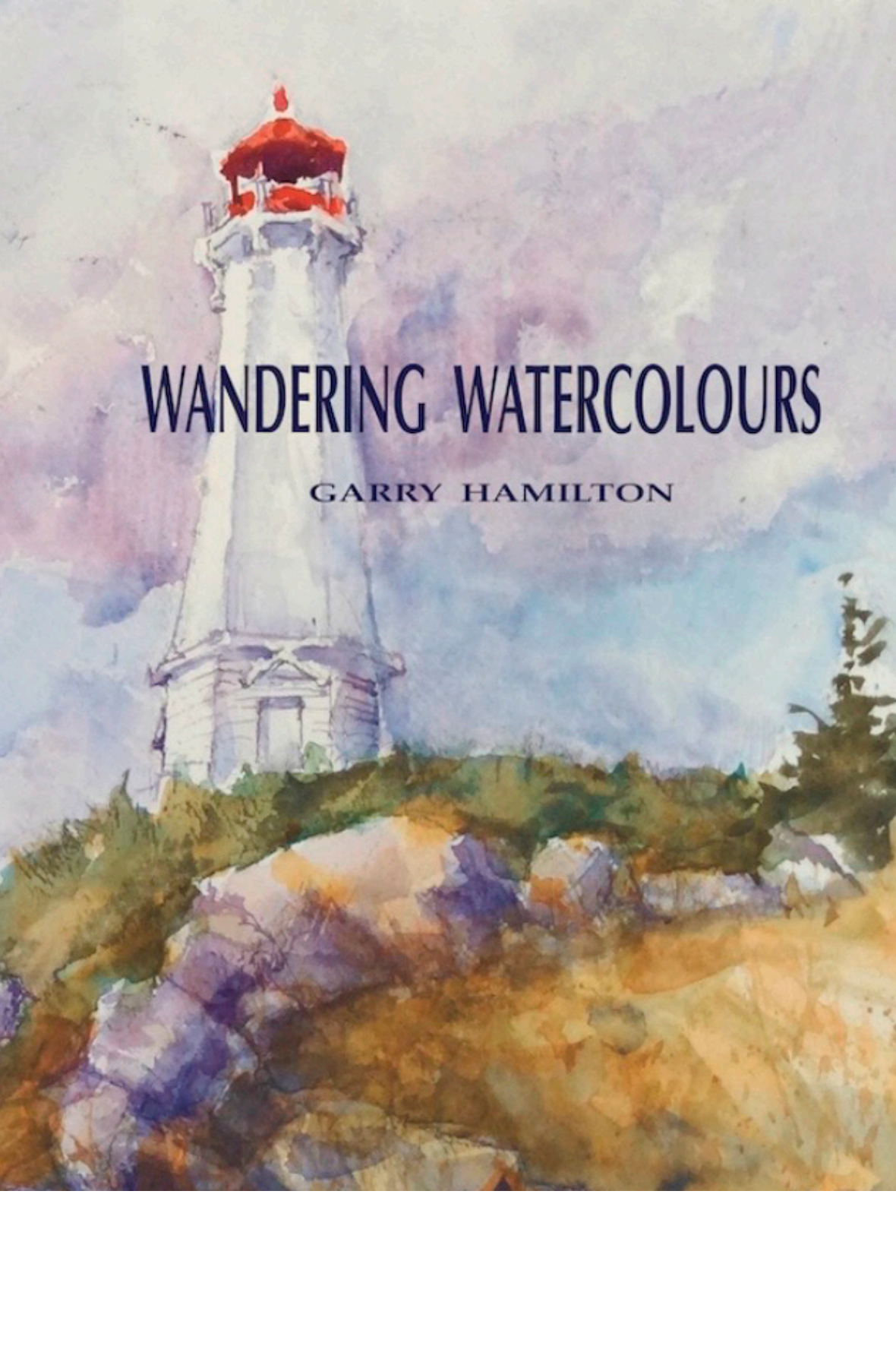
From the travels of an
octogenarian painter

Here is a visual
watercolour journey.

Make yourself
comfortable, put on your
reading glasses, (or not)
Pour yourself a glass of
wine, read on and enjoy

my painting travels and
adventures.
Portraits of people I have
met, and painted,
Places I have travelled,
and painted,
Observations realized,
and
A few chuckles along the
way.

FOLLOWING ARE
A few excerpts

A watercolor illustration of a lighthouse. The lighthouse is white with a red lantern room and a red roof. It sits on a rocky, green hill. The sky is a mix of purple, blue, and white. The foreground is a rocky, brownish-yellow slope.

WANDERING WATERCOLOURS

GARRY HAMILTON



SMILE FOR THE CAMERA

14" X 19"

**MEXICO, SOMEWHERE NEAR
PORTO VALLARTA**

This guy was renting his
iguana for photo taking.

An opportunity for an iguana
sitting on your shoulder,
cheek to cheek, so to speak.
I passed on the opportunity
but I took a reference shot of
the iguana and I think I
caught its charming smile.



SUNSET 10" X 14"

I live in Knowlton a little town, in Quebec. This sunset was in a field, a few minutes drive from my home.



STORMY WEATHER

10" X 14"

NAZERE COAST

PORTUGAL

Jo-Ann stood by the water's
edge for context of the size
of the rolling breakers
created by the underwater
Nazare Canyon.

We watched hang gliders
leap off the cliff top and float
down to the beach below.

I offered to sign Jo-Ann up
for a fast trip down,

but she preferred to take the
funicular.

This painting uses
the three main watercolour
techniques,
wet in wet,
wet on dry
and dry brush.



WINDY DAY

10"X 14"

**KITE BEACH, CABARETE,
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Perfect scene for an artist



Gerry Hamilton
ESPAC NAVE 2012

THE APPRENTICE

15" X 11"

At Kite Beach I saw this
naked infant
entranced by the kite surfer
holding his kite
in preparation for entering
the water.
It broke me up.

.....

NEXT

THE ARTIST'S EYE

THE ARTIST'S EYE



GARRY HAMILTON

THE ARTIST'S EYE

Beautiful paintings by artists
who all have
one common attribute.

In addition to great
technique, they are true to
their own vision as artists
their unique

ARTIST'S EYE

NEXT
SOME EXCERPTS

*The work is all about light.
What makes it fascinatingly
challenging is light can't be
painted directly; you can
only paint the effects of light.*

MICHEAL ZAROWSKY

SUN BREAK

12 X 12 in

*WATERCOLOUR / ACRYLIC ON
GESSOED PANEL*



SUN BREAK

AT THE TROUGH

*8.5 X 13.5 in GOUACHE ON
ILLUSTRATION BOARD*

*Painted on location, plein
air. I remember when I
painted the cows thinking
"how am I going to make this
work with so many cows and
all the movement"
I usually let go of that
thought
and throw myself into it in a*

*very quick direct way,
realizing
that it's only a painting if I
fail.
That thinking process seems
to allow
me to paint with a lot of
freedom and risk, which for
me, makes
for more interesting results.*

JIM MCVICKER



AT THE TROUGH

NEXT

BILL ROGERS

ONE IN, ONE OUT

15 X 22 in WATERCOLOUR



*Studio watercolour from
Charlottetown Driving Park
in PEI.*

*Harness racing has been a
major part of my life since
childhood. I was actively
involved for 20 years and*

*now I just paint my
experiences and visions of
the sport I love.*

NEXT

GAIL SUTHERLAND
FLIGHT

20 X 13 in WATERCOLOUR

*This painting was born from
a hike to Pollets Cove with a
group of close friends.
The trail was steep and
demanding.*

*My pack alone weighed over
60 pounds, but the views and
shared experience made
every step worth it.*

*Wandering the cliffs with my
camera,*

*I suddenly lost my sense of
gravity.*

*For a fleeting moment,
I felt weightless, like I was
flying.*

*It was disorienting and
beautiful, and in that instant,*

*I understood how pilots
without instruments could
lose track of altitude.
The sky felt vertical.*

FLIGHT

*captures that sensation - of
floating, of uncertainty, of
surrender. It reflects not just
that moment on the cliffs,
but a time in my life when I,
too was navigating without a
clear direction trusting the
air to hold me.*



THE ARTIST'S EYE

WANDERING
WATERCOLOURS

SH*TS 'n GIGGLES

SURVIVAL AS
DEMOCRACY DIES

FIREWORKS ON THE
9TH FLOOR

as print books are all
available at
ridiculously low prices.
On Amazon,

search
book title "garry hamilton".
(with quotation marks)

And
(BIG digital HUGS)
if you want to make me
Really Happy,
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