



THE UNEXPECTED COSMOLOGY

Rise of the 21st-Century Flat Earth Awakening

A Biography

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The Unexpected Cosmology

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unexpected

[uhn-ik-spek-tid]

adjective

not expected; unforeseen; surprising:

an unexpected pleasure; an unexpected development.

cosmology

[koz-mol-uh-jee]

noun

1. the branch of philosophy dealing with the origin and general structure of the universe, with its parts, elements, and laws, and especially with such of its characteristics as space, time, causality, and freedom.
2. the branch of astronomy that deals with the general structure and evolution of the universe.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Matthew 12:34

PROLOGUE

CHURCH BELLS RANG...

(The Day John Glenn Conquered Heaven)

“It merely would entail the purge
That the just-pausing Demiurge
Asks of himself once in so often
So the firm firmament won’t soften.
There’s always been an Ararat
Where someone someone else begat
To start the world all over at.”

from “A-Wishing Well” (1959)

—Robert Frost

CHURCH BELLS RANG...

1

AWAITING COLONEL JOHN GLENN'S RETURN TO EARTH was a handwritten message which simply read:

OK, wise guy.

Its author was none other than Samuel Shenton, world renowned and *globally* reviled flat earthist. In light of the three orbits which Glenn is claimed to have completed on the 20th of February 1962, the space race was perhaps his darkest hour—particularly for those few remaining souls who still retained a faith in God's Testimony to His own creation. This was the decade in which flat earthists Mark Sargent, Patricia Steere, Bob Knodel, David Weiss, Chris Van Matre, and Rob Skiba were born. Robbie Davidson, Rick Hummer, and Shelley Lewis would follow along shortly thereafter, and *before* the Apollo missions were over. But their voices would not be heard for nearly another half century.

At present, Shenton *alone* held the torch.

For this he was scorned and ridiculed, in part because the press tugged at his enthusiastic and rather childlike heart strings. Theirs was an archeological artifact dangled for the self-flagellating reader, and yet which the vast majority of Americans, caught in the current of Cold War Science, simply wanted buried. The strain was simply *too* much for him—the hour seemingly *too* dark. Shenton's conviction drained him financially and emotionally at a cost to his own health. He would suffer two strokes in 1963. The second left him with distorted vision—a disaster for his signwriting business. And in March of 1971, Shenton would not live to see the Apollo program he vehemently sought to prove as a series of elaborate hoaxes come to a close.

Shenton died 68 years young.

COLONEL JOHN GLENN RECEIVED LETTERS, and *ob*, how I wish I could get my hand on them. My interest lies particularly with those postmarked in the months leading up to his momentous—though often delayed—flight of passage *beyond* Earth. It is as they say, *one man's trash is another man's treasure*, and I fully believe there is something of value for a guy like me buried within them.

Glenn himself was not capable of answering the “mountain of mail that was piling up...” He told the March 9, 1962 issue of LIFE Magazine that there were among them “some letters which informed me that the postponements were God’s way of letting us know that we should not be tampering with the heavens.” Glenn addressed those very concerns just as promptly as he’d confessed them by relieving LIFE Magazines readership of any potential doubt in his own spiritual motivations. Glenn was just as morally consciences, clean-cut, and all-around American as the rest of them. Specifically, he was given leave of his quarters in Cape Canaveral now and then, he wrote, either for a haircut or on Sundays a church service in Cocoa Beach. In other words, we should expect no shenanigans, either from ground control or beyond.

Regardless of his assurances, in as little as 8 years a poll conducted by Knight Newspapers found that 30% of Americans were “suspicious of NASA’s trips to the Moon,” with the number rising to 54% in some Afro-American areas. But the up-and-coming moon landing deception, I suspect, was not the mere focus of those unanswered letters. They are a narrative of the cosmological nature—religious as well as scientifically inclined—stemming from a then-dying generation. It is a narrative lost now to the ages; erased from public discourse; a conscientious worldview which no doubt lines up with Robert Frost’s own words in 1962 when the farmer from Vermont thoughtfully contemplated such puzzling notions as a *firm firmament softening*. John Glenn kept to church and a proper schedule of haircuts.

In *We Seven*, a collection of essays written by the seven pioneering Astronauts themselves and published following his return to Earth in 1962, Glenn further addressed his religious critics in *A Past to Draw On*. Here the tone of those phantom letters, I suspect, are hinted at when he writes: “There is nothing superhuman, however, about being an

Astronaut. There is nothing spooky or supernatural about flying in space. I have talked to people, both before and after my orbital flight, who seemed to think that both of these propositions were true and that an Astronaut must have to be some sort of Yogi and put himself into a trance of some kind to go through such an experience.” Within a few sentences Glenn adds: “Space flight, like any other kind of flying, is simply the product of normal human skill and technical proficiency. Both of these have to be of the highest order, but there is nothing mysterious or esoteric about either one of them.”

“There were a lot of unknowns in the early days of spaceflight,” former astronaut Scott Carpenter, who followed Glenn’s flight with an *orbital* mission of his own in May of that year, later reminisced. “We were considered guilty of being unable to fly in space and required to prove our innocence, counter to the American custom.”

Prove they most certainly did. Perhaps this was NASA’s true intended purpose. As many critics of the Apollo program have noted, very little of their achievements were scientific. With Glenn, the firm firmament was softened. Mission: accomplished.

That same March 9, 1962 issue of LIFE Magazine, which depicted the Astronaut and his wife overshadowing even the all-familiar caricature of vice president Lyndon Johnson in a police-line motorcade, reported of Glenn’s Earthly homecoming: “As though swirling down from conquered space itself, a splendor of ticker tape and shredded paper almost blots out the view of Manhattan throngs straining for a glimpse of Colonel John Glenn. Along the traditional Route of Heroes through the canyons of skyscrapers, Glenn and his fellow Astronauts received New York’s greatest acclaim. Despite the windy cold, the crowds all but overwhelmed Glenn by the weight of their numbers and enthusiasm. Bands played and church bells rang, but they were drowned out by cheering that approached the decibel force of a rocket at liftoff. At the end of the parade, the man who had known the utter loneliness of space could only say of the welcome that he had *‘never seen anything like it.’*”

LIFE Magazine aptly concluded: “...Nor had anyone else.”

Whoever the unidentified authors of these letters, I also suspect they were not numbered among those who had “stirred the national pride.” Glenn observed, “As the focus of that pride, I have been almost overwhelmed. I felt this way when I was honored by President Kennedy

and by the Congress. But I have felt it even more strongly when I was honored by so many other people. Riding along parade routes in Florida, Washington, New York, and New Concord, my home town, I have looked at all those faces and waved and smiled when I really felt much more.”

Indeed, those letter-writers were of a generation who, for the most part, did not understand nor comprehend *true* Biblical cosmology—by way of argument—but the Spirit of God had not yet been quenched within them that He should fail to whisper:

“Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable,
that it be not moved (1 Chronicles 16:30).”

Knowing how something was not right with this historical turn of events, they likely did not feel the American spirit surging within them, nor gladly participate when church bells heralded Glenn’s conquest of space. There is indeed a contrary spirit at work to that of the Holy Ghost. It *or* he is most certainly American, and more—so much more. He is as old as Babylon itself—and older. There were those in the years leading up to America’s conquest of space—and in the months surrounding it—who perhaps did not connect all the end-times dots, particularly where the coming of the lawless one according to the working of Satan is concerned—”*with all power and signs and lying wonders...* (2 Thessalonians 2:9)” Even now it is impossible to connect them all. Yet I have personally interviewed a handful of such men who lived the Cold-War propaganda, listened to their better discretion and refused to bow to this patriotic spirit at work, despite not being able to place a finger on the specifics.

To be fair, perhaps those who held their breath under the suffocating downpours of paper confetti—which surely lined each parade route in Florida, Washington, New York, and New Concord—did not scoff at the Lord, and God forbid, ask: “Where is the promise of His coming?” Certainly not. But yet, with Glenn’s presidential caravan through America’s grand avenues of hero-worship, the age of scoffers had undeniably begun.

The Apostle Peter prophesied such a time when he wrote:

“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished... (2 Peter 3:5-6)”

Glenn wrote in *We Seven*: “We Astronauts have a mission, an extremely serious and important one. We are helping to break the bonds that have kept the human race pinned to the earth...” As for the throngs of Americans who line the streets, Glenn quipped: “Here they were, identifying with me, and I was identifying with them—right back.”

Colonel and four-term senator John Glenn was an unrepentant Freemason. Who better to pull off the “all power” of Satan, his “signs and lying wonders” which seeks to destroy any notion of an earth “standing out of the water and in the water” but the Freemasons—and others who will go unmentioned here. By 1962, the age of deceit—though perhaps not in today’s mature formation—was finally fluttering its wings. With Glenn, the deceivers had their man. And I ask myself: Would I have ranked among the gullible jubilant? I hope not. Perhaps one of the overriding themes of this end-times narrative—and I myself am guilty of it—is that all too easy we as a human species revel in the parade routes of our own funeral. Quite tragically, it wasn’t for the conquest of space that those church bells rang.

The war for heaven was finally here. And the public was invited to watch.

“*The Russian Soul...*”

1

WE KNEW THEM THEN AS THE MERCURY SEVEN.

April 9, 1959—at a conference in Washington, seven pioneering Americans were asked by a reporter if there were any brave men in the rank who were ready to launch into space right then and there. Everyone raised their hands. Wally Schirra and John Glenn doubled their vote by raising both of them. Yet John Glenn’s historic spaceflight, which commenced on board *Friendship 7* three years later, was no sure thing. “Delays for weather and for technical difficulties were facts I could accept,” he wrote afterwards to LIFE Magazine, “but a postponement or a possible replacement while the Astronaut recovered from a childhood disease seemed a bit silly. It would make quite a headline: GLENN HAS MUMPS.” While Glenn “was especially careful to steer clear of anyone who had even the slightest sign of a cold,” NASA’s engineers had other obstacles. Before completing three successful laps of the Earth, no American had spent more than 15 minutes *in space*.

With Glenn’s final *GO* on February 20, 1962, the Soviet Union had already successfully launched two manned orbital missions and a dog named Laika. Yuri Gagarin circled the Earth once in April 1961, and Gherman Titov outperformed his fellow countryman that following August by orbiting the Earth seventeen times in a period outlasting 24-hours. American astronauts Alan Shepard and Gus Grissom had only managed a 15-minute jump into orbit. Doctors were concerned with how Glenn’s body would hold up during nearly five hours in Earth orbit and whether or not his eyes would function properly in micro-gravity. NASA engineers also worried that spaceflight might cause fluid to move around randomly in Glenn’s inner ear, perhaps resulting in nausea and vertigo. Nobody was even sure if he would be able to swallow properly.

Glenn recounted years later: “Some of the ophthalmologists were literally concerned at that time that your eyes might change shape and your vision might change enough you couldn’t even see the instrument panel enough to make an emergency re-entry if you had to.” He also added: “They were enough concerned about it, we actually put a little

miniaturized eye chart at the top of the instrument panel. And that's still in *Friendship 7*—up in the Smithsonian.”

The October 21, 1957 issue of LIFE Magazine seemed intent to plague its readers with anxiety. Space was a headache. Such questions were asked: “How heavy is cosmic ray bombardment at these altitudes? How will it affect pilots? What will happen to the skin of an aircraft when it runs into clouds of tiny micrometeorites, the dust of outer space? What about the less numerous but larger meteorites that might conceivably strike a plane with explosive force? How do the earth's magnetic and gravitational fields change, and how will these changes affect electronic guidance systems?” The space race was raging between two world empires; the future of humanity was at stake; and yet one thing seemed certain—the U.S. was intent on sending men *beyond* the Earth, and they hadn't a clue what space actually was.

The following month, on November 18, 1957, LIFE published an article titled *The Seer of Space*, which focused on the father of rocket technology and science in the U.S. himself, Wernher von Braun. The former Nazi, who posed on the cover with a moon rocket he designed for Disney's film, *Man in Space*, attempted to alleviate America's apprehensions. “It's been said there are so many unknowns in space, we cannot proceed. The Russians have demonstrated clearly that this is untrue. A rocket-propulsion expert will tell you there's no sweat in solving propulsion problems but the medical problem is the barrier. A doctor will tell you space flight is medically possible but he doesn't think propulsion can be licked. Many of these obstacles will fade away....” The Soviets, he said, had already been integrating space flight with their missile program since 1946. *For America*, Von Braun seemed to sigh, their lack of interest after the War were some terrible years lost. “One fine day we suddenly decided we had to have an ICBM. It was like telling the Wright Brothers to build a B-29.”

Von Braun reminded the reader of LIFE on the need for 100% secrecy while they developed the necessary technology for space flight—and more money. They needed *more* money, but “congressmen must believe in what we're doing, and they won't until the public believes in us...”

Sputnik I made America believe in space travel, and better—it conveniently provided a necessary threat.

“RUSSIA’S SATELLITE, A DAZZLING NEW SIGHT IN
THE HEAVENS: THE FEAT THAT SHOOK THE
EARTH”

“A glittering metallic pinpoint of light streaking across the predawn sky last week gave the U.S. its first look at Soviet Russia’s great feat, the artificial moon Sputnik. After the satellite’s first hundred or so orbital trips across the earth, Americans were settling into uneasy familiarity with the unarguable fact that Russia’s moon was passing over them four to six times a day”

—LIFE Magazine, October 21, 1957

Sputnik I struck terror in the west. “A colossal panic was underway,” wrote Tom Wolfe in *The Right Stuff*, “with congressmen and newspapermen leading a huge pack that was baying at the sky where the hundred-pound Soviet satellite kept beeping around the world... Sputnik I took on a magical dimension... It gave birth to a modern, technological astrology. Nothing less than control of the heavens was at stake. It was Armageddon, the final and decisive battle of the forces of good and evil. Lyndon Johnson, who was the Senate majority leader, said that whoever controlled ‘the high ground’ of space would control the world.”

In actuality, U.S. reaction to *Sputnik I* took on many forms. Bartenders concocted *Sputnik* cocktails with vodka as the base. Rather than popping out of a cake in the traditional *Earthy* fashion, pretty models were reported to burst from a balloon gondola during a Chicago sales meeting. For fashion, space-themed skirts, jackets, hats, and quite ironically, balloons with satellite motif were rushed onto the market. Even the under-aged wanted a part of the Cold War madness. To cash in on the *Sputnik* craze, toy manufacturers released a variety of desirable play things. Employees at Macy’s in New York even dressed the part of space men in order to fill the cash drawers. But not everyone was in a pleasant mood. A young rocketeer named G. Harry Stine was fired by the Martin Company for too volubly belittling the U.S. missile program, specifically in regards to his sharp remark made after Sputnik. “This is really and truly the shot heard round the world,” said Stine. “I wonder what the dead veterans of Lexington and of Korea are thinking.”

Despite the toys and the cocktails and the pretty models bursting out from balloon gondolas, America needed reassurance—and fast. The

media spun the *Sputnik* narrative with a series of articles which basically read: “WE TOLD YOU SO”—In so many words. *It should have been America up there first, and it was the voters fault for not pressing Capitol Hill.* LIFE Magazine wasn’t shy in taking this approach. As a tireless vocal advocate of tying the U.S. space flight program to its military missile effort, Von Braun had urged in a 1952 speech that the U.S. needed to build a “manned satellite to curb Russia’s military ambitions.” But despite Von Braun’s scientific achievements, some of which, LIFE rather awkwardly sums up, included building “the V-2 missiles that plagued England toward the end of the war,” remarks like this “were usually dismissed as if made by a tiresome crackpot.” For most Americans, space was still a marketing ploy of science-fiction—not taxpayer dollars.

But no worries—the story of the United States was that of the underdog. It would bounce back. President Eisenhower promised as much. His U.S. satellite would be scientifically superior to the *beep-beeping* tin-can that was *Sputnik*. America’s armed forces agreed. *Sputnik* served no practical purpose—none that anyone knew. Theirs would be “the launching of a reconnaissance vehicle which would circle the globe much as *Sputnik* is doing now, observing every point in the world at least once a day. Such periodic inspection of the earth will soon be possible.” According to one estimate, the U.S. Air Force would launch a “true reconnaissance satellite” by 1960, which had already been christened “Big Brother,” because “it will see everything, as did the fictional Big Brother in George Orwell’s book, 1984.”

When asked about trips to the moon, Von Braun estimated it would happen within 25 years—perhaps 1982—but only by “a few selected people who could withstand the trip.” Freemasons, likely. Oddly enough, he compared the upcoming moon landing as a challenge akin to Admiral Byrd’s recent expedition to Antarctica. “People went there [Antarctica] because they thought it would be fun, and found uses for it they hadn’t dreamed of.” To wet the reader’s appetite, he even compared Antarctica’s potential—which has yet to be explained to this day—in the tone reminiscent of the New World. “Columbus couldn’t have predicted what the United States would be like today.”

LIFE neatly summed up America’s mission into space. It was “to make this world more habitable even while we explore others...” But as of 1957—even John Glenn’s flight in 1962—one thing remained certain; world peace was being threatened by another world power. It had become

“all too apparent Russian scientists are as good as any in the world—or better.”

“There is that in the Russian soul which corresponds to the immensity, the vagueness, the infinitude of the Russian land, spiritual geography corresponds with physical... Two contradictory principles lay at the foundation of the structure of the Russian soul, the one a natural, Dionysian, elemental paganism and the other monastic Orthodoxy.”

—Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*.

2

IF NIKOLAI FYODOROVICH FYODOROV WENT BY ANY OTHER NAME, *Socrates* would suffice. From a library in Moscow he lived out his peaceful days (1828-1903) committing himself to esoteric studies—dreaming of transhumanism, resurrection from the dead, and space travel. Here in the west very few people have heard of Fyodorov and the Russian Cosmists he inspired. Theirs is not a frequented tale. Perhaps because Fyodorov published very little work in his own lifetime, though he wrote much, and the Cosmists themselves went quietly into the miserably long winter night that was the Bolshevik Revolution. Men like Valerian Muravyov were sentenced to the camps in 1929. Alexander Svyatogor was sent to the camps in 1937, where he died. Father Pavel Florensky was shot that very year—though others were more fortunate. Because of his overzealous credentials in rocket science, Tsiolkovsky lived out his days in a manner of peace. Vladimir Vernadsky was afforded teaching and researching rights until his death in 1945. And though a minor privilege was granted to him, Alexander Chizhevsky was allowed research of his own—in the camps.

Decades thereafter, once the Berlin Wall—which President Kennedy had referred to as “a hell of a lot better than a war”—had been reduced to heaps of rebar, wire, and graffiti-stained mortar, trunks of cars were unlocked and drawers were opened, and the books of the Russian Cosmists were returned to shelves next to Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and others. Odd thing though—despite the glaring fact that his writings were

repressed by Stalin, Fyodorov was highly influential to the Soviet space program. One of his students was the astrophysicist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky—the father of spaceflight due to the groundbreaking equations he developed. With the collapse of the U.S.S.R., the return of cosmism-consciousness brought with it a new magnifying glass of sorts, affording a deeper transparency and keen sense of intuition among the headlines of antiquity. One thing is now *certain*. Despite the Cosmists massacre in the bloodbath of Marxism, the space race couldn't have happened in this manner—and likely wouldn't have happened at all—without them.

Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935) arrived in Moscow in 1873 from a provincial village with no money, no friends, and barely a lick of education. Nearly deaf from a childhood bout with scarlet fever, there was very little school could do with such an extraordinarily gifted mind. Only 16 years old at the time, Tsiolkovsky was met and personally befriended by the father of Cosmism, Nikolai Fyodorov, at the library which served him. Tsiolkovsky said he joined with an “enchanted group” of young people who visited Fyodorov daily, and gladly succumbed to Fyodorov's spell. Each day the master brought his young scientist a fresh stack of books, and together they dreamed of possibilities. Under Fyodorov's personal guidance, Tsiolkovsky began a course of self-education and esoteric embodiment that eventually led to him becoming the honored grandfather of Soviet rocket science and space exploration. Tsiolkovsky calculated the first mathematical formulas for orbiting the satellite which author Arthur C. Clarke had imagined in a science-fiction novel. Without Tsiolkovsky, *Sputnik* wouldn't have happened.

Tsiolkovsky would go on to write science fiction of his own—fantasies which salted his readers with “theosophical treatises on panpsychism, and humanity's future in a cosmos in which every atom is not only alive, but sentient (Hagemeister 2007).” Fyodorov taught his library students that all matter was the dust of our ancestors. Panpsychism was the heart of Tsiolkovsky's writing—the belief that the “atom spirit” is “inherent in every particle of matter in the cosmos.”

All that Nikolai Fyodorov's philosophical energy was concentrated upon can be best summed up with the “One Idea.” Every problem is centrally rooted in the certainty of death. Everyone and everything *must* die. For Fyodorov, no solution to any social, economic, political, or philosophical quandary would prove sufficient until

immortality was solved. If death could be conquered, then all other solutions—the kingdom of heaven itself (in his words)—would flow from the water-well of victory. It is indeed strange that Fyodorov was nurtured under Russian Orthodoxy. He apparently even considered himself “Christian.” And yet nothing of Fyodorov’s learnings conclude that Jesus Christ conquered death and that—because of His perfect atoning sacrifice on the cross through His precious blood—we can evade the second death and partake in the resurrection and restoration of all things. Contrary to the mythology of space travel, Utopia will be fully functional in the final settlement of New Jerusalem. *Ob no*—for Fyodorov, it was the task of humanity to restore to wholeness and life everything that nature drove to death. By *everything* he meant every living person who had ever lived. Science, he assured us, would bring them back.

Fyodorov advocated “immortality for all.”

According to *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*, author George M. Young describes Russian Cosmism as “a highly controversial and oxymoronic blend of activist speculation, futuristic traditionalism, religious science, exoteric esotericism, utopian pragmatism, idealistic materialism—higher magic partnered to higher mathematics.” Michael Hagemester, a leading western scholar of Russian intellectual history, adds the following “genetic marks” to the definition:

“Russian cosmism and Russian cosmic thinking...is based on a holistic and anthropocentric view of the universe which presupposes a teleologically determined—and thus meaningful—evolution; its adherents strive to redefine the role of humankind in a universe that lacks a divine plan for salvation, thus acknowledging the threat of self-destruction...Cosmic evolution is thus dependent on human action to reach its goal, which is perfection or wholeness. By failing to act, or failing to act correctly, humankind dooms the world to catastrophe. According to cosmism, the world is in a phase of transition from the biosphere (the sphere of living matter) to the “noosphere” (the sphere of reason). During this phase the active unification and organization of the whole of humankind... into a single organism is said to result in a higher ‘*Planetary consciousness*’ capable of guiding further development reasonably and ethically... changing and perfecting the universe,

overcoming disease and death, and finally bringing forth an immortal human race.”

This cannot be stressed enough. Everything Fedorov inspired towards throughout his multi-tasking of scattered projects—everything in evolution’s grandiose Gnostic tale pointed towards the final resurrection of the dead which, first and foremost, included the conquest of space. The necessity of annexation with the heavenly realms and the Soviets part in the race arose directly from Fyodorov’s grand ambitions. Since there is clearly not enough real estate on Earth for all resurrected fathers, a certain measurement of infinity would first be settled. Fedorov and the Cosmists needed as part of their grand project of resurrection the gathering of all nations into one political unit governed by a single autocrat—preferably Russian. In their own twisted thinking, the Cosmists had humanities best interest at heart, particularly humanities starring role in cosmic evolution. Such concentrated efforts harken right back to Tsiolkovsky’s novels. Brave international teams of unified scientists—often French, German, Chinese, and American descent, though led most importantly by a Russian—served as a launching pad for his fantasies.

Cosmists were expansive thinkers. If they were to accomplish this, they’d need everything at their disposal—not only centralized religion and world government, but the sociological and the economic, the illusion best mastered in every medium of entertainment—like television, and the magic which art afforded. Science-fiction, the Occult, and esoteric mysticism would appoint us to destiny. George M. Young refers to their philosophy as “exoteric thaumaturgy” which, in so many words, is essentially the capability of a magician or a saint to work magic or miracles in a way that can be understood by the general public. Young refers to Fyodorov as a “man with a twenty-first-century mind and a medieval heart.”

The Cosmists were attempting to transform esoteric knowledge into exoteric, to raise the curtain on traditional occult wisdom, thereby treading new directions within philosophy, theology, literature, art, and science. Some critics have dismissed Cosmism as *mere* pseudoscience. Certainly, they may have delivered a pseudo approach to the halls of academia, but they were notably successful at it—brilliantly so. Moreover, they would prove to a worldwide audience through cunning feats of trickery that space was possible, despite being “a borderland, a crossover area between science and magic,” a wave of the wand, “a back-and-forth

process in which thaumaturgy finds academic legitimacy, and academic knowledge becomes thaumaturgical.” Theirs is a tale as old as Genesis chapter 3. *Each of us*, according to the Serpent, *is truly divine*. Only here in the case of the space mythos, it is gravity which binds us and keeps us grounded in this material world.

In order to mold all humanity, all time, all space, all science, religion and art into their Occult paradigm, a totalitarian fist must be applied to all without exception. The proper totalitarian regime requires complete subservience to the state, and because Cosmists were interested in universal solutions, they most certainly held to a totalitarian mindset. With the space race came the total—and *seemingly* final—deconstruction of Biblical cosmology through the sleight of hand. The good of the whole community was placed “above the freedom of the individual to go his or her own independent way.” In this case, Geocentrism—or the flat earth—was sacrificed on the cutting room floor of necromancy. The mythology of space, with its wealth of esoteric value, would once and for all be elevated above the throne of God. For Cosmists such as Chaadaev, the one virtue was to “captivate our being whether we wish it to do so or not.” Chaadaev seems to whisper *pantheism* when he writes:

“There is no reason which is not obedient reason. But that is not all. Does man do anything his lifelong but seek to submit to something? ... What would happen if man could make himself so submissive that he wholly rid himself of freedom? Clearly, according to what we have said, this would be the highest degree of human perfection. Every movement of his soul would then be produced by the principle which produced all other movements of the world. Thus, instead of being separated from nature, as he now is, man would fuse with it. Instead of the feeling of his own will, which separates him from the general order of things, which makes him a being apart, he would find the feeling of universal will, or, what is the same thing, the intimate feeling, the profound awareness of his real relation to the whole creation.”

One only becomes truly free by forsaking his personal freedom and becoming part of a greater evolutionary and conscious whole, so long as he allows the few but fully enlightened to lead. For the Cosmist, it mattered little if their broadly esoteric ambitions were not immediately workable or realizable. Despite their oppression under Stalin, Marxists

believed in **thought as action**—as did the Cosmists. This best represents Berdyaev’s characterization of “*the Russian soul*.” It is facing and overcoming “a multitude of apparent contradictions” in action. It is no accident that the Russians adopted Marxist ideas more immediately and thoroughly than westerners. Both philosophical approaches wed together like a hand and glove.

Writes Young: “...the focus has characteristically been not on the theoretical nature of *this* or *that* concept but on the actions required by *this* or *that* ideal—not the nature of reality but the consequences of any given model of reality.” For example, in the Russian tradition, it is not enough to ask: *What is true?* The true Russian must go on to ask: *What must we do about it?* Young continues: “Thus, long embedded in Russian philosophy, as we have seen in Fedorov’s view of science, is a tendency to view every ology as an opportunity for an urgy, every discussion of *what is* as an invitation to consider *how to accomplish what ought to be*. And this insistence on not merely observing and defining, but radically transforming the given world is a further example of Cosmisms’ thaumaturgical tendencies, of an eschatological historiosophy that links Russian Cosmism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the age-old practice of magic and alchemy.”

Freemasonry would have a most significant impact in Russia, “with its emphasis on the craft of constructing a better man and better world.” With Freemasonry arose resurgences in alchemy—particularly through Peter the Great and his closeted Masonic friendships. As the forerunner of modern-day chemistry, alchemy is an attempt not only to create gold from base metals but to forge higher men from common mortals. Such doctrines seemed to speak explicitly to *the Russian soul*. In fact, Nikolai Fedorov’s grandfather, Prince Ivan Alekseevich Gagarin, was a leading figure in Russia’s Masonic movement.

Actually, many of western histories leading figures in esotericism invested their budding years in Russia. Theosophist H.P. Blavatsky is one of them. Names like George Gurdijeff, P.D. Ouspensky, Nicholas and Helena Roerich, and Rasputin will ring the chimes of familiarity for some. The Cosmists however separated themselves from the western Theosophists only so much as Blavatsky and her kind were devoted to Hindu and Buddhists esotericism, whereas the Soviets had not forgotten their Orthodox background. For them, esoteric Christianity would do—like Gnosticism. Ironically though, while the Theosophists made names

for themselves glorifying a Luciferian future in their literature, the lesser known Cosmists climbed *beyond* the staircase of speculation. Writes Young: “The all but unnoticed Cosmists were devoting serious philosophical, theological, and scientific attention to matters usually considered topics for esoteric speculation, such as self-directed evolution toward higher levels of humanity; human attainment of virtual omniscience, omnipotence, and immortality; the restoration of life to the dead; the influence of astral forces on human affairs; the human attainment of superhuman powers; the radical alteration and spiritualization of the material world.”

Unlike western esotericists, Soviets put *thought to action*. The Occultists gave the Americans assurance that such esoteric concepts could be nurtured beyond the tit of the mind. While much may be drawn from the space race, the myth of space itself—animated with a wave of the hand and academic thaumaturgy—has ultimately served one purpose; unify the world into one last beast-government under the UN banner for the final showdown, but not with the Soviet Union. We call this the battle of Armageddon. And there is a threat far greater than every conceivable asteroid, advancing black hole, or doomsday planet which a science-fiction writer might hurl at us, and it lives behind the *dark water* we call space. Diviners will continue their sleight of hand, much as they’ve always done, until the kings of the Earth muster men into battle for one common purpose—to stop the long-promised and inevitable return of our Messiah Yeshua.

Fyodorov said: “At the present time everything serves war; there is not one discovery which the military does not study with the aim of applying it to warfare, not one invention which they do not attempt to turn to military use.” In order to achieve the goal of a new world order, which in turn would lead to man’s crowning achievement in spiritual and physical evolution, they *needed* war—though a Cold War might suffice.

With *Sputnik I* the conjurer had exercised his rights—to a degree. The board was set and the pieces were moving. Henry Cabot Lodge proposed to the U.N. immediate discussions for keeping deadly weapons out of the ionosphere, “so that this vast new realm will be used for the “exclusively peaceful and scientific purposes” of the human race. Even Commander George Hoover of the United States Navy, a veteran of Project Vanguard, remarked confidently of *Sputnik*: “I think this is the first step toward the unification of the peoples of the world, whether they know it or not.”

As of 1962, American scientist had science-fiction at their disposal—not forgetting Nazi scientists. With *Operation Paperclip*, the U.S. had Nazi's too. The Soviets, however—the Soviets had the Cosmists. But unlike the United States, Soviets could only take the propaganda so far. They may have succeeded in casting the technological gold of another alchemical nature, but even their mastery over art was limited. The western powers could carry it further—in fact, to the moon and back. America had something they lacked. For nearly seventy years they'd been plugging away at perfecting the animated idols of Babylon. Americans had Hollywood.

In 1957 Wernher Von Braun confessed to LIFE: “We could put a man into orbit in a year...but don't ask me how we'd get him back. If a man would be ready to sacrifice his life by being fired into orbit it would answer some of the questions about space flight, but even if one volunteered we probably couldn't find anybody willing to shoot him up there.”

Two years later, John Glenn volunteered with both hands. On his momentous orbit around Earth, the man who'd flown 59 combat missions during the War and another 90 in Korea was able to flip his space capsule around, mid-orbit, so that the heat-shield faced forward while Glenn rode backward. “I started having my troubles with the automatic control system late in the first orbit,” Glenn told LIFE in March 9, 1962. “Something was obviously wrong with the system and it became necessary for me to control the capsule's movements by hand.” He added: “The idea that I was flying this thing myself and proving on our first orbital test that a man's capabilities are needed in space was one of the high spots of the day.”

Upon re-entering Earth's fiery atmosphere over the Hawaiian isles at an orbital velocity of approximately 17,500 miles per hour—he would safely land in the Atlantic, just north of the Grand Turk Islands—Colonel John Glenn continued piloting *Friendship 7* backwards. Because three rocket boosters “were firing backwards against the direction of the flight, I had the sensation of accelerating back toward Hawaii. Actually the rockets were only slowing me down.” It is a feat which he had never once attempted during the War, in Korea, or any time thereafter, and no daredevil has yet attempted to revisit his legacy. How he gained such mastery of a wingless space capsule, using only boosters to find his landing zone, no reporter has ever dared to ask.

THE GENESIS CLOAK OF DECEPTION

“The World... the whole, self-poisoned lost is at the most critically, foretold condition it is possible for ‘The Watchers’ as ourselves to ever contemplate.”

Samuel Shenton

18 February, 1970

1

ATTENDING SAMUEL SHENTON’S FIRST GATHERING of flat earthists was British astronomer Patrick Moore, host of BBC’s *The Sky at Night*. Shenton had founded the International Flat Earth Research Society in 1956 as a direct descendant of Lady Elizabeth Blount’s Universal Zetetic Society. A president was immediately established in William Mills, relative of one of Lady Blount’s closest followers, Frederick Cook. The legacy of Blount and the flat earthists who associated with her and the paper which she edited—*The Earth Is Not a Globe Review*—formerly commenced in the living room of Mills Finsbury Park home, where every cushion of furniture was reportedly filled. The eminent Copernican astronomer later recounted leaving that meeting “in a mood of deep thought.”

Memories of that meeting had clearly not escape Moore, some thirteen years later, when he opened a monthly episode of *One Pair of Eyes*, titled, *Can You Speak Venusian*, to boast of the letters he’d received from “people of independent thought; people who weren’t shackled by the strings of convention.” To this he quickly added, “I believe, you know, they’re all nowadays too conventional and too regimented. We believe what we’re told and we believe as we are told.” Here-in lays the premise of his program. Moore wanted to examine the alternative views of individuals who were not shackled by conventional thinking—who were quite prepared to go out on a limb and *think* for themselves.

Within moments of the program, having already met with a group of rambunctious, snowball pelting school boys (they’d apparently slogged a

round down his neck before the camera happened to catch the crime) to challenge them as to their own unquestioning belief in gravity, Moore kindly confessed: “There is a danger that we’re going to turn into regimented sheep if we accept too much—or have we already done it? And I very much fear that I’m one of these sheep...” One such letter, which he possessed in his keeping, originated from the gentleman whose meeting he had attended some thirteen years earlier. Shenton, he says, “believes the earth is shaped like a gramophone record, with the North Pole in the middle and the wall of ice all around the edge.”

Seated in the home of the world’s flat earthist spokesman, maps, illustrations, and diagrams spread out before them on his table, Shenton seems completely unconcerned that the episode in question was filmed in the wake of the Apollo 8 mission, the first crewed spacecraft to reportedly leave low earth orbit, reach the moon, circumnavigate it, and then return. That’s not to say that thirteen *brutal* years of the space race hasn’t taken its toll. If anything, he comes across to his viewers as a tired old man obstinately clinging to a failed position. When the International Flat Earth Research Society was conceived in William Mills’ living room, space travel itself had yet to be achieved, and such bold blanket statements, that Scripture itself informed his beliefs, were (*how do we say it?*) less of a gamble. There was indeed a time when space travel was little more than a genre of science fiction. At that meeting in 56, Shenton himself quipped: “Would sailing around the Isle of Wright prove that it were spherical?” And yet, in as little as a year, the Russians were determined to change that.

Though ailing of health and short of breath, Shenton clearly isn’t shaken at the fact that it would also first air on the 10th of May 1969, only weeks before the Apollo 11 moon landing. When speaking of earth’s *origin*, the waters, Shenton insisted, “were dispelled from the earth, and the whole thing was covered by a heaved-up structure, *Shamayim* in the Hebrew—a heaved-up structure actually *in water*.”

Moore quickly asks: “What about the astronauts then, if they didn’t in fact go around the earth, what did *they* go around?”

The astronauts simply “fired off from Cape Canaveral,” Shenton replies, “and went on an egg-shaped orbit” around the plane of the earth.

“Keeping the same height all the time?” Moore asks.

“Absolutely, sir,” Shenton speaks with generosity and kindness, giving absolutely no hint as to the innumerable correspondences he’d

received from misanthropists over the last decade and a half. Orbit is nothing more than carrying a rocket up to a certain height and then leveling off.

Like a gramophone record.

2

DESPITE THE ASTRONOMER'S CHARITABLE WORDS, a likely few shared his sympathy—and an even smaller rotunda of the Christian faithful clung to Samuel Shenton's dog-like loyalties. Sure, Glenn received letters. Moore did too. But with the Mercury missions captivating worldwide audiences, Shenton began receiving his own fair share of them—*lots* of letters. Actually, they started pouring in—upwards of 40 per day. But unlike America's paraded space heroes, the stamps postmarked to Shenton were rarely licked with pleasantry. Among the morally outraged correspondences addressed to Shenton, typical arguments included ships disappearing over the sea's horizon, as the Alexandrian's had once *proven*, Earth's circular shadow on the moon, and Jupiter and Saturn's globular appeal.

Dated September 20, 1965, only one month after NASA's launch of Gemini 5, a New York man wrote:

Dear Mr. Shenton,

You are a nut. NUT – N-U-'T – NUT. If the world is flat, why hasn't anyone fallen off? Maybe your organization is a farce, but if you seriously believe what you state, you, dear sir, are crazy.

In closing, the New Yorker added: "When you get this letter, it will have traveled 3,000 miles over a curved surface."

On October 4 of that same year, a North Carolina man wrote:

"All I can say is this is the most imbecilic misconception of the Dark Ages that has existed to this modern day. You, a mature man (physically, if not mentally) rejecting all scientific proofs to support a belief that has not been accepted for many centuries. I am including...a photograph of the Earth taken from the moon by the American Lunar Orbiter. Try to explain that into a flat plane without sounding foolish."

Children and teenagers were likewise full of reproach. Likely fresh from the playground, a boy from Brooklyn wrote:

“Why do you think the world is flat? I think the world is round. Your people think the world is flat. But it is not flat. I can prove it... The people in Brooklyn knows that the world is round. They can prove it to. Because we have round globes. Why do you think the world is flat? If you come out here everybody will know that your people think the world is flat. Someone should show you that the world is round. Did you see the pictures that the spacemen took of the Earth? Didn’t you see the pictures on TV?”

In her book, *Flat Earth: The History of an Infamous Idea*, Christine Garwood writes: “Despite the point that, in all likelihood, many of Shenton’s correspondents could not identify how they initially knew the earth was a globe, or could not build a convincing case that it was, except by reference to cultural representations of nature, they could not accept, and were sometimes disturbed or offended by, Shenton’s refusal to abide by commonly held standards of authoritative proof.” Accordingly, it was unthinkable that the Bible should be employed to add weight to the activities of “infidel science.” Shenton spoke of a transparent moon some 32 miles in diameter, completely snubbing the official estimate of 2160 miles; a self-illuminating body which floated in the sky a mere 2,550 miles away. The flat earth was a profound metaphysical issue backed by the Word of God, one which struck at the heart of a war between Science and the Bible.

Shenton however was not much of a writer. *Speaking* was his forte, with political groups, reading circles, church associations, and youth clubs occupying his peripheral vision. He turned down interviews with *Playboy* on the grounds that its pages “smelled of Gomorrah,” and refused the far-out underground magazine *Oz*, despite their common anti-establishment stances. Contrarily, the flat earthist infrequently declined an invitation to lecture or debate, and was certainly not a stranger to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the Young Scientist Club. His activities quickly garnished the Media’s gaze.

Throughout the space race, mocking headlines would read: “*Enoch Sends Flat-Earth Men Round the Bend.*” In turn, Cold War Americans—who preferred the pomp and circumstance of glittering parades—fell in easy cadence with their propaganda. So imagine their initial disappointment to

find in Shenton an average blue collar worker—specifically, a sign writer by trade—who lived simply with his wife in a ginger-brick terrace in the suburbs of Dover. The media had no doubt hoped to digest as their main course an eccentric provocateur, but what they found was an amiable soul; a balding Englishman who habitually wore woolly-pullovers, red carpet slippers, and enjoyed studying maps.

Shenton's troubles began in October of 1957, when *Sputnik 1* streaked across starry skies. And yet Shenton refused to budge. *Sputnik*, he contended, was just like a marble “spinning round a saucer.” This *so-called orbit*, Shenton assured his followers, was nothing more than a cheap parlor trick. Soviet Yugi Gagarin had simply circled the earth, he said, “like a needle on a record.”

Only two months later—in December of that year—William Mills, president of the International Flat Earth Research Society, *died*. For the following decade the IFERS would prove costly and time consuming for its founder. Regardless, a determined Shenton subsidized costs from his own pocket and had little choice but to run the operation from his Dover house. It is *there* where he would brave the seemingly infinite gloom of the space race alone, and eventually, as his age deepened with the persistent offensive of America's Apollo Missions, he would brave it from his bedroom.

After Alan Shepherd became the first American in space on May 5, 1961 aboard his Mercury spacecraft *Freedom 7*, Shenton informed the media that such a feat was impossible on the basis that there was no such thing as *orbit* to begin with. To this effect he said: “Humanity has been *brainwashed* into accepting round earth theory.”

In 1966 Shenton produced a pamphlet for members of IFERS, *The Plane Truth*, which stated, in no uncertain terms, “that modern astronomy and space flight were insults to God and divine punishment for humankind's arrogance was a mere matter of time.”

Shenton was apparently a glutton for punishment, because he readily denounced the August 1967 Lunar Orbiter's photograph of the earth, reportedly taken from 214,806 miles in distant space, a “fraud, fake, trickery, or deceit, just like that.” He furthermore called attention to suspicious lines and ragged edges, maintaining that it was just a “composite picture,” or mock-up, which any of their photographer chaps could have managed with ease. When asked by a reporter at the *Sun* why

anyone would want to perpetrate such a deception, Shenton replied, this “great Global Earth Conspiracy” was motivated “by the desire to deny God as the Creator of all things.”

As if he had yet to take a single swing to the hornets’ nest with a bat, he furthermore noted, the plot had been perpetuated by our worst enemies. *No*, not the Soviet’s, Americans, nor the Brits, but “persons and schoolmasters, the idle shepherds” mentioned in the Bible. Those tasked with the safekeeping of Christ’s flock were to blame. They were *hirelings*. Clearly, the wolves had come in.

Shenton did not shy from insulting the Christian’s ongoing worship of intelligence. He claimed that schools, colleges and universities were a “media of mass brain conditioning;” a cesspool where the “unproven, godless, globular theory” festered. By simply rejecting the space flight narrative—and daring to go it alone—Shenton was humbly asking his fellow Christians to *choose* God’s Testimony concerning His creation rather than the adulterous patriotism which had hijacked the good faith and served as a counterfeit façade for the true saving religion. Shenton was bold enough to tell the world’s press that orbital space flight was nothing more than an *illusion*. “Gagarin, Glenn and Company,” he said, “had circled over a flat surface like a toy airplane on the end of a piece of string.”

After the Apollo 8 capsule returned in 1968 with pictures from space, Shenton bolstered his own rhetoric. In a reply to the *Guardian*, Shenton insisted that those who studied the Bible knew the earth was flat and were aware that Christ himself had warned of a “great deception which might shake the frail Christian faith.” Though NASA astronauts circulated photographs depicting the Earth as a *planet*, their technological villainy had been worsened by their exploitation of “the opening verses of Genesis...as a deceptive cloak.” Those who understood Scripture *knew* the truth, that Science was propagating a lie. “That is why,” Shenton concluded, “there will always be a Christian opposition to godless men who parade man’s thoughts as science.”

Even Christine Garwood confirmed what the Bible’s authors thought *and taught* when she wrote of Hebrew Cosmology:

“...the cosmos consists of the vault of heaven (shamayim), or 'firmament,' containing the sun, moon and stars (genesis 1:14-17). The Bible teaches that these heavenly bodies move across

the stationary earth (Psalms 19:1-7), while the firmament rests on pillars or mountains (Job 26:11) rooted in the flat earth below. Beneath the earth lies the underworld, Sheol, seen as the abode of the dead (Numbers 16:28-34; I Samuel 28:13-15; Isaiah 14:9-11; Ecclesiastes 9:19). The earth, which is generally depicted as an immovable disc or 'circle' (Job 26:7), is bordered by a protective barrier, probably a mountain range. As for its shape, it is generally spoken of as a flat disc, so that if one traveled far enough one would eventually arrive at the 'ends of the earth' (Deuteronomy 13:8, 28:64; Isaiah 5:26; Psalm 135:7). Within this scheme, the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12, Ezekiel 7:2) might refer to distant regions, unless taken literally, when the earth could be considered rectangular or square.”

Christine Garwood, aptly recognizing what the Hebrews *actually* believed, has sided with the Greeks; and dare I say the sorcerers of Babylon—those who would turn the opening pages of Genesis into a deceptive cloak. That is one thing for Garwood, who makes no passing mention of her salvation, but what of the believer? Shenton stood with the chapped lips and the hoarse throats of the Spirit-filled Prophets, Psalmists, and Apostles. Most importantly, he stood with [YHWH] YAHUAH, THE MOST-HIGH ELOHIM, and His Son, Yahusha, Savior of the World, who confirmed all Scripture as truth.

And for the most part, Shenton stood alone.

As of 1969, IFERS had dropped to 100 members worldwide. How many members simply subscribed to glean information from him, so as to have a good laugh, is unknown. Not even its own president, the Greater London Council and North East London Polytechnic lecturer Ellis Hillman, believed the earth to be flat.

Shenton did not have our framework of knowledge today. He could not have possibly connected all the dots between the Mystery Babylon religion of old with the Occult of present. He likely paid Aleister Crowley and his kindred no mind, nor founder of JPL, Jack Parsons—and quite certainly had no knowledge of the Russian Cosmists and little else that had transpired beyond the iron curtain. I therefore ask my reader to choose his side. Over there among the spirited bands, gaily marching to the tune of *Stars and Stripes Forever*, we find the Greek philosophers, the Platonists, and the Occulting Mysteries, from whence they derived, masterfully manipulating the heartstrings of America’s national pride. And

quite contrarily, we have the Prophet Isaiah, who wrote of the Babylonian religion and such a time as this.

And thou saidst, I shall be a lady forever: *so* that thou didst not lay these *things* to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, *thou that art* given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I *am*, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of they sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. For thou hast trusted in they wickedness: thou hast said, **None seeth me.** Thy wisdom and they knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I *am*, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know.

Isaiah 47:7-11

With the Apollo 11 moon landing, Shenton succumbed to bad health. The very summer of his televised meeting with Moore, Shenton collapsed. For the remainder of his life, he was confined to running the society from his bedroom. By Christmas 1969, Shenton had been in his sick room for three months, but still managed to “straddle a typewriter across his body.” He used it mainly to reply to his correspondences, one in which he confessed that he had “not been to bed for about a year.” It was a life “spent propped up between chairs” while “whacking great ulcers down each shinbone” had prevented him from “sleeping, thinking, or reading.” Even worse, he wrote, their “vile stench and the weeping makes me wish to hide away; had it not been for my wife’s constant attention, I don’t think I could have stuck it!”

His condition further deteriorated over the opening winter months of 1971. Shenton died in a Folkestone hospital on 2 March, 1971, at the age of sixty-eight due to cardiac failure and hypertensive heart disease, a condition doubtless exacerbated by the strain of persistent campaigning to pull the whole “self-poisoned world” of science, as he called it, from the classroom of every age.

Thank you, Samuel Shenton, for going it alone in our darkest hour.

SIR PATRICK MOORE DIED on December 9, 2012 at 89 years of age. A flat earthist such as myself can only wish *and wonder*, had he stuck around but another three years, to hear about these flat earthists running amuck. I can imagine him in bed, frailly attempting to hold his composure while grumbling miserably and, dare I say it, smiling softly:

It's Samuel Shenton all over again.

Only this time—*this time* there's hundreds of thousands of them.

PART ONE

Living **THE DREAM**

Living THE DREAM

1

I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE. I've *always* wanted to be interviewed by YouTuber Patricia Steere. Ever since joining hands with the flat earth community in its toddler months, I've often fancied the inevitable invite that would never come. For the record, there is a high probability that somebody out there, notably a flat earthist, has only *just now* spit out their coffee and is pausing, without having yet read this far, to scrub this page down with a napkin. I mean, generation of vaginas will go dry for penning this *very* book. That is what I was told, at least, when I had announced my intention to write it. *Oh*, haven't you heard the news? It's all over YouTube.

Patricia Steere has a penis.

Just *now* there is some other sad sap out in there in the world that, having haphazardly stumbled upon this book, perhaps as a recommendation from a friend, has spit out their coffee or worse, choked on a crumpet or blueberry scone. But back to my public confession—I've often imagined the microphone which I might prop myself up behind as Patricia's latest conversation piece on her YouTube series, *Flat Earth and Other Hot Potatoes*, interviewed purely on the basis that I was a contributing *anything* for the community.

Hemingway once described the process of writing as *sitting down at a typewriter to bleed*. I've always maintained that writing is more akin to walking out on stage, stripping down ones garments, and then standing there quite alone, sweating under the blinding bulb of the spotlight while my anonymous audience, hidden in the blanketed darkness, sits there to take account of my intricacies—the added padding of flesh caked onto each thigh or the uneven distribution of hair streaming from my lower neck to my chest. It is strange indeed then that I so regularly labor over a seemingly endless gauntlet of potential mockery while simultaneously doggy-paddling with a leg cramp through floodwaters of timidity, lacking enough self-confidence to pick up the phone and introduce myself to a former DJ.

Steere, I often thought, would never have me on.

And then one day in June of 2019 I was sitting under the shade of a tree somewhere alongside the Dordogne River in France, welcoming the sweltering heat of summer in, when news had reached my social media feed that Patricia Steere had terminated her YouTube account. Hundreds of *Flat Earth and Other Hot Potatoes* episodes were simultaneously eliminated with it. Just like that—*gone*. The woman who'd once given a voice to so many flat earth researchers was lending her microphone no more. To be more precise, Steere had pulled the plug on everything.

Patricia, it seemed, had left the flat earth for good.

I was preparing to cook my family dinner, trying to make sense of another long-winded recipe in French, when a message lit up my screen. Rick Hummer, the man who'd served as Masters of Ceremony at the Flat Earth International Conferences, had said Patricia Steere was *willing to talk*. More specifically, she wanted to talk *with me*.

But I didn't have her number, I said.

She told me to give it to you.

Wait, Patricia Steere said *me* specifically?

CALL HER NOW, BRO.

Dinner was critically panned by a family of food critiques, who had made a point of highlighting my French to English measurement *miscalculations*—*macaroni* and cheese. How could this go any worse? So I positioned myself comfortably behind my computer screen, soon-as-unhappy faces had finished scouring over their dinner plates, and set up the microphone, just as I'd so often practiced in my own imagination. And then, with a heavy *sigh*, I told myself, "It's now or never, *bro*."

2

"ROB SKIBA IS THE DEVIL," my friend said.

Bunyan.

For the remainder of this book, that's what we shall call him—Bunyan (though I don't really suspect he'll come into it often). And if I

were to dial *him* up on the phone, *the devil* that is; then our friendship, Bunyan's and mine, would come to an abrupt and immediate end. No more late night doctrinal discussions bleeding our intellectual inquiries into one speaker and out the other receiver while sipping on coffee, reciting the apostolic fathers, reciting Scripture verses. Rob Skiba may have been a flat earthist, just as Bunyan and I were, but that was non-circumstantial evidence at best. Rob Skiba enticed reprobate minds, and I had listened in to the tune of the Pied Piper. GOODBYE. I was cooking dinner over the stove, parmesan chicken with Brussel sprouts, when he inscribed his warning in a private message, and my fingers shook. It wasn't the first time I'd heard Bunyan describe Skiba in such dastardly terms, and so I knew he was serious.

Then again, Bunyan wasn't the only one.

Rob Skiba *clearly* hasn't read Scripture for himself, *they say*. Rob Skiba is an ambulance chaser, a legalist in pursuit of foolish genealogies, *they say*. Rob Skiba is a Judaizer, *they say*. Rob Skiba is so spiritual weak as to toil and sweat and grasp at the straws of a works based salvation, *they say*. Rob Skiba has fallen from grace, *they say*. And another thing *they say*, Rob Skiba is bewitched.

Or in slightly other terms, Rob Skiba is the devil.

Essentially, Rob Skiba's crime was **Torah observance**, a breach of new covenant in which Deputy Darby and the dispensation police would gladly arrest him over. For this reason alone I adhered to the warnings of his detractors and, despite the *shape* of the world, purposed to keep our distance from the *shape* of his humanity—in fact as far away from Rob Skiba as possible.

There was however only one complication.

A year earlier, soon after the first International Flat Earth Conference in Raleigh, mind you, I was contacted by several *separate* individuals, all of whom had hoped to enlist me in hampering the pervasive pestilence of **Torah observance** by disproving the claims of its adherents. *Stop these devils*. This would be easily done, I told them. After all, wasn't the Law a curse? Wasn't it nailed to the cross? Haven't they fallen from grace? Are they not bewitched? I agreed, and told them I'd commit myself to a write-up, an entire book if I had to, on Paul's claim to fame—his first epistle, Galatians—using simple, concise logic.

And so I opened up Galatians and began reading.

The circumcision issue became an immediate splinter in my mind. By insisting that his Gentile converts not be circumcised by the Pharisees, hadn't Paul disposed of the Law? Weren't we living in the age of grace, Rob Skiba? Hadn't these **Torah observers** read the New Testament for themselves?

Apparently not.

An entire calendar year passed, and people began to wonder—why isn't Noel writing against the **Torah observers**? It wasn't for lack of dedication. I simply couldn't stop turning the issue over and over and over again, like an unsolved crime investigation from centuries-past. Did Paul throw out the Law, or didn't he? Hasn't two-thousand years of church fathers settled the issue? I was always spoon-fed, from the time I could talk, that the Apostle was indeed selected by God to dismantle the Law, and we weren't to question that. His circumcision argument was proof enough, was it not? And then one day I was speaking with Bunyan on the phone, desperately trying to close the case in our favor, and it silently occurred to me—what if circumcision was *never* about salvation?

I had only spoken with one or two **Torah observant** individuals before, and for once, I wanted to understand their position. The poet laureate Billy Collins once told me there's essentially only two kinds of people in the world—poets and writers. A poet, he said, sits by the window gazing out, inviting the whole world to look in, while a writer stands outside; eagerly peeping in upon the poets and other sad-sap souls with open curtain policies, in hopes of understanding them. For the most part I am a writer, and so naturally, I thought about Rob Skiba's window.

I wanted to peep in. After all, Rob Skiba is an author and YouTuber. His shades *aren't* drawn. And I let Bunyan know about it.

Bunyan did not approve.

So there I was, having listened in to the tune of the Pied Piper—standing now over the kitchen stove, fingers trembling. *It's been nice talking with you.* GOODBYE. I considered my options. Like, maybe I'd delete Rob Skiba from my contacts and then finally get around to writing that scathing paper on **Torah observers**, using Galatians as my guide. Perhaps my confidence with Bunyan wasn't completely lost. But the thing is—he'd already inferred it. Bunyan had already insinuated our wondrous

conversations meant so little to him as to completely scrub them off his intellectual frying pan. He was willing, and had threatened in no uncertain terms, to end our relationship cold turkey *if* I simply called him up on the phone.

I was brokenhearted. Rob Skiba's *flat earth* had already cost me too many friendships. Those dominoes would surely continue to fall. But I still had questions.

The existentialist Kierkegaard once wrote, "There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what *isn't* true; the other is to refuse to believe what *is* true." In February of 2019 I picked up the phone and dialed Rob, wondering if I were *either* of the Danish philosopher's fools.

3

THERE'S A SAYING AMONG THE PREACHERS OF OLD. Come Monday morning—or rather, come *every* Monday morning, they begin writing their resignation letter.

Not too long ago I had this lucid dream. I dreamt I cut the umbilical cord that kept me attached to the computerized world—this media saturated augmented false-reality which we are ceremoniously indoctrinated into believing—and then dove into a pool. From underneath the shadow of swaying palms I gazed up at the sunlit world, listening to the aroma of music as it penetrated into the chlorine blue, like the muffle from a seashell; pretending like all of *this*—my bizarre interim with the *Truther* Movement—never happened. Come Monday morning, *every* Monday morning, I sit and relish in that dream. I often contemplate what that moment will be like, *after* I pull the plug, *after* I dive head-first in the pool and then float within the watery underworld watching the bubbles rise past my eyes. Just holding my breath, numbering the bubbles, feeling the sensational touch of water as it shrouds every arching curve of my body, waiting to be *left behind* from the times I find myself in the world above.

Come Monday morning, I think about that moment when I finally climb out of the pool and the sun kisses my skin.

But that's only the first part of my dream.

When I finally decided to come out in support of Hebrew cosmology some years ago, the burlesque rebuttals were almost immediate. I was making a mockery of the Gospel, they said. I had become reprobate, they said. I'd never experienced anything like that before. I'd never experienced so many eyes pressed upon me—brothers and sisters in the faith whom I had thought were dear friends, whom I'd broken bread with, and prayed with, gnashing their intellectual teeth and salivating. The fallout was ugly. There are people whom I will likely *never* speak with again.

There was a senior pastor and his wife—they run a rather large church in central California—the two of them followed me around on social media simply to hate-watch. I don't know if they were sitting on the couch together, thumbing at their phones, or sitting in separate rooms clapping away on their computers, but they would simultaneously track me down hoping to publicly shame what I was hoping to point people to in the Bible. I'll never forget, he actually told me, and I quote:

“Tears are flowing from Yah's throne *because* of you.”

Excuse my description, because I don't know what else to call their behavior other than psychological masturbation. They were pleasuring themselves. It was just sick and disgusting, and slimy, coming from their spiritual pay grade.

Coming out, and publicly writing about it, *day after day*—that was a difficult time.

My best friend, we attended the same high school together (as did my wife); we joined the army at the same time; we served and led ministries together. He was my best friend. I loved him dearly. We did almost everything together. We were practically attached at the hip—he and I. We would sit around smoking cigars and sipping Scotch late into the night discussing *anything* on the table, from conspiracy talk to theology. You know—the furthest pastures of Biblical inquiry. We weren't afraid to go there and look into it. So he *also* looked into it, the flat earth that is—soon after I threw my weight behind it. It certainly interested him. He was intrigued. I had actually hoped, I really believed for a time that he'd come on-board, that we could take this venture together. And for specific reasons he couldn't, or rather, he chose not to follow along on the pilgrim's journey. He just couldn't take that path. And so I started along on my own. About that time the fallout happened. Please understand, there never was an argument between us, though I'm certain I said some

hurtful words, but I think it became abundantly clear that he could no longer be associated with me *because* of my views. The irony here is that he seemed to privately hold to my own convictions. The Biblical flat earth excited him.

I think we all understand that this isn't really a debate about the shape of the earth, but *where* we see ourselves in the world, and more importantly, *how* we view the world—the shape of humanity. All things considered, I think our continued friendship became an insurance issue. He was in the process of becoming the pastor of the very church my wife and I had fled from.

Fact of the matter is I miss him.

There's such a void in my life—recalling all the faces lost. It sometimes feels as though I've left a trail of breadcrumbs, hoping they might catch up. But in reality those crumbs were bits and pieces of me. I think of the fallout—people whom I once broke bread, the meaty discussions we held over God's Word, and then the venomous reaction after my coming out about Hebrew Cosmology.

I don't hold it against them.

I'm on this pilgrimage journey now—my wife and I together—desperately seeking out the Celestial City, like a narrative from *Pilgrim's Progress*, and should any one of them race along to our side again, I will most certainly embrace them.

I guess I forgot to tell you about the second part of my dream.

Essentially, it goes something like this. I climb out of the pool and then turn on the television. Perhaps it's not an actual television—but far more likely the furniture which fills the memories of my mind. But it's all there on the flickering screen—the alpha waves which serves as the witch doctor's potion, and the grand-scaled psycho-drama which drowns the whole world in the spells of their electronic programming.

I see a demolition of towers while Isis, the queen of heaven, looks on. I see a field and a pentagon-shaped building without plane wreckage. I see the death camps. I see murdered children who sing before millions of televised audiences; crisis actors who have a habit of getting cast in various mass shooting events. I see trails of chemicals vandalizing the skies over *the bread and circuses* of sporting arenas to mock the very citizens who never care to look up. I see people lining the pharmaceutical aisles to

receive their annual poison. I see our worshiped celebrities and the very world leaders we vote for and place our confidence in throw up their allegiance to Satan before our very eyes. I see astronauts on wires, the green screen of space, moon props, flat horizons, motionless skies—I see an entire earth covered by the surface of water. I see the wave of the hand—the pigeon in the sleeve. I see the stage, the performance, and the script. I see my friends and loved ones mourning for phantoms. I see the Zionist conquest of the world. I see the Mystery religion as a corpse exhumed. I see the damnable lie of the ages fleshed out in our conversation. I see Protestants shaking hands with Jesuits; pastors spoon-feeding a gospel of lawlessness and relishing in the fact that the appointed times of changed, specifically their own part in it; generations of men forsaking Sabbath worship; entire congregations openly worshiping a counterfeit spirit; the filth of Platonism bleeding from our doctrine; and the signposts ahead suggest we're closer to Rome than ever.

I see what so many of you see.

And I'm tired. I'm sick of it. I am weary of the satanic media's groundbreaking news story being that I am fake news. And yet, there are things I've seen—what so many of us have seen—that simply cannot be forgotten.

I gaze into the pages of God's Word, like so many of you do, and come every Monday morning see what very few are *willing* to see. And yet, it's all there. Mystery Babylon and spiritual Egypt surrounds us.

It's a Tuesday morning, January of 2019, and I sit in the office of the senior pastor in Charleston, South Carolina—yet another church my family has been visiting. It has become routine for me to schedule a private meeting with the pastor rather early on. Before investing our time in any congregation, I feel it's best to expound upon my beliefs and let the things I've *seen* be known, just so that there are no surprises—let the pastor kick us out early, if need be. And so I told him some of what I've seen—only short clips and frames, really. But where do you really begin? Where is the starting line? Do we tell them about the 9/11 demolition or the moon landing lie? Or do we go much further back, thousands of years even, to the very first lie—do we go to the garden and begin from scratch?

He had already looked me up online. He knew all about me. Come Monday morning, I had contemplated pulling the name Noel J Hadley

offline. I considered sending in my resignation letter to the world. He looked me up on a Monday, and *refused* to believe any of it.

I was one of *them*.

The senior pastor examined me square in the eyes and asked: If I was to continue in his congregation, could I set that part of me aside? He wanted to know if I could divide my soul. When I dress myself in a tie and coat come Sunday morning, could I leave the part of me who wishes to help people *see* the great delusion in the closet? Could I not be *weird* about the world around me, he said. Could I just accept the official narrative? Could I be—*normal*?

He looked at me, unblinking, as I considered his offer of friendship.

I thought about my dream of the pool. I remembered the saying among preachers of old. I thought about the Prophet Jeremiah, who warned Judah of the Babylonians; who pleaded with them to cast out their idols; whose entire ministry was defined by tears. I thought about Jeremiah after he was taken into custody, a prison cell which was, rather ironically, adjacent to Jerusalem's Temple.

It must have been Monday morning in prison, because the Prophet wrote:

I have become a laughingstock all day long;
Everyone mocks me.
For each time I speak, I cry aloud;
I proclaim violence and destruction,
Because for me the word of [YHWH] has resulted
In reproach and derision all day long.
(Jeremiah 20:7-8)

It must have been Monday morning, because the Prophet sent in his resignation. To this effect he wrote: "Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more of His Name.'" But then Monday evening rolled around, as it *often* does, and after careful, though tormented contemplation, the lonely man of God concluded:

Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;

And I am weary of holding it in,

And I cannot endure it.

The senior pastor seemed to stand outside of time as he stared me down, unblinking—waiting upon my answer.

I thought about my friends whom I broke bread with; who snarled their self-righteous teeth. I don't hold it against them. I miss them dearly.

I had hoped to hide the weariness, the unending loneliness in a world numbed by the spell of grand wizards, and I considered my beautiful dream of the pool. But this was a Tuesday morning, *after* I had declined sending in the resignation letter, and so I said: “What I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have read about, the reality of the days we live in, is something I simply cannot look away from. Its wardrobe is as much a part of me as His words are planted in my heart.”

I walked out of his office and down the hall and then finally out of the building containing a steeple which resembles an obelisk (I've seen that too); the very sort of building that contains so much of everything I'd ever known. I was sick of the lies. And quite contrary to a carefree swim, I did what I never in my wildest of lucid dreams imagined possible.

For the love of [YHWH] YAHUAH, THE MOST-HIGH ELOHIM, and His Son, Yahusha, Savior of the World, I left church behind for good. If it wasn't for that phone call with Skiba, then this book—I'm quite certain of it—never would have happened.

ACTUALLY, THE WOMAN WHO ANSWERED hadn't a clue as to *who* I was, despite the fact that she'd agreed to be interviewed regarding the circumstances leading up to her departure. And to make matters even more awkward, I'd interrupted her during a shower. Our conversation came solely based on Hummer's recommendation, and in fact I thought she may have been disappointed to hear that I'd actually gone through with it—or she was expecting someone else. We hung up so that Patricia could better prepare herself, but when she answered again half an hour later, and perhaps it's simply my own insecurities talking, I still believe she was hoping for *somebody* else. My second introduction was sloppier than the first. The woman on the other end of the phone was *deeply* hurt, and I fumbled around a bit, not at all as I'd practiced, while Patricia likely decided if she wanted to hang up.

I finally managed to course correct my terribly awkward introduction, though dinner was not salvageable, and said, “You probably don't remember who I am, but we actually met once, almost two years ago.”

“Remind me again,” she said.

Our initial introduction would happen *explicitly*, and might I add, quite *appropriately*, considering the subject matter at hand, through an online picture—one which I sloppily captured on my cell phone. The image will testify to the fact that the photographer was sitting in the second row of the first annual Flat Earth Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, directly behind personalities Patricia Steere and Mark Sargent while Jeran Campanella spoke onstage. A story which it simply cannot vouch for is the electricity of excitement filling the room. I wanted to capture *that moment* any way I could. And so I snapped a photo of the back of Mark Sargent and Patricia's Steere's head, and then immediately uploaded it onto Facebook.

Patricia Steere just so happened to be scrolling through her Facebook news feed, by which she and I were *friends*. Apparently, another Facebook *friend*, if any of us can ever really call each other that, had rudely suggested that I reach forward and pull her wig. It would take Patricia to let me in on it.

Patricia laughed with delight over the phone as I described our first encounter, perhaps as a sort of remedy to the pain she was currently attempting to heal from.

“I *remember* that,” she smiled.

She even recalled precisely what she *said*, a quip which can best be described as a simultaneous and trademark blend of funny and scathing, the very moment she turned around, quite abruptly, and I sunk into my chair.

“Go ahead and pull it. It’s all natural.”

Though it is true that I had Patricia laughing now, her fullest confidences in *how* I might take her own confessions and spin them on paper had certainly not yet been earned. The woman on the other end of the phone was *deeply* hurt. There was no question in my mind about that. And over the next two, nearly three hours, I was about to learn why.

Her story has been told a hundred times and in another thousand varieties, though the sad fact of the matter is Patricia Steere, I would come to learn, has had very little to no part in its telling. There are so many voices detailing the secret compartments of her life that likely no two accusers, if taking the witness stand separately, could agree. And yet Patricia Steere’s narrative, as told by Patricia Steere, will likely not be welcomed by *many* in the very Movement which bears “Truther” in its name.

Though her tormentors were more than willing to lend their voice, what remains of her friends, for the most part, *initially* chose silence rather than continue the public torment which Patricia has long endured. While committing myself to the integrity of her story, I had been dutifully warned: *You can’t print that; or, Patricia is missed but she left us. Why exhume a rotting corpse?* Controversy surrounds us. And yet, in one despairing, albeit brief moment, when I contemplated throwing everything Patricia and I had spoken about into the flames, I thought not only about Patricia, but the next Patricia to come, and then not so long over the horizon, yet another foreseeable Patricia. And I asked myself, how many must be sent as a sacrifice to the chopping blocks before somebody—*anybody* stands up on their own two feet, to face the slanderers and the psychopaths?

On the entire 700 kilometers drive from the Dordogne Valley to the French-Swiss Alps, where my family would be living for the following

month, my wife was rummaging over my personal notes and scribbles regarding Patricia Steere, which I had only then begun to jot down into legible sentences. Telling her story has been incredibly difficult as a husband and a father, having to focus in on the nefarious thoughts and fantasies of countless slanders and intellectual gropers—too many to number—and then rummaging tirelessly through their moral depravity day and night, even while I slept, in an attempt to uncover the right words. My wife has become somewhat of a co-writer as of late. Whether stopping for gas or eating a sandwich over lunch, we continually digested the psychological profile of Patricia Steere’s tormentors and the community at large, because that’s what this is really about. It’s not really about Patricia, *though* her story is told. It is, rather astonishingly, about our own journey of discovery and faith, of love and repentance, and not only forgiveness, but the desire to be *forgiven*.

The Swiss Alps were within our grasp when, quite suddenly, she summed up *everything*, the entire theme of this book and the article which it is based upon, in one single sentence.

She quoted from Scripture.

“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

Matthew 12:34

Before publishing the article which would, in turn, become a book—this very book which you hold now in your hand, Patricia and I worked through the night to finish it. I had locked myself up in a 16th century tower, once commissioned by King Louis XIV, with a breathtaking view of the Swiss border, in order to polish off a 30,000 word article based on our interviews, and had barely slept in several days. I was mentally exhausted. The physicality of it had taken its toll, and I could barely even read my own words. Regardless, we spoke on the phone. We conversed about sin and salvation and other spiritual matters. And then at one point she asked, “Are you having self-doubts?”

“Yes,” I confessed. “But not about releasing *this*.”

“You’ll be hated for doing it,” she said.

“I’m not afraid,” I said.

Then what are you having self-doubts about, she wanted to know.

I told her.

At long last I had stumbled upon a fiction which is so desperately preferred among the emissaries of an idea which I hold dear, whereas the moral depravity of one's imagination has become the soap box and the crutch—that it has caused me to ask deep philosophical questions and re-think my own part in the flat earth Movement. Indeed, like Patricia, I too have dreamt up the day when the plug is pulled and I can simply walk away from it all.

I've been to the end of the river and evil has a name.

They call him Apathy.

5

THE WINNER OF THE SPACE RACE would reach the moon first, but its outcome was still undetermined when Patricia Lynne Steere was born on earth. The date was February 5, 1963—the place, Spokane Washington. She was the last of the baby boomers. By 1963, Sputnik 1 was almost a decade-old memory. Even American John Glenn's historic orbit onboard Friendship 7, which transpired one year earlier, was likely wearing out the newsreel as the Soviet Union turned its attention to Valentina Tereshkova, launching the first woman into space on board Vostok 6. NASA would follow suit with the first geosynchronous satellite. On November 22 of that very year, while Patricia was not yet ten months old, President Kennedy rode through Dallas, Texas, right past the Book Depository, in a custom designed Lincoln Continental convertible, the results of which only seemed to secure America's foothold in a war with southeastern Asia, in cities and villages which very few Americans could nor cared to pronounce. By the time the Vietnam conflict came to an end, she was twelve years old. And yet it would take another several decades before Patricia Steere could gaze back upon the international broadcasts of that decade, among others still to come, and question *everything*.

The Beatles would of course invade America precisely twelve months after her birth. In hindsight it would perhaps appear perfectly timed that Howard Steere, Patricia's grandfather, retired as a radio station owner year

after their arrival. Her father was an only child, a radio DJ in Spokane, but David and Judith Steere, along with their daughter, the eldest of three children, would find themselves back in Kalamazoo in order that he might take over the station. In time he would own several more.

Her mother Judith was Jewish and of New York pedigree. Her father was a Presbyterian from Ohio. It was the fifties, and since neither parent were strongly swayed by the convictions which their faiths hoped to hold, her mother converted to Christianity when they wed. And her family *apparently* didn't mind. Patricia and her siblings were baptized in that same line of thinking. Together they attended Sunday school, celebrated Easter and Christmas, none of which seemed to have a profound effect on anyone, including her mother's disclosure regarding their Jewish roots at the age of nine or ten, when she told them what it meant to be Jewish and then took them to a temple. Looking back on it all, her upbringing was not one which was deeply religious. That is not to say however it was void of religion altogether. If the Steere family *held* to any one religion, it was likely radio. And because of that, money was never far away.

"Both of my parents were intellectually minded," Patricia recalled.

That did have a defining effect on her. She once asked why the sky was blue.

Judith Steere simply responded: "Look it up."

And Patricia Steere knew what she meant by it. Their well-to-do house included a library; a room, she described, which was filled with *tons of books*. "She'd make us walk over to the dictionary in the library, which was on one of those mounts like you'd see in churches, opened up all the time—a podium, I guess. And we'd have to go look it up, whatever it was, and read it out loud."

Her studies would lead to the natural sort of conclusions which the Cold War and its resulting counterpart, the space race, not to mention the shock and awe that was rock n' roll, seemed to promote. Growing up, Patricia was what one might describe an evolutionary agnostic. "I never really thought about God," she confessed. As a child "I'd pick up the family Bible and read Revelation because I was young and I had no idea what it was saying, but it was scary."

Life however was good for the Steere family. Despite moving around variously throughout western Michigan, they soon found the residence at Gull Lake, nestled directly upon the golf course and a stone's throw from the Gull Lake Country Club, worth hanging their hats in. Patricia recalls her mother Judith socializing with the ladies, playing golf, paddle tennis and bridge, while her father stuck mostly to golf. It was charity however which filled most of her mother's concerns. Judith Steere eventually earned a Master's degree in social work sometime in the 1970's and took work as a counselor, where she "helped abused and runaway children."

After their divorce, Judith took her three children to be near her mother in Florida, while David remained in Michigan. Patricia would attend the bulk of her high school education in Cooper City, Florida, neatly wedged between Fort Lauderdale and Everglades National Park. It was a union however which would soon be restored. David and Judith remarried. Patricia finished her grade school career at Loy Norrix High School in Kalamazoo, class of 1981.

As a young woman, Patricia found herself taking up the family business, working first as a part time DJ at her father's radio station. "I ended up doing the morning news," she said, "then afternoon's full time." Upon learning that he too would be retiring, Patricia decided to venture elsewhere into radio on her own. "I ended up getting a DJ job in Turlock, California. I wanted to be in California but not in a town like that. It was a start though, and I stayed in radio full time until the late nineties."

"What discouraged Patricia about California," her friend Chris Van Matre recalled, "it got to the point where they would record the commercials or whatever they wanted for the show, and all she'd do is push buttons."

Her radio career would come to an end in New Orleans.

"It was a good upbringing," she concluded. Despite a short interim, "I had parents who remained together until the end—a model of love." Their common accord is something that she aspired for her own life. "My father told me a long time ago, *whatever* you do, *when* you do it, if it was on the front page of the newspaper, be certain that you'd be fine with it."

Years later, Patricia would return to broadcasting. She had discovered a *community*, quite unexpectedly, where her skills could once more be applied. But this time it was different. This time she had stumbled upon something much larger than herself. The shape of the Cold War and the

space race, and in fact the earth itself which hoped to contain it, had changed. Her father's advice, however, would not. After all, it was very *good* advice—given the proper application.

And Patricia Steere hoped to follow it to the letter.

6

BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF, because ten days earlier I'd set up my microphone in the underground wine cellar of a medieval village in south-western France, having never held a conversation with the woman who had only recently stepped out of the shower. In time, the story that she told that night would have such a profound effect on the very community which I too, like Patricia, had clamped to my heart, that dozens of additional voices would ask to contribute.

Bob Knodel would ask to contribute. Chris Van Matre would ask to contribute. David Weiss and Paul Lindberg, Karen B and Shelley Lewis, Zen Garcia and Laurel Austin, Chris and Liz Bailey, Mark Sargent, Robbie Davidson, Rob Skiba, and Rick Hummer all agreed to be a part of the telling. It is a story so large and told by so many players that the book which you now hold in your hands, *The Unexpected Cosmology*, is not nearly the whole of it, but the beginning of the tale. The following narrative is therefore not only Patricia's, nor is it simply my own. It is the testimony of the very *community* which she and so many others had *dreamt* of establishing.

"I told myself I wouldn't do this," Patricia seemed to bemoan our initial conversation with a sigh.

And then, for better or worse, she began to tell me about it.

In fact, *they all did*.

PART TWO

THE UNEXPECTED COSMOLOGY

THE LAST ICONOCLAST

1

SAMUEL SHENTON WAS DEAD. It was 1972, and as the crew of the Apollo 17 readied to photograph the Blue Marble on NASA's final moon mission, Lillian was faced with the prospect of *what to do* with her late husband's work. Stacks of books and papers and boxes, undoubtedly chaotic with correspondences, remained. Without Shenton—or rather, without *another* Shenton to fill his shoes; nobody seemed to have any hope of knowing the *true* shape of the earth they were standing on. The IFERS had dwindled to a handful of members, and not even its own president, Ellis Hillman, a Greater London council member, believed the earth to be flat. For Hillman, *ancient* cosmology was merely an interesting idea, something he might even go on talking about in his spare time. And besides, he'd read all about Zetetic astronomy in the British Library. Lack of enthusiasm aside, he alone was Shenton's natural successor—*this*, according to Hillman. Despite the ridicule which Shenton was forced to endure, the politician had nuzzled up to him and served faithfully at his side. Therefore, nobody else had a right to his lifetime collection of work but him.

Halfway across the face of the earth, in San Francisco, California, a certain forty-eight year-old Charles Johnson, who had corresponded with Shenton for nearly a decade and remained an enthusiastic IFERS member in doing so, hoped to relieve Lillian of the burden. Despite not being a sign maker, as Shenton was, he felt a nudge, a prod, a higher calling to Shenton's *public* profession. Johnson contended that Hillman exhibited a lack of conviction—and rightly so. Hillman was also president of the Lewis Carroll Society, re-established in 1969. As an advocate for Carroll's legacy, Hillman would give amusing lectures on the flat earth concept, perhaps as a way to combine his newfound whimsical nonsense humor, as though Wonderland and Shenton's earth were confused. It is an activity however, perhaps more of a side hobby, which the politician would not bother himself with more than twice a year, despite frequent requests.

In a stunning move, Ellis Hillman borrowed a van, showed up at Lillian's Dover house, and transported the bulk of Shenton's papers,

whatever he could get his hands on (and apparently for her convenience), to the archive department of the North East London Polytechnic. He would later claim that he had arrived precisely in time to prevent Shenton's widow from disposing of his work in a rubbish bin outside of their home.

Crisis diverted.

Adding insult to injury, Shenton's papers were thereafter secluded for safekeeping in cardboard boxes, shipped to the archives of the Science Fiction Foundation in Barking, a district and suburban area of East London—which, no surprise, Hillman had also helped to found.

To his dying day in 1996, Hillman *insisted* that the flat earthist Charles Johnson, whom he'd plotted to wrestle Shenton's legacy from, was a serious *nutter*.

2

GIVEN ENOUGH TIME, ALMOST ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE. It was 1785, and the Enlightenment was not yet through, because Englishman James Hutton had one more treatise to contribute to its garbage heap of humanism. With *Theory of the Earth*, the age of creation became an issue of antiquity. History would no longer exemplify a six-thousand years old narrative—*ob no*. Quite suddenly, there were millions of years which needed accounting for. We should not be surprised to find that the high critics of academia met Hutton's treatise with thunderous applaud. Hutton disfavored the Bible. And like most behemoth lies, he had peppered his theory in such a way as to make his observations seem strictly based on scientific knowledge rather than philosophical speculation. From the pulpit to the pews, panic ensued. The church had only recently forsaken the pleas of Martin Luther and settled into the Copernican Revolution—which he *outright* opposed—in hopes of harmonizing faith with higher criticism. Once again, Christianity was no longer immutable. Something else had to give. You know what they say. "The road to hell is paved with good intention." Good intention and *compromises*.

Less than a decade earlier, French cosmologist and naturalist Comte de Buffon had already attempted to lift Science from the hinges of Biblical

authority with his publication of *Les époques de la nature* in 1778. Before the 19th-century, Christians universally ascribed to a 6,000 year-old creation and a catastrophic flood, which not only gave the earth's features its observable contour, but preserved the totality of God's created order. Buffon's theory of extinction fell on deaf ears. So too did his imaginative storytelling, which employed the new physics of Newton as his springboard and sought to hypothesize how matter in motion might have formed the earth. "The father of all thought in natural history" accredited the planets of the Copernican Universe as having been created by a comet's catastrophic collision with the sun.

The snubbing he received, one might conjecture, can best be attributed to the fact that a war was presently being waged over the New World. And besides, Buffon was not loved by Americans. After propounding a theory that the New World and its inhabitants, including plants and animals, were inferior to Eurasia in all facets, going so far as to accredit its inferiority to "marsh odors," an incensed Thomas Jefferson dispatched twenty soldiers to New Hampshire with explicit orders to capture a bull moose as proof of the "stature and majesty of American quadrupeds." Buffon later admitted his error. Unfortunately, an even grosser transgression was committed. His comet theory, which posited the age of the earth to be 75,000 years old, was based on calculated figures which projected the cooling rate of iron. His attempt was a success—*somewhat*. Though the comet theory itself was not admitted, the age-old Universe which accommodated the error remained. Science was determined to come up with something—prove anything—which might give credence to their undeveloped religion.

French naturalist and zoologist George Cuvier came to Buffon's rescue. As the "founding father of paleontology," Cuvier was praised for his capability to work with a few bone fragments and reconstruct the complete anatomy of previously unknown species "with uncanny accuracy"—a practice which paleontologists would quickly make a habit of. While studying elephant fossils discovered near Paris, Cuvier demonstrated that their bones could not be paired up with their living African and Asian counterparts. They were provably distinct even from fossils in Siberia. In 1789 Cuvier published a treatise detailing the differences between the lower jaws of a mammoth and an Indian elephant. When a counter theory was proposed, that living members of these fossils still lurked somewhere on Earth, unrecognized, Cuvier scoffed. Extinction *happened*. For the Christian, this was a nagging

problem which seemed to plague God of His divine plan. The saving faith may still have held the higher ground, culturally speaking, but its gates were being battered down. If Science was winning the war, it's only because most combatants wanted favor with the mob. And besides, compromise is the cheapest lawyer.

Christianity's *unfulfilled* need, particularly her acknowledgement from higher criticism, is indeed unfortunate. In the most merciful of death blows, Cuvier threw them a bone. He suggested that there may have been a series of great floods throughout the undocumented and ever-elongated epochs of antiquity which wiped out any possible number of civilizations and species—all of which happened before the creation described in Genesis 1:1. In part, the church could keep to their 6,000-year theology, while simultaneously new doctrines were born.

Before Cuvier there is no historical record of a Christian anywhere advocating an age-old approach to creation. Famed theologian Thomas Chalmers, founder of the Free Church of Scotland, took it upon himself to save the church from spectacle. "One has only to read the writings of this man to understand how acutely he felt the attacks of science, and geology in particular, upon the Scriptures," writes Weston Fields in *Unformed and Unfilled* (1976). He was "part of the age during which men were breaking loose from and thrusting aside what they felt had been the shackles of the Scriptures, and were placing all their hopes in the new science and its "assured" results. It is not without significance that Chalmers deemed it necessary to harmonize the Scriptures and science in order to save Christianity from the onslaught of atheism!"

During a sermon to his congregation in 1804, Thomas Chalmers brought the Gap Theory into being. According to Chalmers; the world existing between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 was destroyed before its recreation in the six literal days described by Moses. With Science as their framework, they bought it. His views reached an even wider audience ten years later when in 1814 he wrote a review of Cuvier's theory. Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, the Christian now had any number of years—billions if need be—in which he could agree to the fantastical pre-recorded fantasies of the Science religion. God apparently had more savory dishes to offer humanity through Natural Revelation.

Chalmers later wrote of Genesis 1:1: "My own opinion, as published in 1814, is that it forms no part of the first day— but refers to a period of indefinite antiquity when God created the worlds out of nothing. The

commencement of the first day's work I hold to be the moving of God's Spirit upon the face of the waters. We can allow geology the amplest time . . . without infringing even on the literalities of the Mosaic record. . . ."

With *Earth's Earliest Ages*, first published in 1884, G. H. Pember perhaps best outlined Gap thinking, and certainly attempted to qualify it, when he wrote: "It is thus clear that the second verse of Genesis describes the earth as a ruin; but there is no hint of the time which elapsed between creation and this ruin. Age after age may have rolled away, and it was probably during their course that the strata of the earth's crust were gradually developed. Hence we see that geological attacks upon the Scriptures are altogether wide of the mark, are a mere beating of the air. There is room for any length of time between the first and second verses of the Bible. And again; since we have no inspired account of the geological formations, we are at liberty to believe that they were developed just in the order in which we find them. The whole process took place in pre-adamite times, in connection, perhaps, with another race of beings, and, consequently, does not at present concern us."

It was a happy ending—sort of. *Well*, not really.

One compromise gave way to another accommodation, and yet another... and another... and another. By the 1820s, Reverend John Fleming argued for a Noachian deluge which was perhaps not quite so catastrophic as Moses records, and in the decade to follow the evangelical Congregationalist theologian John Pye Smith advocated a local creation account and quite similarly a local flood, both of which occurred in Mesopotamia. Anglican clergyman and Oxford geometry professor Baden Powell went even further. He argued that Genesis was a myth simply intended to convey theological and moral truths. Hugh Miller, a prominent Scottish geologist and evangelical friend of Chalmers, abandoned his friend's gap theory in favor of the day-age theory, which dismissed a week-long creation for days which represented entire ages. Miller came to this conclusion and shortly thereafter committed suicide.

Charles Lyell made Hutton's contempt for the Bible look elementary in comparison. As a contemporary of Thomas Chalmers and a man "of superior talent who thought" *for himself* and was "not blinded by (Scriptural) authority," Lyell's soaring ambition was to "free the sciences from Moses." With *Principles of Geology*, first published in 1830, he did just that. Throughout its indignant pages Lyell refers to Scripture as "false conclusions... futile reasoning... founded on religious prejudices...

ancient doctrines sanctioned by the implicit faith of many generations, and supposed to rest on scriptural authority.” Basing his work in part on Hutton, Buffon, and Cuvier, Lyell imagined other possibilities. He suggested the best way to account for the age of the Earth was through present observable processes in topography, a process which, he said, had been building very gradually at the same rate over vast amounts of time. He then divided stratum into layers and assigned each one an increasingly-deepening age. The ever-expanding chapters of pre-recorded history finally had names, so that on top of the Paleozoic and Mesozoic Ages is the Cenozoic—the spinning, whirling globe we currently stand upon.

Charles Lyell invented the geologic column.

Lyell’s creative storytelling became Scientific doctrine in 1830, long before carbon dating, potassium argon dating, and rubidium strontium dating could account for it. Then again, when carbon dating, potassium argon dating, and rubidium strontium dating were finally invented, Lyell not only dethroned Moses, as was his claim, but stood in the lawgivers place. How Lyell’s imaginations could be *so precise*, down to the fine print—we must conclude—could only come from Divine inspiration. But Lyell didn’t believe in that sort of thing.

Martin Luther was right. He once implored the brethren:

“We Christians must be different from the philosophers (scientists) in the way we think about the causes of these things. And if some are beyond our comprehension (like those before us concerning the waters above the heavens), we must believe them and admit our lack of knowledge rather than either wickedly deny them or presumptuously interpret them in conformity with our understanding.”

Little did Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers suspect that harmonization with *Natural Revelation* was about as complimentary with Christianity as the roof of a house is on fire. Ultimately, Chalmers served the very evil which he supposed to prevent. Indeed unfortunate—it was a wholly avoidable disaster. And yet in hindsight Weston Fields sympathetically writes: “he could not have realized the full implications of his position” when Chalmers wrote:

“Should, in particular, the explanation that we now offer be sustained, this would permit an indefinite scope to the

conjectures of geology—and without any undue liberty with the first chapter of Genesis.”

As it is with all great deceptions, man needs time—and more time. He needs time a-plenty if his perverse imaginations can coax his contemporaries away from the guiding light which only Scripture can provide in hopes of delivering *counter* promises. First the church knelt down to the astronomer—then the geologist—and finally the biologist. The set-up was perfectly executed. Charles Swindoll once said, “The swift wind of compromise is a lot more devastating than the sudden jolt of misfortune.” In actuality, all hell broke loose.

The church was ill-prepared for Mr. Charles Darwin.

3

CHARLES M. SHULZ REMEMBERED A TIME when the Earth was flat. Perhaps not very fondly—and I’ll explain why in a moment. But in the early decades of his monumental fifty-year run drawing *Peanuts* for the funnies, its memory certainly hadn’t escaped him. The evangelist Wilbur Glenn Voliva and his religious band of rebel-rouser flat earthists likely had a part to play. So successful were Voliva’s attacks on the space ball mythos, using the Testimony of the Holy Ghost as his platform (far better than any flat earth society ever did), that he even got critical-thinking writers like George Orwell, in his own newspaper column, to openly suggest the possibility. But that was *another* generation. They were not Schulz’s spokespersons. Whack-jobs like Voliva and the last remaining Biblical literalists who’d given him a podium had already faded into the oblivion of America’s Great Depression. Schulz was a veteran of the War. Under the flag of victory, the entire world’s landscape had been changed—including its outlook. His was the “space age.” And like so many of his generation, born into households of Christendom—including the baby-boomers whom they raised—Charles M. Schulz would die a secular humanist.

At the turn of the twentieth-century the gloves came off. Scientism went to Total War. For men like Voliva and William Jennings Bryan, theirs was a last ditch effort; and for anyone who decided to join them in the trenches by clinging to a literal interpretation of God’s Word, the

bombardments were nothing short of shock-and-awe. Western philosophy and secular humanism were pulverizing them. Bryan, a *globetrotting* gap theorist, but a creationist all the same, was unfairly beaten down by the main stream media simply for daring to oppose academia's *evolving* narrative in the Scopes Monkey Trial and taking the witness stand. Not long after, Voliva and his ministry succumbed to financial bankruptcy and controversy. By the 1950's, Bryan and Voliva were dead, and their last remaining loyal followers, who had dominated dinner-table conversations only two decades earlier, were few enough in number to be forgotten—or too old to be remembered.

It may be safe to say that the flat earth *Movement*, if such a term should be accredited with geocentricism, officially began nearly a century earlier when, in the summer of 1838, seven years *after* Charles Darwin set off with Captain Robert Fitzroy for the Galapagos Islands, the Englishman Samuel Rowbotham waded into the old Bedford Canal. With a telescope positioned 8 inches above its surface, Rowbotham watched a boat mounting a red flag positioned three feet above the water row unhindered from his view until it finally reached Welney Bridge—the approximate and total length of Bedford's six miles. A globular earth, Rowbotham maintained, should have buried the top of the mast 11 feet below his line of sight. Rowbotham repeated his experiments several times over the years. His observations would be published in 1849 and subsequently expanded into a book, *Earth Not a Globe*, in 1865. But once again, it arrived several years too late. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* landed on shelves five years earlier.

Rowbotham's results received little notice.

The year was 1870, and Zetetic supporter John Hampden, a Protestant rector's son and recent Oxford drop out, began publishing various tracts demanding that the Church of England be reformed "on strict Protestant lines" in order that Genesis might be defended with literal accuracy. Hampden's initial influence, William Carpenter, had been convinced that the earth was flat through one of Rowbotham's speeches. Carpenter's book, *Theoretical Astronomy Examined and Exposed*, had hoped to injure the growing scientific establishment rather than receive the intellectual snubbing that it did. Hampden therefore had an idea. He offered a wager that he could demonstrate, by repeating Rowbotham's experiment, that the earth was indeed flat. The January 12th issue of *Scientific Opinion*, a weekly journal, records Hampden's qualm.

“What is to be said of the pretended philosophy of the 19th century, when not one educated man in ten thousand knows the shape of the earth on which he dwells? Why, it must be a huge sham! The undersigned is willing to deposit from £50 to £500, on reciprocal terms, and defies all the philosophers, divines and scientific professors in the United Kingdom to prove the rotundity and revolution of the world from Scripture, from reason, or from fact. He will acknowledge that he has forfeited his deposit, if his opponent can exhibit, to the satisfaction of any intelligent referee, a convex railway, river, canal, or lake.”

—JOHN HAMPDEN

Alfred Russel Wallace read the ad. Wallace was best known for independently conceiving the theory of evolution through natural selection, even jointly publishing his own work alongside contemporary Charles Darwin, which in turn prompted Darwin to ultimately send *On the Origin of Species* to the ink printer. At any rate, the bait was dangled, and Wallace tugged on the line—but not before first consulting his friend, Sir Charles Lyell, inventor of the geological column, asking whether he thought the challenge should be broached.

Lyell replied: “Certainly. It may stop these foolish people to have it plainly shown them.”

Wallace accepted the wager.

Rather than simply positioning a mobile target three feet above the surface, as Hampden had intended, Wallace set a line of sight 13 feet high in order to reduce the effects of atmospheric refraction and then added a pole halfway down the six-mile canal in order that a “hump” could be detected on the curvature of the earth. Hampden initially refused the demonstration. Wallace however succeeded. He detected a hump. Evolution was spared. After the Darwinist was awarded the bet by their mediator, editor of *The Field* sports magazine, Hampden subsequently distributed a pamphlet alleging foul play. Wallace *had cheated*, he said. And to prove that point, Hampden took him to court.

Though the court ultimately ruled that the wager had been invalid to begin with, the flat earthist was imprisoned for libel and furthermore threatening to kill the Darwinian. Speaking of which, for his injudicious involvement in a bet to “decide the most fundamental and established of scientific facts,” Wallace was criticized by Darwin’s contemporaries to no

end. Until his dying days, the Bedford Level, Wallace maintained, was the foremost regret of his life.

He later wrote:

“The next matter was a much more serious one, and cost me fifteen years of continued worry, litigation, and persecution, with the final loss of several hundred pounds. And it was all brought upon me by my own ignorance and my own fault—ignorance of the fact so well shown by the late Professor de Morgan—that ‘*paradoxers*,’ as he termed them, can never be convinced, and my fault in wishing to get money by any kind of wager. It constitutes, therefore, the most regrettable incident in my life.”

Decades before Wallace’s involvement and even afterward, the Bedford Canal became a rallying cry of Biblical literalism, particularly in England. As the 19th century closed, Lady Elizabeth Anne Blount carried on Rowbotham’s work in founding the Universal Zetetic Society. Her wealth and social status allowed access to England’s social elite, and her *Earth Not a Globe Review*, which not only matched Scripture with scientific observation, further advocated vegetarianism and anti-vivisectionist views. On the 11th of May, 1904, Lady Blount revisited the Bedford Canal by hiring a commercial photographer and globe supporter in Edgar Clifton, with hopes of dashing Wallace’s evolutionary earth to pieces. To do so, Blount dropped a large white sheet at Rowbotham’s original starting position (some 70 years earlier) in order that the photographer, using a telephoto lens camera mounted two feet above the water, might capture its bottom edge from Welney Bridge, six miles away, which he did—spectacularly. He saw it all.

Clifton was stumped.

The Darwinists simply ignored the Zetetics.

Perhaps this is because Henry Yule Oldham, a senior academic in geography at King’s College, Cambridge, had already reproduced Wallace’s results in 1901 using three poles fixed at equal height above water level. So contemptuous were the Darwinists towards Rowbotham’s little Level experiment and John Hampden’s wager that Bedford was taught in schools as *proof* of the Earth’s curvature. For the following half century, until the space race could produce photos, generations of children were raised worldwide to learn that the earth was provably a

globe because the Darwinists had conquered the Copernican revolution by defeating flat earthists.

It was the perfect propaganda.

Elsewhere in the world, Ulysses Gran Morrow, a newspaper editor, replicated a similar experiment on the old Drainage Canal in Summit, Illinois. The date was July 25, 1896. In doing so, Morrow *also* attempted to prove the earth was spherical—but there was a catch. Morrow was sponsored by a man named Cyrus Reed Teed, an eclectic physician and alchemist who had by now claimed divine inspiration and a messianic anointing, furthermore taking the name Koresh. Together they hoped to prove the earth was concave.

Koresh called it *Koreshanity*.

Fundamentally, Koreshanity posited that the earth and sky, the sun, moon, and stars exist *inside* the surface of a sphere—essentially globe earth inverted. Though Koresh initially found some success in San Francisco, he eventually proposed a New Jerusalem in the 320 acre plot of Estero, Florida, 15 miles south of Fort Myers. His newfound paradise was incorporated on September 1, 1904. Like Jim Jones several decades after him, his followers came in droves.

Wilbur Glenn Voliva heard about it. In the suburbs of Chicago, Voliva wanted a New Jerusalem of his own.

By 1907, Alexander John Dowie, the man who called himself Elijah, was dead. Upon his request, Dowie's grave was filled with concrete, once his coffin was secured inside, in order to stave off any potential rumor that his body had been stolen—that is, in the event of *resurrection*, a rumor in which Dowie started. Was Wilbur Glenn Voliva concerned? Not likely. Despite once being billed as his most loyal follower, Voliva had successfully wrestled the grand Utopian vision from the theocrat who'd envisioned it, with a slanderous shock and awe press campaign to follow. Finally Dowie was gone forever—good riddance. Zion City was *his* now. One tyrant was traded in for another.

Meanwhile, back in Florida, Koresh's death in 1908 proved a serious bummer to his causes, particularly since the self-anointed Messiah claimed to be immortal.

Neither he nor Dowie resurrected.

Throughout the following four decades Voliva would successfully rule over one of the most reviled and yet simultaneously awe-inspiring churches *and communities* of the twentieth-century. The rigid rules and regulations enforced upon Zion's citizens became a legendary roadmap for Prohibition to come. It was there in Zion—the land of Dowie's grand design; that the flat earth movement would take its next grand stand. Though Voliva had one accused Dowie of “extravagance, hypocrisy, misrepresentations, exaggerations, misuse of investments, tyranny, and injustice” in order to douse his leadership credibility, by the end of the First World War, Voliva began painting himself in even broader strokes than Dowie by billing himself “The World's Richest Holy Man.”

The world took notice.

On Sunday, June 4, 1922, from a *Washington Times* column titled: “HEARD AND SEEN: A Column FOR and FROM Everybody,” the following question is asked of columnist Bill Price.

IS THE EARTH FLAT?

Dear Bill:

We are taught that the earth is round. We have no way of knowing except to follow what the scientists say. So far as my mundane affairs are concerned it makes no difference. But I'm getting all balled up about the whole thing. Between reading the declarations of WILBUR VOLIVA, of Zion City, that the earth is positively flat, and W. J. BRYAN that we are not descended from apes, I don't know where I stand. Voliva quotes the Bible to show that the Earth is flat and Bryan relies upon it to prove that Darwin was imbued with imagination.

Can't we settle this thing in the Old Column, the only real forum the people have? Just suppose the earth is flat after all. What are we going to do about it? The thing ought to be settled.

There are thousands of cake-eaters and flappers all over the World who are living their sweet lives under the impression that the earth is round. If they are being deceived it's terrible, that's all. They should know the real truth. Are there not among your contributors many bright minds who will tell us just what the flappers do think on this subject?

—PROF X.

Earlier that year, *The Washington Times* ran a far less flattering story. On Friday, January 27, 1922, columnist Arthur Brisbane, clearly not a fan of Flat Earth, Voliva, or the Bible, wrote:

“Mr. Voliva, the “prophet” of Zion City, says the earth is not round, but flat. Thus Zion City’s children are taught.

There is more in that than mere stupidity, refusing plain truth that patience might make dear to a chimpanzee. Mr. Voliva knows his people, knows that they accept his mental trash because it is more easily swallowed than hard fact. Kroger, of the Transvaal, also said the earth was flat. That’s one reason why the English got him and his land. Superstition loses its fights in these days.

From Voliva you learn how strongly men cling to old falsehood, how they hate new truth.

Every really great inventor, statesman, and thinker has known how men cling to original error and even invent new brands of “error” to escape unpleasant thought. Thinking, to the average man, is like standing on its hind legs to a dog—possible, but unpleasant. Both become impossible as dog and man get old.”

Even George Orwell, author of *Animal Farm* and *1984*, chimed in on the conversation. On the 27th of December 1946, as part of his “*As I Please*” column, the author wrote a piece titled: “*How Do You Know the Earth is Round?*” He began his article by stating:

“Bernard Shaw remarks that we are more gullible and superstitious today than we were in the Middle Ages, and as an example of modern credulity he cites the widespread belief that the earth is round. The average man, says Shaw, can advance not a single reason for thinking that the earth is round. He merely swallows this theory because there is something about it that appeals to the twentieth-century mentality.”

The battle for the flat earth was *real*. This was the world which parented Charles Schulz and his generation. Schulz however would father another. By the time Linus, Lucy, Schroeder, Charlie Brown, Peppermint Patty, Marcie, Franklin, Pig-Pen, Snoopy and their fellow baby-boomers were born, the outcome was almost certain. Within twenty years of their conception, the space race would achieve its ultimate mission. Not only

was the Soviet Union to be humiliated—the Bible was too. That’s two birds with one stone. The appeal of “twentieth-century mentality,” as Orwell put it, won over. The Bible’s “mental trash,” to quote Brisbane, particularly from those clinging to its “old falsehood,” did *not*.

4

CHARLIE BROWN FIRST LEARNED ABOUT *planet* Earth as most of us did—in the classroom. The date was October 27, 1950, only three weeks after *Peanuts* first premiered, and Shermey’s claim that a schoolroom globe is “proof” of its spherical nature did not pass by Brown without an initial air of skepticism. But where apprehension is concerned, Charles Kenneth Johnson’s introduction to the schoolroom globe was carried out in a slightly more dramatic fashion. Born on his father’s cattle ranch in Tennyson, Texas, on July 24, 1924, only two years after Schulz, Johnson would never forget the day when, in the second or third grade, his teacher introduced them to *the very thing*.

“Now they brought out this globe,” he later recalled. “It wasn’t like today, they didn’t have globes everywhere, and people didn’t say globe every few minutes. They put out this globe, and started the propaganda on it. I didn’t accept it from the start. You can see the thing is false! It’s quite obvious. I can see it today the same as I saw it there.”

A ball with water on it—and the water just hangs there? The eight year-old thought. Why don’t ships sail over the edge and fall off?

He then spoke his concerns out loud. His teacher immediately and publicly rebuffed his concerns. But Charles Kenneth insisted. *Mam, this is a sham*. The boy was sent home from school with an added homework assignment. He was to fetch a bucket, fill it with water, swing it round and observe the centrifugal force which held the water in place, as Newtonian laws of motion implied.

Not a single moment was wasted. Here Johnson further recalled: “I got a bucket of water and I whirled it around. It didn’t come out, but I saw at the same time that it had nothing to do with the globe. This was absurd. So I knew there was a lie here. Maybe I was extra smart or extra something for my age. I see other things they told us in school weren’t true. But that was the big one. I knew it and I’ve always known it. It’s a

complete world of lies, telling you things they know when they really don't know it. I always knew that the Earth was not a ball. I pondered for a while about how I could prove otherwise, but I didn't want to spend any time dwelling on it. I just knew that the Earth was flat."

He later told a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, "The water was rigid in the bucket. It wasn't moving, like people, cars, trucks, trains, and animals do."

By May 11, 1957, some seven years after Charlie Brown's initial introduction, Brown was thoroughly indoctrinated—though apparently glum about it, as one would expect of America's favorite block-head. Lucy however had not passed the exam, because the thought of an Earth "spinning through space" was laughable at best—and reserved for one's wildest imaginations.

"People come and people go, but the Earth keeps on spinning," says Charlie Brown.

"Spinning?" Lucy asks from behind a stone wall. "What do you mean, spinning?"

"Spinning through space..." Charlie Brown explains. "The Earth keeps on spinning through space."

Lucy explodes into laughter: "Oh, my, Charlie Brown! You may not be the brightest person in the world, but you sure have some imagination!"

"Good grief!"

Charles Johnson, however, was *never* convinced. While his schoolmates learned about the globe and then fleshed out what imaginations a globular Earth offered on the playground, Johnson poured through library books, searching knowledge, *desperately* seeking answers—all the while striving to withstand the monotonous persuasions of his school regime. It was there in the library where he acquainted himself with Freud, Einstein, and Dickens on his own. As a pubescent, Johnson later quipped that he'd already acquired more knowledge than the average University graduate. And then one day the young Johnson happened upon an article in *Harper's Magazine* concerning Zion's overseer, Wilbur Glenn Voliva.

Again, Johnson recalled: "I knew in a split second, when I read in Harper's Magazine, just check the water. I said, 'My God! Why didn't I

think of that?’ I vowed that the minute I’d get to a lake, I’d check it. I knew from that second then how to prove it.”

The boy wrote the ailing Voliva a letter.

Voliva responded,

—and then he died. With Voliva finally buried (*good riddance*), the Utopian hopefuls of Zion, Illinois abandoned his teachings just as quickly, and with as much dramatic hand wiping, as Voliva had with Dowie. With the outbreak of the Second World War, particularly the atomic age to follow, flat earth was an embarrassment to almost everyone involved.

Charles Johnson would have to wait nearly another two decades before a certain Samuel Shenton of Dover, England, would take up the fight alone.

5

THERE’S A REASON WHY *Peanuts* REVERBERATED so well with the adult crowd, especially college students—beatniks, hipsters, and eventually, as the sixties progressed, with hippies. In 1957, adults would have *gotten* the joke. But perhaps more importantly, they would have had a sort-of first-hand appreciation for it. They were laughing at their superstitious grandparents, and maybe even their crazy uncles. Schulz said it like this: “I feel that *Peanuts* reflects certain attitudes of life in our country today and perhaps some basic fears.” For most Cold War-era Americans, the very idea of a flat stationary Earth exhumed all the bad tastes associated with the food poisoning from a past memory—proof of religious zealotry gone tragically wrong. Lucy Van Pelt came with a fist, and she could even pound it into the creative gut of Schulz himself. She was crabby, for one—or in her case, a fuss budget—authoritatively bossy, judgmental, at times sadistic (when a football was involved), and for all her attempts at leading Charlie Brown through psychological therapy (which may have also included a football—now that I think on it), stunningly arrogant.

Consider one of Schulz’s most enduring strips. On September 19, 1966, Snoopy’s house burned to the ground. Lucy’s response can best be summed up in *everything* that Schulz likely saw wrong with Christian

fundamentalism. While the cause of the fire was never revealed, for Lucy, the conclusion came easy. Snoopy, she said, had *sinned*.

To blindly call Schulz a “Christian apologist” or evangelical spokesman is to brown-nose his strip with *wishful thinking*. In part, he curbed his own contemplations with the changing moralities of his time. Schulz’s most morbid view of religion comes, I believe, with Lucy’s younger brother—the serial Scripture-memorizer, Linus Van Pelt. His undying devotion to the Great Pumpkin is nearly as unbearable to watch for the agnostic after humanist Thomas Payne’s own heart as Charlie Brown’s blind faith in Lucy, who is completely incompetent in her promises to hold his football in place.

And yet here is another account of *Peanuts* lasting power—Schulz’s clever ability to pander to *everyone*. In June of 1963, the Supreme Court ruled 8–1 in favor of Edward Schempp, thereby declaring school-sponsored Bible reading in public schools in the United States to be unconstitutional. Schulz followed that decision on November 3rd, 1963 with one of *Peanuts* most nostalgic and hotly-debated moments.

After making sure the *coast is clear*, Sally beckons her brother Charlie Brown to follow her behind the couch so that she can whisper into his ear: “We prayed in school today.”

Charlie brown is aghast.

Sally’s confession masterfully played to the emotions of both sides, and not only proved a rallying cry for Christian groups across America, who cried *foul* at the Supreme Court’s decision; it doubled-down as a banner for atheist groups too. *Everyone* concurred with Sally.

Some will claim I am being unfair. And yet, despite his Christian upbringing, it is clear—by his own testimony—that the creator of *Peanuts* had changed. The man who once fought CBS Executives to keep Linus’ speech intact at the end of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*; which first aired in 1965—had changed. The man who once berated Hank Ketchum’s use of shallow spirituality in *Dennis the Menace*, as well as Bil Keane’s *The Family Circus*—had changed. The very man who once taught Sunday school and quipped: “I preach in these cartoons, and I reserve the same rights to say what I want to say as the ministers in the pulpit,” simply shriveled up inside and died. Perhaps he had been punched in the creative gut too many times by Lucy Van Pelt, because Charles Schulz gave up on church. But far worse, he gave up on Jesus, because in the sunset of his

life Schulz unashamedly referred to himself as a “secular humanist.” Not only had the Bible lost its credibility as the final authority on philosophical matters, including a salvation which could only come through Jesus’s blood, but other religions now filled the void—all of which provided the hope of legitimate paths to God.

Schulz confessed: “I do not go to church anymore. I guess you could say I’ve come around to secular humanism, an obligation I believe all humans have to others and the world we live in.”

As Schulz faith slipped through the very fingertips which so devoutly held his creative pen and outlined his sketches for five-consecutive decades, he asked his readers to do the same. In a January 1986 strip, Sally asked Charlie Brown: “When we die, will we go to Heaven?”

Charlie Brown’s response was: “I’d like to *think* so.”

At any rate, in October of 1950, the mere fact that a classroom globe could be used as proof of a proposed spherical Earth—and made to be a joke—was a confessional in and of itself that Schulz had at least been in on the table-talk. By 1957, he’d passed it off as a gross and arrogant error of fundamentalism. In March of 1969, Snoopy beat not only Apollo 11 and the Russians to the moon, but “the stupid cat next door.” During the 1980’s, Schulz was clearly all in. Who needed the globe for indoctrination? With “*This Is America, Charlie Brown!*” a series of made-for-TV episodes which gave aide to American patriotism, the *Peanuts* journeyed aboard the International Space Station. And during the last decade of his life, the very notion of Evangelist Wilbur Glenn Voliva’s claim—that the Bible was *literally* true and the Earth was flat—was a disposable joke.

Woodstock, we come to find out, is a Flat Earthist—*this* according to Snoopy’s brother, Andy. It is October 17th, 1997, and Schulz casts the same grin of mockery that so many seem to possess the moment they find out that the golden canary and Biblical literalists have something in common. You know, “Why don’t you do us all a favor and jump off the edge of the Earth?”

Olaf, being Snoopy’s fat, dopey, and rather gullible brother, does *just that*.

THE WORLD'S PREDILECTION FOR THE PHILOSOPHY of Greeks and Alexandrian delusion, an entire two millennia's of it, must have been washed away in a deluge of rejuvenation that very moment after Charles Kenneth Johnson, then in his late twenties, entered a San Francisco record store in search of Acker Bilk's evocative and haunting bestseller, *Stranger on the Shore*. Six months after hitting the top of the charts in England, the clarinet single, which had been written for Bilk's daughter, topped the United States charts for seven consecutive weeks. In 1962 Billboard named it the number one single for the year.

Charles *hoped* to reach for a copy. Then again, Marjory did too.

Their fingers met, and the two strangers quickly discovered that they had far more in common than a taste in music. Charles was a vegetarian. Marjory was too. They even had geography in common. Both were flat earthists and single. Charles Johnson would *often* remind his critics that Marjory was shocked when she migrated with her family from Australia during the War and arrived in America to learn that her native home was referred to as the land *down under*. Marjory would argue otherwise. Ultimately, she swore in an affidavit that she had never once hung by her feet.

They were married in 1962 and honeymooned in Reno.

Despite the fact that Gene Cernan, a crew member onboard the Apollo 10, employed *Stranger on the Shore* as the soundtrack to their moon mission some seven years after their meeting, playing it on cassette tape from the command module, nothing—not even NASA—could ruin their song.

LILLIAN DID MANAGE TO KEEP ENOUGH of her late husband's original collection at arm's length from Hillman's rubbish rescue to ship whatever remained, a mere *package* it seems, to Johnson in San Francisco. Johnson, who had served up until now as an aero-plane mechanic for twenty-five years, was grief-stricken to learn that Shenton's life work had been entered into the science-fiction genre under the watchful eye of a

politician, but with Lillian's gift, albeit a modest one, the hopeful heir was elated. He later recollected experiencing "a great surge of feeling" upon receiving the package, finally holding Shenton's own handwritten notes between his fingertips. At that very moment, Johnson later recalled: "I knew what all my life had been for, what all the experiences I've had are for."

Everything had been, he said, "to prepare me for now!"

This generation... This very moment...

It was God's calling.

For Johnson, holding Shenton's torch, in accordance with Samuel and Lillian's blessing no less, was akin to receiving "the mantle of Elijah." He and Marjory, Johnson insisted, were the very last iconoclasts.

That very year, 1972, Johnson retired from his career in aircraft mechanics and incorporated Shenton's organization as the International Flat Earth Research Society of America and Covenant People's Church, aptly relocating to California's Mojave Desert, where he purchased five acres of land, 'God's five acres,' he dubbed it, for a mere \$10,000. Charles and Marjory would remain there for the rest of their lives.

8

WELL BEYOND PLUTO'S ORBIT, WHERE THE HELIOPAUSE kisses the boundaries of interstellar space, solar winds howled *goodbye* to Voyager 1, which suddenly had the distinction of becoming the first craft to leave the sun's dominion behind. Meanwhile, here on Earth, the embers of Plato's dreams glowed ashy-red. In a rather symbolic gesture, the spiritual aspirations of the ancient Mysteries had finally been realized. The date was August 25, 2012. First launched 35 years earlier—in September of 1977—the twin satellites *Voyager 1* and *2* had accomplished what they initially set out to do. There's was an anthropologic mission peering in on the closeted behaviors of the wandering luminaries, and on the day of Voyager's final ascension, one thing seemed certain. The planets—Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto; including their moons—each gave witness to the scars of a galaxy torn apart by the lusts of war. Edward

Stone, chief scientist of the Voyager program, declared of the heavens: “It was Voyager that focused our attention on the importance of collisions.” He added, “The cosmic crashes were potent sculptors of the Solar System.” The stories they told *seemed* Gnostic in origin.

Decades earlier, the man who founded the Institute for Creation Research in 1970, served as its president, functioned as a vigorous proponent of young-Earth geology and key figure in the re-emergence of creation science, began his career as a “Gap Theorist.” His name was Henry Morris, and the amateur missteps which at first guided his reading of Scripture shouldn’t come as a surprise. If it was Thomas Chalmers who convinced ecclesiastics that gap-pseudoscience was a worthwhile pursuit in the years leading up to Charles Darwin, it was the work of G. H. Pember and his 1884 publication of *Earth’s Earliest Ages* which canonized it. In a 1954 scholarly appraisal of creationist theories, Evangelical Bernard Ramm wrote: “The gap theory has become the standard interpretation throughout hyper-orthodoxy, appearing in an endless stream of books, booklets, Bible studies, and periodical articles. In fact, it has become so sacrosanct with some that to question it is equivalent to tampering with Sacred Scripture or to manifest modernistic leanings.”

Morris’ first book, *That You Might Believe*—published in 1946 when he was only twenty-eight—advocated the Gap Theory of his time. But no worries, that was only its first edition. More would follow.

This was the world in which Henry Morris was born and nurtured at the breast in. His was a gigantic spinning space rock, billions of untold years in age, hurdling through an infinite universe at breakneck speeds around an insignificant main-sequence star which reportedly converts 620 million metric tons of hydrogen each second into helium via an extremely hot core and nuclear fusion, and is also made up of carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen, and small traces of neon, iron, silicon, magnesium, and sulfur. The sun-star of Morris’ upbringing was an unfathomably large ball of hot plasma rocketing around the Milky Way at 480,000 miles per hour while here on Earth he and his contemporaries were expected to stare up at the stars and believe they were penetrating through the fabric of time into prehistory, because the closest star is reportedly 25 trillion miles away—meaning its luminous qualities left the nuclear reactor of its origin four light years earlier. There is of course a star in Cassiopeia, which is actually 97,848,000,000,000,000, or roughly 98 trillion miles away—the light of which began its lonely journey to Earth some 16,308 years before

penetrating our skulls. In that time the Earth has traveled 2.2 million miles per hour. That would be 314,287,776,000,000 miles, or 314 trillion miles. The viewer is left to wonder if the light from that distant star traveled alongside his celestial path all along.

Henry Morris changed all of that.

Well, not quite. He kept to the entire narrative reported by Copernican astronomers, as described above, but tossed out the billions of years.

For the second edition of his premiere book, Morris made a few unorthodox changes; *out with the old, in with the new*, scientifically speaking. Conclusively, the gap simply wasn't Biblical. Though Morris initially defied the law of the land by clinging to a literal six day span of creation from "In the beginning" onward, he and his fellow pseudoscientists would later write the law for Evangelicalism. Within twenty years of Ramm's proclamation, Arthur C. Custance published what many believe to be the greatest defense for Gap Theory in its two-hundred year history. *Without Form and Void* was its Magnum Opus. And yet perhaps unbeknownst at the time, it would become the Gaps final stand. Only six years later, 1976 to be exact, Weston Fields published a stunning counter-strike with *Unformed and Unfilled*. Through the contributions of Henry Morris and company, a new generation of Creationist was born, one which sought to upkeep, as a campaign promise, and tend-to the natural revelation of astronomy—namely, NASA and the Copernican Revolution—while dismissing any and all obvious attempts to sterilize the Bible's authenticity throughout the geological and biological realm. In one swift stroke, the Gap Theory was buried in the strata of its origin. While lecturing to audiences, the newly reformed Morris was known to remark that the first edition of his premiere book was "blessedly unavailable."

Coming to NASA's defense without being arraigned for wrangling Scripture—a crime Gap Theorists were accused of committing—would prove problematic. For starters, Biblical descriptions of the "waters above the firmament" haunted his ministry. If the Apollo missions were not to fall continually suspect under the scrutiny of Biblical Literalist and flat earthists like Samuel Shenton (who gave the press enough material to drench entire columns with the ink of mockery throughout the 1960's until his death in 1971), and for the following three decades, Charles Johnson, Morris had little choice but to uphold the canopy theory first proposed by astronomer Isaac Vail in his 1886 book, *The Waters above the*

Firmament: Or the Earth's Annular System. Vail's theory was based in part on ancient Sumerian mythology and advertised a crystalline canopy formed millions of years ago as the earth evolved from a molten state. While observing the grandeur of the Grand Canyon, the seven layers, or firmaments of Vail's imagination—and which seemed to be on rather friendly terms with the seven luminaries of the Mystery religion—was construed. Accordingly, at the end of each creation “day-age,” the lowermost layer collapsed upon the Earth—all six of them—until the final *seventh* firmament of Genesis 1:6 rained upon Noah's ark.

Morris clearly preferred irony; for he was borrowing from the very catastrophist views (of imaginative and occultist origin, *mind you*) which he claimed to husk from his pseudoscience practices. This newly rebranded, and rather short lived, canopy of Morris' generation constituted a vast blanket of water above the troposphere, and possibly even beyond the stratosphere, in the high-temperature region now known as the ionosphere, and extending even further into space. Unlike Shenton or Johnson, Morris and his young-earth advocates negligently turned a blind eye to Scriptural observations which affirmed the sun and the moon as existing *below* the firmament. Perhaps just as importantly, the 148th Psalmist and the Apostle Peter's own declarations, that the waters above are still present and accounted for, were impolitely shoehorned from their theory.

“Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.”

Psalm 148:4

Regardless of the obligatory compromises needed to secure the globes *whirling, spinning* foothold in Scripture, the gap theory was finally dead and buried in Charles Lyell's geologic column. So too is the canopy theory. Today the Creationist has no clear explanation. But where the Gap Theory is concerned, not everyone received the memo. Old-time Pentecostal preacher Jimmy Swaggart preferred the lavish storytelling which only the Gap could offer. So too has Kenneth Hagin and Benny Hinn. Corruption of the material world—warring angels—cosmic battlefields—Yahweh's intervention—the true spiritual self rather than the fleshly temple—the Gap Theory has long been a favorite illustration for the epic *good vs. evil* which the Charismatic preacher supposedly mirrors in his daily tongue-babbling, spirit-filled prayer life and ministry. In reality, with the release of *Star Wars* in May of 1977 and the launch of Voyagers

1 and 2 only a few months later, the cat was out of the bag. In hindsight it's clear. Keeping in step with the Manichean doctrine of old, which insisted upon the interference of Satan and his demons in the process of creation, the Gap Theorist prefers his origins story glazed with an extra helping of Gnosticism.

With his book, *Beyond Star Wars: Ancient Cosmic Conflicts in the Space-Time Continuum*, first published in 1978, author William F. Dankenbring would have us believe the explosive aboriginal chapter of the Bible should mirror as an opening crawl in outer space. Perhaps, we might suspect, *Star Wars* creator George Lucas even plagiarized a history which God didn't bother to publish in His Word while the ever-observant Sumerians lapped it up. It might even be titled, *HEAVEN WARS: Episode 4: A New Hope*—or something to that effect, with the scroll reading: “And the Earth was formless and void...”

“*Star Wars* really happened! Long ago great battles raged in the universe. A great war caused vast destruction throughout the cosmos and upon the earth. Super beings battled for control of the universe, space, and time.”

For space age Gap Theorists like Dankenbring, the chasm spanning Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 is an untold war in which the asteroids between Mars and Jupiter form the cosmic debris of an ancient planet torn asunder in some primordial celestial cataclysm. The surface of Mars, riddled with massive craters, is best compared to an ancient battlefield—Venus too. The rings of Saturn “bespeak evidence of ancient catastrophism.” Even our very own moon received a paralyzing bombardment from space. “The far side of the moon, photographs from space and Apollo space shots show, was hammered so violently by meteors that the entire original crust was shattered and torn apart... The blasts of crashing asteroids and meteors released huge volcanic eruptions covering vast sections of the moon with flowing lava” and “huge lava seas.”

Then of course there's Niburu—Planet X.

We shan't forget *that*.

Dankenbring further writes: “This *war in heaven* must have been catastrophic in nature. It must have been the greatest battle of all time! Armies of angels clashing with each other! The entire cosmos must have been shaken. The fantastic truth of what happened eons ago makes the *Star Wars* movies pale into nothingness by comparison!” A little later

Dankenbring reminds us (never forsaking the opportunity for a well-placed exclamation mark): “...the original STAR WARS broke out! The thrilling story is more than merely hinted at in the opening verses of Genesis—in the beginning.”

Even canopy theorists like Carl Theodore Schwarze developed a taste for the Manichean cataclysm. First publishing *The Harmony of Science and the Bible* in 1942, followed up with *The Marvel of Earth's Canopies: A Fascinating Book on the Harmony of True Science and the Bible* in 1957, Schwarze chose to avoid the obvious conclusion—that God Himself created “the firmament of His power (Psalm 150:1).” Schwarze re-imagined Vail’s volcanoes with atomic explosions, research which Satan had apparently been dabbling in long before Adamic times. In such a scenario, the Psalmist might have been a little clearer and referred, rather devilishly, to Satan’s “firmament of power” rather than [YHWH’s]. But Schwarze was not even satisfied leaving the highly debated pre-flood “greenhouse effect” to God. Oh-no—that *also* can be blamed on the aftermath resulting from Satan’s research in atomic warfare. Manichean cataclysms and Gnosticism abounds. This ancient blast was the event described by less scientific minds in Genesis 1:2, with a future destruction to come outlined in 2 Peter 3:10.

Whereas Schwarze found his “scientific” vision in Hiroshima and the resulting Cold War, William F. Dankenbring organized his Natural Revelation—aside from an obvious curtain call at Grauman’s Chinese Theater—with the Voyager mission. The data which NASA collected from its ascending satellite, drifting ever closer to the gateway of interstellar space, was *proof* of a galaxy torn apart by the lusts of war.

In ‘*Genesis Revisited: Is Modern Science Catching Up With Ancient Knowledge?*’ ancient astronaut theorist and author Zecharia Sitchin contrasts Voyager’s discoveries with Sumerian texts of antiquity. Rather strange that God would expect a Christian to look to Babylonian literature in order to better understand the revelation He forsook in Holy Scripture. At any rate, Sitchin writes: “The Sumerians made clear, 6,000 years ago, the very same fact. Central to their cosmogony, worldview, and religion was a cataclysmic event that they called the Celestial Battle. It was an event to which references were made in miscellaneous Sumerian texts, hymns, and proverbs—just as we find in the Bible’s books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and various others. But the Sumerians also described the event in detail, step by step, in a long text that required seven tablets.” He adds:

“The (surviving) text deals with the formation of the Solar System prior to the Celestial Battle and even more so with the nature, causes, and results of that awe-some collision. And, with a single cosmogonic premise, it explains puzzles that still baffle our astronomers and astrophysicists.”

Even more important, “whenever these modern scientists have come upon a satisfactory answer—it fits and corroborates the Sumerian one!”

Sitchin further points out that “until the Voyager discoveries, the prevailing scientific view-point considered the Solar System as we see it today as the way it had taken shape soon after its beginning, formed by immutable laws of celestial motion and the force of gravity. There have been oddballs, to be sure—meteorites that come from somewhere and collide with the stable members of the Solar System, pock-marking them with craters, and comets that zoom about in greatly elongated orbits, appearing from somewhere and disappearing, it seems, to nowhere. But these examples of cosmic debris, it has been assumed, go back to the very beginning of the Solar System, some 4.5 billion years ago, and are pieces of planetary matter that failed to be incorporated into the planets or their moons and rings. A little more baffling has been the asteroid belt, a band of rocks that forms an orbiting chain between Mars and Jupiter. According to Bode’s law, an empirical rule that explains why the planets formed where they did, there should have been a planet, at least twice the size of Earth, between Mars and Jupiter.”

After Voyager’s flyby of Uranus in 1986, “the realization that there had to be one or more major collisions that changed the Solar System from its initial form became inescapable,” commands Sitchin’s pen, “as Dr. Stone has admitted.” Uranus was shown to not only be tilted on its side, but it was not formed that way from the very beginning. Its rings—pitch-black “blacker than coal dust,” are “warped, tilted, and bizarrely elliptical...” an “obvious conclusion was that the rings and moonlets were formed from the debris of a violent event in Uranus’ past.”

Voyager 2 also found that Neptune’s two moons Nereid and Triton “were knocked into their peculiar orbits by some large body or planet.” Bradley Schaefer, a professor of astronomy and astrophysics at Louisiana State University noted, “Imagine that at one time Neptune had an ordinary satellite system like that of Jupiter or Saturn; then some massive body comes into the system and perturbs things a lot.”

Planet X *again*.

Unlike most Gap Theorists of centuries past, who were not afforded the thrilling exploits of science fiction to captivate their better senses, Dankenbring and other space age theologians like him extended the ruined civilizations existing before Genesis 1:2 all the way to the red planet. “Mars—unlike the other planets of the solar system—has a day almost equal to the earth’s day,” Dankenbring writes. “The time of axial rotation of Mars is 24 hours, 37 minutes and 23 seconds; the earth’s day is 23 hours, 56 minutes, 4 seconds. No other two planets are so alike in the duration of their day. Another striking resemblance between the two planets is the inclination of their axis of rotation. The equator of Mars is inclined 24 degrees to the plane of its orbit, whereas the equator of the earth is inclined 23 1/2 degrees to the plane of its ecliptic. Such a similarity is unequalled among all the other planets of the solar system.”

Dankenbring’s gullibility is most striking when he pauses to consider the mystery of Phobos and Deimos, two Mars moons which apparently shook astronomical circles after Asaph Hall announced their discovery in 1877. Why?—Novelist Jonathan Swift, who published *Gulliver’s Travels* in 1726, 150 years before Asaph Hall glimpsed the two moons of Mars through his telescope, “actually wrote of them in his book!” Here Dankenbring salivates: “Swift actually described the distance of these two satellites from Mars in terms of Mars’ diameter implying measurement and calculation. The Laputans, according to Swift, said Phobos was three Mars’ diameters from the planet (12,420 miles). Modern instruments reveal it is actually 7,897 miles away. The Laputans said Phobos orbited Mars every 10 hours. Modern measurements show the actual time is 7 hours 39 minutes. The Laputans put the diameter of Deimos’ orbit as five Mars diameters (20,700 miles). It is actually 16,670 miles. They put the revolution of Deimos at 21 1/2 hours. It is actually 30 hours 18 minutes. These figures are simply dumbfounding if Swift invented the whole story out of thin air – the crevices of his own vivid imagination! It’s simply uncanny.”

We must ask ourselves how novelist Jonathan Swift knew about Mars’ two moons. Isaac Asimov called Swift’s calculations of orbits and their periods of revolution “an amazing coincidence.” He added, “However, his guess that Phobos would rise in the west and set in the east because of its speed of revolution is uncanny. It is undoubtedly the luckiest guess in literature.”

For Dankenbring, the moons of Mars, as first described by Swift, is indeed proof that ancient peoples knew of the cosmic *Star Wars* long before George Lucas thought to pen a first draft.

On November 28, 2017, the thrusters aboard the Voyager 1 spacecraft did what everybody thought was impossible. Dormant since November of 1980, one month before I was born, Voyager 1's thrusters suddenly *thrust* again. In a statement on its official website, NASA said: "The Voyager team assembled a group of propulsion experts at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California, to study the problem." After 37 years of inactivity and wandering 13 billion miles from Earth, "they agreed on an unusual solution: Try giving the job of orientation to a set of thrusters that had been asleep for 37 years." The Voyager flight team dug up decades-old data and examined the software that was coded in an outdated assembler language. It *still* worked. Voyager 1's mission has been extended into the throws of interstellar space until 2025.

1970's technology is truly amazing.

There is a kind of circular logic which naturally accommodates geological thinking. In 1884 G.H. Pember reminded Christians that God had not revealed to humans how geology should be interpreted. For this he insisted upon a geologist's reliance in interpreting Scripture. Furthermore, if the Earth was "without form and void," we come to another conclusion entirely. Satan had already rebelled and destroyed a former world created by God before Genesis 1:3. In *Earth's Earliest Ages*, he writes:

"It is thus clear that the second verse of Genesis describes the earth as a ruin; but there is no hint of the time which elapsed between creation and this ruin. Age after age may have rolled away, and it was probably during their course that the strata of the earth's crust were gradually developed. Hence we see that geological attacks upon the Scriptures are altogether wide of the mark, are a mere beating of the air. There is room for any length of time between the first and second verses of the Bible. And again; since we have no inspired account of the geological formations, we are at liberty to believe that they were developed just in the order in which we find them. The whole process took place in preadamite times, in connection, perhaps, with another race of beings, and, consequently, does not at present concern us."

With Voyager, we are asked to take this same circular reasoning even further. Forty years earlier, when the Voyager twins first launched beyond the Earth's atmosphere, *Star Wars* wet the imaginative appetite for an entire generation of Biblical Gnostics in waiting. In December of 2017—less than one month after JPL managed the impossible—fans of the ongoing saga lamented over the release of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, the chronological eighth in the series. For many, it was the worst *Star Wars* movie of all time. The internet is practically foaming at the mouth with testimonies of stark raving men. Some are even sobbing. Once again, *Star Wars* has managed to shatter the memories of many fragile childhoods. If only they knew about Voyager 1 and 2 in light the Bible.

If only they knew that space was fake.

9

THOUGH IT IS TRUE, LANCASTER HAS noticeably widened at its hips over the years, very little else of the Mojave Desert has changed from Charles Johnson's time until now. It is here where California State Route 14, the vital artery which winds through Antelope Valley and in turn serves to connect the city with the exotic excesses of Los Angeles, can finally stretch out its legs with ease and continue through an almost endless horizon of jagged canyons and parched earth. I like to think of the flat earthist at the end of each day, wearily chomping down on a cigar from his front porch. Johnson is a distinguished-looking bearded gentleman who contrasts vegetarianism with a lifetime of chain-smoking, hand-rolling each cigarette with an air of professionalism, and he drinks coffee by the pot. His legs are slightly elevated, feet folded together on a stool, as he gazes at the canvas of blazing color surrounding him—a routine sunset which only the desert can offer.

Twenty miles to his west, the Tehachapi Mountains rise up from the painted floor—a comfortable, practically fortified barrier separating him from the rich agriculture of Bakersfield and the San Joaquin Valley beyond. Twenty miles to his south, as the bird flies, is a notable curiosity piece known as Vasquez Rocks, site of various filming projects, mostly science-fiction due to its eerily twisted, alien-like features. TV production surrounds Johnson, including numerous episodes of the *Twilight Zone*. As a habit, alien landscapes tend to take on the familiar face of his own

isolated world. Speaking of which, another twenty miles to the north, Johnson might look out as far as Edwards Air Force Base, the ancient lakebed which will, over the decades, host the landing of 54 space shuttle missions and some change, as well as *test* their capabilities for orbit. A silhouette of Joshua trees, creosote bushes and tumbleweeds surround him, and in practically all directions, abandoned mine shafts and forsaken ghost towns litter the landscape. Lancaster is truly a world unto itself. Only from *here* can the Copernican universe expand forth within the immeasurable imaginations of men, with no firmament to contain them.

Pull any calendar year out of a hat, 1972 or the turn of the millennium, it matters little. The sunsets are conveniently the same, *breathhtaking*, and memories of Charles Manson remain. The Johnson's arrived in Lancaster only a year after the Tate murder trials concluded, and yet in the little mining ghost town of Ballarat, straddling the edges of something remotely habitable and Death Valley, a green-and-white truck employed by the Manson family still sits abandoned to this very day (pick any year between then and 2019), situated *precisely* where police apprehended its members after fleeing Barker Ranch in 1969. Time and scorched winds have slowly eaten bullet holes into its rusted metal, but pentagrams, spray painted silver on the inside of the truck, are not so easily scrubbed away. And if one looks especially close, he or she might even read three letters etched into its door, WAR.

From the world in which the flat earthist inhabits on his front porch, chomping away on an evening cigar, the Johnson home is a half-mile journey from the nearest neighbor. Friends drop by now and then, but his primary companions are several cats, half a dozen dogs, scatterbrained chickens, and the occasional desert tortoise or road runner—not forgetting the love of his life, Marjory. No electric-power line runs to the property; the world's first and foremost flat earth headquarters; and water must be carried up the hill. But that's how the Johnson's like it, a complete *isolation* from globular society. "We're two witnesses against the whole world," Johnson once told a reporter. "We've chosen that path, but it isolates us from everyone. We're not complaining. *It has to be*. But it does kind of get to you sometimes." Then again, there are daily visits from the postman to consider. By 1980 his flow of letters will peak at around 2,000 a year; or a half-dozen every day—not all of which are properly addressed. But it matters little. Any mail addressed to the *flat earth*, the postal service knows to deliver.

I like to think of the *irony* encapsulating his peripheral vision over three intellectually tiresome decades as he lowers his cigar to sip on coffee over and over again, rinse and repeat, one evening after the next—though perhaps Marjory has brewed him decaf at this hour. If not for the various fantasy scripts fleshed out at Vasquez Rocks or Red Rock Canyon and the like, most notably the stand-in arena where Captain Kirk wrestled an extraterrestrial humanoid reptilian species, known as a Gorn, in a 1967 episode of *Star Trek*, then he has *real life* space shuttles to consider. Occasionally the sins of the outside world prod at him, as personified by the Manson's and an uneasy marriage with the muddled narrative of an equally sinister media objective. For example, Manson family member Lynette Fromme's attempt to assassinate U.S. President Gerald Ford in 1975 by simply pointing a gun at him has all the markings of a Manchurian candidate. Surely, Johnson thinks about *that* when considering those individuals and the truck which remains as a testimony to their plight from Baker Ranch.

As the sun sets over 'God's Five Acres,' I can see Johnson now, the last iconoclast, cocking his head back, and precisely how *Science Digest* described him in 1980, with "a wry sense of humor and booming laugh," cleverly chuckling at the madness which nuzzles the outside world with the warmth of a baby blanket of sorts and which simultaneously seeks to administer to his seclusion, sadistically beckoning him on, or perhaps it is only the aching groans of a windswept desert.

Clack—clack—clack—click—clack, goes his typewriter.

"Scientists consist of the same old gang of witch doctors, sorcerers, tellers of tales, the priest-entertainers for the common people," he once perfectly summed up his entire worldview for *Flat Earth News*. "Science consists of a weird, way-out occult concoction of gibberish theory-theology unrelated to the real world of facts, technology and inventions, tall buildings, fast cars, aero planes and other real and good things in life."

For the first decade of the Johnson's Flat Earth Research Society, only 200 paying members, many of which consist of Voliva's Zion residents, subscribe to his writings. As the decades roll on and the sun continually sets over the scorched desert of Lancaster, that number will rise and eventually cap off somewhere around 3,500, no doubt with help from the press, who love more than anything to peer in and jeer at him for the pleasure-reading of a self-flagellating audience.

Clack—clack—clack—click—clack.

Moses and the Prophets and Jesus and all His Disciples taught and knew the Earth was flat.

Clack—clack—clack—click—clack.

Witch doctors are attempting to replace that old time religion with Science.

Clack—clack—clack—click—clack.

Galileo, Newton, Martin Luther, Descartes, Darwin, Fake Space Program, COPERNICIOUS [*sic*] monstrosity! Now is the season of Satan...

Clack—clack—clack—click—clack.

The media often returns fire. If Americans are completely oblivious to the prophet in the wilderness, the media will not fail to let them know about it. In 1984 *Newsweek* will convey that Johnson's Flat Earth Research Society is more "a mystical entity than an organization." John Mitchell, 67th Attorney General of the United States under President Richard Nixon, basically says something of the equivalent to "I know you are but what am I?" when he lumps Johnson's society with modern-day druidism.

"Whatever its purpose," author Robert J. Schadewald writes in *Worlds of Their Own: A Brief History of Misguided Ideas: Creationism, Flat Earthism, Energy Scams, and the Velikovsky Affair*, regarding the Shuttles of Edwards Air Force Base, "Johnson is convinced that it is not intended to actually fly." Schadewald seems to shrug, almost apathetically, as he further writes: "Perhaps the Space Shuttle is intended to bolster the beliefs of these backsliders. Whatever its purpose, Johnson is convinced that it is not intended to actually fly. Because it was build and tested almost in his back yard, he knows many people who worked on it. What they've told him about some aspects of its construction only reinforces his convictions."

"They moved it across the field," Johnson sneers for Schadewald, "and it almost fell apart. All those little side pieces are on with epoxy, and half fell off!"

Schadewald further explains, "The Shuttle had other problems besides heat resistant tiles that wouldn't stick. For instance, when the

testers tried to mount it on a 747 for its first piggy-back test flight, it wouldn't fit." "

Here Johnson chortles.

"Can you imagine that? Millions of dollars they spent, and it wouldn't fit! They had to call in a handyman to drill some new holes to make the thing fit. Then they took it up in the air--and some more of it fell to pieces."

The fact that the Shuttle will eventually, *potentially*, orbit on its own and then return to Edwards Air Force Base, Schadewald adds, is appropriate enough for the flat earthist.

"Do you know what they're doing at Edwards right now?" he asks for the writer's pleasure. "'*Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*' is made right where they claim they're going to land the Shuttle. Edwards is *strictly* a science-fiction base now. *Buck* is a much better science program, considerably more authentic. In fact, I recommend that the government get out of the space business and turn the whole thing over to ABC, CBS, and NBC. The TV networks do a far superior job. They could actually pay the government for rights, and it wouldn't cost the taxpayers a penny."

The wild popularity of Buck Rogers during the first half of the 20th century is likely lost to most millennials these days, but her counterpart isn't. *Star Wars*, he will tell another reporter, was made in some guy's garage.

Clack—clack—clack—click—clack.

That George fellow made an entire universe more believable than the U.S. government out here in Lancaster.

Clack—clack—clack—click—clack.

Most of all, I like to picture Johnson sitting on his porch, cigar in his fingertips, imagining what is still to come. Though he sees himself and Marjory as examples for society standing "way ahead of the pack," it is only because he holds to long *snubbed* Biblical truths. And yet he dreams of something far larger than himself. Johnson is *nothing*. He is an old man in the desert exhibiting nothing more or less than a simple childlike faith. Long before the internet revolution Johnson dreams of a Zetetic research center. He dreams of a nationwide flat earth lecturing tour by RV. But he also dreams of a national flat earth convention, and just as importantly a

chosen people to warm those seats, having collectively cracked the age-old puzzle. There's simply no *motion* to the Earth—no *curvature*. It's that simple. Surely, a generation is coming that can wrap their heads around those simplest and easiest to comprehend facts. Regardless, as the decades roll by, the aging couple slave tirelessly over a flat earth awakening which they will *never* live to see.

They will clap away at their typewriters each day, vainly searching without ever finding a successor. That somebody *will* come—in fact, an entire army of them; but none who likely read his work *while* they yet live.

I can picture Johnson *now*, watching the sun set on the secluded, paradoxical world he loves, and the dawn he patiently hopes to see—*yet* never will. Charles Johnson; with that wry sense of humor and booming laugh, thinking about Christopher Columbus, whom he swears until his dying day is a fellow flat earthist. And then Copernicus—he thinks about Copernicus, and then cracks a joke which only he alone can hear.

“Co-*per*nicious,” he calls him.

He clamps down on his evening cigar and laughs. Nobody else laughs along. And that's okay. One day they will. The day *is* coming. Many will be chosen, hand-picked even, to believe the simplest and easiest to grasp of truths—they'll have little to no choice—and then live within the Lancaster of their own mind. And *then* they'll laugh along.

Say it with me.

Co-pernicious—

HIV

1

AS ONE DECADE GAVE WAY TO ANOTHER, the statistical estimate of homosexuals had ranged from twelve to twenty-five percent of San Francisco's *total* population, with the average gay man having sexual encounters with at least five-hundred other men—twenty-eight percent with *more* than a thousand. Some fourteen years after the fact, the almost-mythical corners of Haight and Ashbury were no longer the standard for America's love revolution. In 1980, the Castro was. Never before in the history of the modern world had sex been more readily available than San Francisco. The Satanic Panic officially began that very year with the publication of *Michelle Remembers*, a book co-written by Canadian psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder and his former patient, then wife, Michelle Smith, which detailed her childhood abuse by a cabal of Satanists and the demonic possession which resulted from it. In both cases, *nobody* was prepared for the shit storm to come.

On July 6, 1981, a rare and deadly form of cancer showed up in 41 homosexual men. In as little as a few years, Dr. Jesse Peel, a gay community organizer and psychiatrist in Atlanta, found himself attending as many as two or three funerals for friends in a single week. Peel was losing more of his contemporaries than his aging mother. Before the AIDS epidemic even had a name, one thing became absolutely certain—gay men in New York and San Francisco were dying.

In the March 14, 1983 issue of *New York Native*, nom de plume “Larry Kramer” did not mince his words when he *pleaded* to fellow members of his homosexual community: “If this article doesn’t scare the shit out of you, we’re in trouble. If this article doesn’t rouse you to anger, fury, rage, and action, gay men may have no future on this earth. Our continued existence depends on just how angry you can get.”

“There are now 1,112 cases of serious Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome,” he further wrote. “When we first became worried, there were only 41. In only twenty-eight days, from January 13th to February 9, there were 164 new cases—and 73 more dead. The total death tally is now 418.”

195 of those dead were registered to Kramer's own hometown, New York City, and as of March, eighty-six percent of all serious AIDS cases had already ended in death in as little as three years. Simultaneously, suicide was on the rise. And yet there was still no known cause for the immunodeficiency virus which had only recently been named. "For two years we've heard a different theory every few weeks. We grasped at the straws of possible cause: promiscuity, poppers, back rooms, the baths, rimming, fisting, anal intercourse, urine, semen, shit, saliva, sweat, blood, blacks, a single virus, a new virus, repeated exposure to a virus, amoebas carrying a virus, drugs, Haiti, voodoo, Flagyl, constant bouts of amebiasis, hepatitis A and B, syphilis, gonorrhea," Kramer wrote. "After almost two years of an epidemic, there are still no answers. After almost two years of an epidemic, the cause of AIDS remains unknown. And almost two years of an epidemic, there is no cure."

Kramer was not convinced however that AIDS was merely restricted to gay men. "There have been no confirmed cases of AIDS in straight, white, non-intravenous-drug-using, middle-class Americans," he wrote, carefully adding, "if there have been—and there may have been—any cases in straight, white, non-intravenous-drug-using, middle-class Americans, the Centers of Disease Control isn't telling anyone about them."

"Why isn't every gay man in this city so scared shitless that he is screaming for action? Does every gay man in New York want to die?"

Though his article, *1,112 & Counting*, has become a fixture in the history of the war on HIV, in 1983 Larry Kramer was shunned.

2

THE MORAL MAJORITY WAS FOUNDED only two years earlier, in 1978, with the explicit instructions of pushing both politics and culture to the furthest possible corner of Jerry Falwell's far-right vision for an evangelical Christian America. On August 7, 1983, nearly five months after Kramer's landmark article, Falwell declared on a nationwide broadcast of *Old Time Gospel Hour* that AIDS was "the judgement of God upon moral perversion in this society," specifically "the homosexual promiscuity in this land."

Falwell would further claim: “AIDS is the wrath of God against homosexuals. To oppose it would be like an Israelite jumping in the Red Sea to save one of Pharaoh’s charioteers. AIDS is not just God’s punishment for homosexuals. It is God’s punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals.”

The Moral Majority was a relatively early supporter of presidential candidate Ronald Reagan. After Reagan’s landmark victory in November of 1980, Falwell attributed his success directly to the Moral Majority, particularly his own ability to encourage and ultimately pull in the support of church-goers who had never before been politically active—and historians tend to agree. At any rate, Ronald Reagan seemed to share Falwell’s apathy. Nearly five years, an entire administrative term and some change, would pass before the pronouncement of AIDS ever publicly left the president’s lips. After initially being diagnosed with AIDS on June 5, 1984, the first lady turned her back on Rock Hudson, once a dear friend. The President’s own press secretary, Larry Speakes, apparently had Reagan’s approval while joking about the “gay plague” among members of the media, even going so far as to laugh about one of the reporters potentially having it. When prodded, Speakes *insisted* that the president was not concerned. The AIDS crisis had its very first Hollywood a-list celebrity with Hudson’s death on October 2, 1985. His attempts to reach out to the White House for help fell on deaf ears. The actor was shunned by the Reagan family.

If Falwell was to be understood and believed, to try to *stop* AIDS from wiping its victims off the face of the earth, to even attempt and save those infected by it, goes against the intended programming of our *better* spiritual nature. This is God’s wrath—*best get out of the way*.

Falwell’s religious-right listened.

3

ON THE 20TH OF MAY, 1982, 24 YEAR-OLD Rebecca Carmen Turino-Flod lost an extravagant amount of blood while giving natural childbirth to a healthy pair of twin girls. That very day, in Harbor City, California, Becky’s frail condition required a blood transfusion. In time, her loved ones would have to reconcile the fact that the young housewife

was diagnosed with the AIDS virus. As Kramer rightly suspected nearly a year later, Becky's condition was kept *hush* from practically everyone—even her family.

Despite an anointed handful of church friends who quietly stuck it through at her side, the religious community as a whole tagged her very kind an *abomination*. In-laws feared how they might be perceived in Ronald Reagan and Jerry Falwell's America, *particularly* Becky's sister-in-law—a doctor. In the end, her family listened to greater evangelicalism. Becky was nearly abandoned. Even her daughters, only then coming into consciousness, were kept from her. As her condition worsened, the young housewife was desperate. A visiting sister recalls wheeling her out of the house amidst a desperate cry for help. Becky fought AIDS almost totally alone. And then one spring day in 1988, she lost the battle. On the day in which she died—Becky's few remaining friends claim to this very day—her husband was out working on his car.

At five years of age, all Sarah Carmen Flod wanted to do is *see* her sick mother; *hold* her sick mother; *speak* to her; but mostly *form* a memory of her sick mother—*any* memory at all. And yet, the shame and embarrassment which the family felt in light of her condition necessitated that the two, actually the three of them, be split apart. As the 1980's trudged on, tears pursued the kindergartner to school each day and then followed her back home—and more importantly, displaced her throughout the nightly intervals in-between. The young girl, finally coming to age, had no one willing to even speak with her about the trauma. If only the embarrassment of what had happened could just *go away*. To this very day, no living member of Becky's family who denied her then has yet to express any remorse. If Becky Carmen Turino-Flod contracted AIDS, then she must have done something to deserve it.

Becky Flod had sinned, and God cursed her for it.

That—or God was *negligent*.

Blame Him.

The only crime committed, though at close evaluation there were indeed several of them, is that the woman I would meet less than a decade later, and ultimately come to love, has little to *no* memory of her mother, nor is the subject easily broached. In the months, even the years after we were married, it was not uncommon for my wife to break down into gushing tears over Jerry Falwell's vision for America. In 2011, despite

nearly a decade of occasional lamentations to mark her only lasting memorial—and even now in Oxford, while writing these words across the Atlantic Ocean, her lips tighten and her eyes swell at the recollection—I finally stood *for the first time* very Becky’s grave. My wife was not yet thirty years old. And on the day we finally met, neither was her mother. The missing years, the loss of age, the omnivorous waste of it all; nearly a quarter of a century of physical, emotional, intellectual, religious, and apathetical boycotting the very soul who was swallowed up by the grass, cursed eternally with the *gay plague* and yet, in a seemingly cruel twist, would not even be numbered among them, finally overcame me. As one who had somehow circumnavigated the AIDS crisis altogether as a child, nearly all I could muster, as a mighty sledgehammer slugged away at my lungs, was a nonsensical, almost breathless prayer.

Dear God.

SATANIC PANIC

1

BY DAY, JACK PARSONS LAUNCHED THE COLD WAR. By night, the founder of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory emerged from a coffin to perform the Enochian magic first began by Englishman John Dee. His own esoteric works were often mixed with his scientific experiments, and it has been reported that Parsons attempted to invoke spirits while working with rocket fuel. His mentor Aleister Crowley had espoused science with the practice of sex magic, Kabbalism, rites taken from Freemasonry and medieval grimoires—a quest which Parsons could stand behind. Parsons used his own salary to conduct occult experiments in hopes of ushering in a new age of magical freedom. In the Mojave Desert, he and Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard were attempting to invoke the power of a goddess. This divine being—identified by Crowley as both the Biblical whore of Babylon and the goddess Ishtar—would usher in the end to an age of repressive Christian morality.

It was 1946. They dubbed the project “the Babalon Working.” And on the 18th of January, only two weeks into their fusion of sex-magic, Parsons announced to Hubbard:

“It is done.”

2

THE LOS ALTOS DRIVE-IN THEATER, once located at 2800 N. Bellflower Boulevard in Long Beach, California, where I watched such classics as *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Back to the Future* and, in its final hours before closing, *Jurassic Park*, is now a typical shopping mall, complete with the *ho-hum-drum* of a Papa John's Pizza and K-Mart. Upon its wide release on June 11, 1982, *E.T.* invaded every American city and suburb. Within two weeks, *Reese's Pieces* sales tripled. *Variety's* McCarthy critiqued *E.T.* as “the best Disney film Disney never made.” Mrs. Hadley would have been only a few blocks away and just as many *weeks* old when I participated in

my own screening of the film from the front seat of the family wagon, and I can distinctly recall walking around the church parsonage in Hawthorne, California endlessly rehearsing: “E.T. phone home! E.T. phone home!” This is likely due to the fact that my parents documented those persistent words on cassette tape, and for years thereafter I wore out the ribbon by rewinding and playing my performance on the very Japanese-made Panasonic that had earlier recorded it.

But I wasn’t the only one. Neil Diamond wrote a hit song, *Heartlight*, based on the film’s central tropes. Michael Jackson not only purchased one of the working puppets used in the film but—in a somewhat more masterful performance than my own—can be heard crying at *E.T.*’s death during his own special LP-length recording. At President Reagan’s request, Spielberg held a private screening in the White House. The First Lady cried during the film’s third act. Then again, so did The Gipper. Spielberg told *Twilight Zone Magazine*, the leader of the free world could not withhold “a little moisture in his eyes. I view that as a very positive sign.”

On the 17th of September, *E.T.* made an unprecedented appearance at United Nations headquarters in New York City. *Twilight Zone Magazine* writer David Shifren was on hand to witness the event and interview its director. He wrote: *E.T.*’s “United Nations debut came before a standing room only crowd of foreign dignitaries, consulate members, and UN staffers who saw the young director receive the UN’s Medal of Peace, the first time the prestigious award has ever gone to a filmmaker. They then watched a special showing of Spielberg’s blockbuster hit, *E.T.*” Shifren adds: “Despite the event’s formal setting—the UN’s spacious Trusteeship Council Chamber, where almost every seat bears an official placard naming a member country—the audience was completely swept up by the film.” They applauded enthusiastically during the closing credits, particularly for Spielberg’s name, and cheered during the more exciting scenes.

The “UN and *E.T.* are one and the same,” Spielberg said in his acceptance speech. “They both have the desire and the need to communicate, to care, and to love. This film is dedicated to all children of all ages.” Further voicing approval for the UN, Spielberg concluded: “The United Nations represents everything that *E.T.* stands for—*love and communication.*”

E.T.'s arrival at the UN did nothing to massage the nerves of right-wing evangelicals. Eschatological-minded Christians had long been suspicious of the UN's potential to fulfill the prophecies of Daniel and the Apostle John. By making this the case in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Christian Zionist and dispensationalist author Hal Lindsey prompted an entire baby-boomer generation to gaze up at the clouds for Christ's return. While science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke had already called out the aliens bluff, detailing them as your run of the mill Biblical devil and then being so bold and perverse to glory at their destined arrival in *Childhood's End* (1953), the books of Christian author Frank Peretti would be instrumental in cementing the alien-demon connection. The blood of American radio host and televangelist Bob Larson simply boiled over the connections he made between rock music and Satanism. His book, *Satanism: the Seduction of America's Youth* persuaded countless parents that forces were influencing America's youth through "ghoulish games, horror films, black metal music, and drugs, as well as the occult enticements" in hopes of selling their souls to Satan. *Dungeons & Dragons* was criminalized in the church. And as most online reviews by a grown and apparently bitter millennial will show, Phil Phillips book, *Turmoil in the Toy Box* (1986), pillaged and plundered the playtime carpets of countless childhoods by convincing their parents that *He-Man*, *G.I. Joe*, *Star Wars*, *My Little Pony*, and *Smurfs* were laced with occult ties.

I remember it well.

"It was something we didn't realize at the time, but now, it looks like a low-scale version of the McCarthy-era paranoia around communism," said Peter Bebergal, author of *Season of the Witch: How the Occult Saved Rock and Roll*, in an interview with *io9*. "The devil worshippers could be anywhere. They could be your next-door neighbor. They could be your child's caregiver." He furthermore added: "A lot of it was having a spiritual vacuum, created by the fact that the 1960s promise of this cosmic, spiritual consciousness didn't really pan out. Then you had this 1970s uptick of paranormal investigations, ESP, an interest in UFOs, really climaxing with *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. But the aliens never actually landed, you know? I think it led to a cynicism that led to kind of a cultural paranoia: there is no meaning. There was already an uptick in fundamentalist Christianity. The Reagan Right had begun to dominate politics. And it was the beginning of a cultural war; that's when the Parents Music Resource Center started to put labels on album covers to warn against profanity or even references to the occult. It was a perfectly ripe

stew for *Satanic Panic*. In a way, believing that Satan is running the world is still offering a kind of order to things, in a world that can feel very disorderly.”

And yet the *Satanic Panic* which once sent the baby-boomer generation into a tailspin is no more. More precisely, it is but a *whimper*—already doomed to messy back-filing in the annals of discomfited minds. Somewhere along the way the Christian dusted his devil-worshipping Led Zeppelin album off and returned it straightway to their turntable, callously shrugging as he did so. Despite Jimmy Page’s lifelong devotion to Aleister Crowley, I can only deduce that songs like *Highway to Heaven*—particularly Page’s clear pronunciation of “Hail Satan!” when played backwards—means little but theatrics to the haphazard person who deceives himself into claiming a love for the Savior while singing along. The devils music has become family entertainment. For many—and dare I say *most*—the Spirit is thoroughly quenched. Looking back on it all, there is a tragically missed opportunity in Christian musician Keith Green’s 1977 song, *Nobody Believes in Me Anymore*, which was written from Satan’s perspective and played as an anthem for the *Satanic Panic* generation.

Most seem to paint the Satanist with shades of Shakespeare; the “double, double, toil and trouble, fire burn and cauldron bubble,” of the Three Witches of Macbeth, or Wayward Sisters—one of the most famous lines in English literature, rather than the *real thing*. Rumors of poisoned Halloween candy and Druid-like childcare workers abounded, in part thanks to daytime television. Mention of the Kabbalists, the alchemists, or the mystics of Science were altogether muted. In the end, the *Satanic Panic* crowd based much of its content on broad-sweeping theatrical generalizations, chasing after wind-swept caricatures and the elongated shadows of gnats rather than *real magic*; the kind which saturates our very cognition through the alpha waves of television and with the potency to program; the kind of magic which sends men to the moon and, in the most delusional of indoctrination power, changes the shape of the earth.

After publishing *Trouble in the Toy Box* and its follow-up, *Saturday Morning Mind Control*; authoring 15 books in total and selling 1.3 million copies; and succumbing to a stool and dunce cap of ridicule, author Phil Phillips is currently the president of *God Loves Kids*, a mission’s organization caring for almost 4000 children, and which currently builds orphanages in Nepal. Phillips came to warn us. Most laughed. The thing is, much like the *Satanic Panic* movement which prompted him to action,

many of his ideas seem ill-considered. For example, when warning parents of the Occult's almost-omnipresence in *E.T.*, he seems to get some details wrong in the investigation, such as the children "playing *Dungeons & Dragons* in the opening scene," which makes one wonder if he actually saw the movie to begin with. And according to Phillips, E.T. "tells Elliott that he'll always be with him in his *heart*." For someone playing the part of town squire, he tragically mismanages an important detail—assuming he took the time to see the movie at all.

E.T. doesn't tell Elliott he'll "be with him in his heart." What E.T. actually accomplishes to get away with is far more frightening, and precisely why the Satanic Panic crowd seemed to be grasping at straws rather than spiritual discretion. The movement perished for lack of knowledge. With a glowing fingertip E.T. points to the boy's forehead and assures him, "I'll be right here." By turning our attention to Elliott's third-eye, E.T. has just given himself away. He is not *truly* a cosmic traveler. He is as old as the angels, which according to Enoch, conspired to take human wives on Mount Hermon—I shall explain *why* in a moment—and likely accommodated them. And his method of *waking up* is older. With his long, glowing finger reaching out like the hand of God in Michelangelo's famous painting—an image used for the film's promotion and which seemingly went unchallenged—E.T. is Elliott's astral-guide.

Even Neil Diamond seemed to get the memo. With *Heartlight* he wrote:

“Turn on your heartlight
In the middle of a young boy's dream
Don't wake me up too soon
Gonna take a ride across the moon
You and me.”

Further generalizations and unsubstantiated rumors only make Phillips claims ill-considered when he reports a recent “conversation with one screenwriter of *E.T.*, a man deeply troubled at his involvement with the movie. He told me about the visual subliminals the screenwriters wove into the movie, many of which were specifically designed to enhance the reputation of and change the nation's thinking about the homosexual community.” This is as far as Phillips dares to go—perhaps because he did not actually have the capacity to recognize subliminal homosexuality

while keeping on the lookout for them. He could have mentioned the shed where Elliott first meets E.T., or the Reese's which he cleverly coaxed him to his bedroom with, or the woman's clothing which Gertie dresses him in—or the fact that E.T. was never conclusively identified as male or female. In fact Spielberg confessed to writing E.T. as an asexual creature, which only complicates the film's budding pubescent sexuality. Consider E.T. getting drunk with an indiscriminate portion of beer. Telepathically—which is an Occult practice, by the way—Elliott also succumbs to drunkenness at school. When E.T. watches John Wayne kiss Maureen O'Hara in a televised broadcast of John Ford's *The Quiet Man*, we are left to ponder whether E.T. was sexually stimulated by Wayne or O'Hara. And when it comes to subliminal messaging, let's not overlook the rainbow which clearly breaks God's own laws of natural science to paint a starry sky at E.T.'s departing.

One thing is certain—those who *refuse* to acknowledge the *work* of Satan in the world were immediately capable of critiquing the film's underbelly to America, and with remarkable acuteness. As the 1980's dawned, conservative familialism was maintained under the protection of patriarchal culture and sought to vilify unconventional families—such as gays and lesbians as well as single parents. It actually mirrored the *Satanic Panic* with its widespread fear that a battle of good versus evil was raging just below the surface of American culture. In the face of soaring divorce rates—which more than doubled between 1970 and 1980—and widespread invocations to sustain marriages at all costs, E.T. simply spun that around and gave us a look at the alternative. Actually, that alternative brought America to tears. Whatever the outcome of Elliott's blossoming sexuality may prove to be, one thing remained certain. His father had run off to Mexico with another woman and his mother was on the verge of emotional collapse. And yet the child of divorce could not only survive, but also thrive. In short, the family would get along just fine. After its premiers at the Cannes Film Festival, film critic Pauline Kael wrote in *The New Yorker*: “It is bathed in warmth and seems to clear all the bad thoughts out of your head.” Film critic Marina Heung maintained that “the enduring appeal of E.T. inheres in the dissolution of the nuclear heterosexual family over the latter half of the twentieth century and the concomitant threat posed by this disintegration to many believers in the nuclear heterosexual family's powerful, and presumably positive, effect on child development (*Making E.T. Perfectly Queer*, Brooke M. Beloso).” It is

an “odd little love story between an alien and a child,” wrote Thomson of *The Guardian*, which clears those “bad thoughts.”

In the *E.T. Storybook*, based in part on Melissa Mathison’s screenplay and released with the movie’s premiere, author William Kotzwinkle describes the *alienated* alien with all the zig and zag lines of a modern Renaissance Man—the artist, inventor, healer. His race is described with “misshapen heads, their drooping arms and roly-poly, sawed off torsos” One might mistake him for a goblin, with his “enormous bulbous eyes” and “webbed feet coming almost directly out of his low-hanging belly and his long hands trailing along ape-fashion behind it.” What particularly strikes my interest is the mystical woods, still untouched by the bulldozer and which rises high above Elliott suburban home, where we first meet him. Bunched together amongst the flora, one might mistake them for “little old elves caring for their misty, moonlit gardens,” which would “make one think of elfland, and the tenderness they showed the plants might add to this impression.” E.T. and his crew of botanists were very old, for they had “collected everything that grew or had grown on Earth throughout its existence,” including what only remains now “in fossil form, imprinted in coal.” The botanist has had “millions of years’ experience” on Earth, Kotzwinkle assures us. E.T. is the perfect description of the Watchers who, for thousands of years, have invigorated the Mystery Religion and cultivated the wisdom as well as Sciences of Eastern and Western civilization. “He loved Earth, especially its plant life, but he liked humanity too, and always, when his heart-light glowed, he wanted to teach them, guide them, give them the stored intelligence of millions of years.”

Space itself is the grand illusion. Being first and foremost a botanist, we find E.T.’s meaning in the Pagan religion from which he originated from—animism and pantheism. The little garden gnome not only watched over the physical preservation of Earth’s vegetation, but their *souls*. Wandering off the fire road into Elliott’s backyard—a path which carried him down like a god from the mountain—Kotzwinkle further elaborates on his extraordinary gifting: “Something in the yard was sending soft signals. He turned and saw the vegetable garden. He crept toward it, embraced an artichoke, and asked the vegetables what he should do. Their advice, to go and look in the kitchen window, was not welcome....The artichoke insisted, grunting softly, and the extraterrestrial crept off obediently.” And then, when the pizza delivery person arrived, E.T. panicked. “*There’s nothing to fear*, said a tomato plant. *It’s only the Pizza*

Wagon.” When E.T. dove into the shed to protect himself, he found tools, particularly a diffing fork with which to defend himself. “Don’t stab yourself in the foot, said a little potted ivy.” E.T. could feel the life of the orange diminish as it was plucked from a tree. Like a true fairy of Theosophy, E.T.’s spirit seemed interlocked with a common house plant. When E.T. died, so did the geranium.

There is another ingredient to E.T.’s role as a Watcher of old. He was *conjured*.

Elliott’s mother Mary—only recently divorced and in dire need of excitement in her life—we are told by Kotzwinke, looks strangely upon her two sons and their friends as they play *Dungeons & Dragons* with “their six-sided cube” in her kitchen, a “rubble of a ruined city of Crush bottles, potato chip bags, books papers, calculators.” She tries to make sense of their talk.

One voice says, “So you get to the edge of the forest, but you make a truly stupid mistake, so I’m calling in the Wandering Monsters.”

And then another, “Can I get Wandering Monsters called out for just befriending a goblin?”

“Steve’s Dungeon Master,” that would be her son Michael, “He’s got Absolute Power.”

Absolute Power, Mary sighs. *But she couldn’t even get them to dry a dish.*

And then Elliott—she recognizes the voice of her second-born—shouts: “I run down the road. They’re after me. Just when they’re about to get me and they’re really mad, I throw down my portable hole. I climb in and pull the lid closed. Presto. Disappeared into thin air.”

Portable hole? If only I had one to disappear into, Mary thought.

What she doesn’t realize—what none of them do—is that an actual demon is being *conjured* through the ritual. In fact, Elliott has rather arrogantly laid out a precise plan of action for his astral-guide in the days to come. Within moments the two will meet under the light of a waxing moon like something from Aleister Crowley’s *Moonchild*. We should recognize some semiotics at play—it is rather Kabbalistic in nature—because the letters “E” and “T” begin and end with the protagonist, Elliott, therefore foreshadowing the mystical connection that the two will share. That said, the feminine moon, with her wealth of esoteric potency,

is a major player in the unfolding drama—despite not being listed in the closing credits. E.T. and Elliott's soaring flight on a bicycle *made for two* will bypass the light of the moon at its fullest. This will occur on Halloween night, which is also the ancient druidic festival of Samhain; a dreadfully important moment in the pagan and occult ritual calendar. Samhain is the night when the gates and doors to the "otherworld" are opened, and the spirits of the dead enter our realm. It is also the very night in which E.T. sets up his computer to call upon them.

This is precisely the significance of the shadow government scientist played by real-life Marxist Peter Coyote, but whom we only know as Keys. For most of the movie we never see Coyote's face, only the keys jingling from his belt. On the esoteric level his flashlight reminds us of the hidden knowledge which pierces the darkness. However we need also reference the *Key of Solomon*, an Occultist text of the Italian Renaissance—typical of Renaissance Occult-Science—which is inaccurately ascribed to King Solomon but deals with conjurations, invocations and curses to summon and constrain spirits of the dead and demons in order to compel them to do the operator's will. Aleister Crowley translated one version of it. With E.T., the Scientists of the shadow government are non-other than wizards attempting to summon a botanical gnome—*not* spacemen. Considering all this and what we know of Aleister Crowley, Jack Parsons, and Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which created the American space program, the fact that government esotericists arrive up to apprehend E.T. dressed as NASA astronauts lends further credence to this movie representing one massive ceremony.

Imagery stylized after a Kubrick move seems to fill every frame. Remember when an intoxicated E.T. watches John Wayne kiss Maureen O'Hara on the television? While this transpires, we cut to Elliott's classroom, where three distinct posters depict Voyager, Jupiter, and Io. Voyager was the mission that sent probes to Jupiter and Saturn in the late 1970's—all thanks in to Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

In *Magia Sexualis*, author Hugh Urban described Crowley's use of sex magic as a powerful means to shatter the limited rational mind and finite human ego. "However, the ultimate goal that Crowley sought through his sexual magic went far beyond the mundane desire for material wealth or mortal power. In his most exalted moments, Crowley believed that he could achieve a supreme spiritual power—the power to conceive a divine child, a godlike being, who would transcend the moral failings of the body

born of mere woman. This goal of creating a divine fetus, Crowley suggests, lies at the heart of many esoteric traditions, from ancient Mesopotamia to India to the Arab world: ‘This is the great idea of magicians in all times—To obtain a Messiah by some adaptation of the sexual process. In Assyria they tried incest....Greeks and Syrians mostly bestiality.... The Mohammedans tried homosexuality; medieval philosophers tried to produce homunculi by making chemical experiments with semen. But the root idea is that any form of procreation other than normal is likely to produce results of a magical character.’ Sex magic, particularly in its transgressive, non-reproductive forms, can thus unleash the supreme creative power: the power to create not an ordinary fetus, but a magical child of messianic potential.”

Even the movie itself was filmed in a pomp in ceremonious fashion. If one watches the DVD commentary, Drew Barrymore reminisces that E.T. was like a “guardian angel for them,” insisting that he was almost *real*. We can surmise that E.T. is a type of reptilian creature, which is best hinted at when he telepathically commands Elliott to free the frogs moments after scriptwriter Melissa Mathison’s husband Harrison Ford tells his class: “the frogs won’t feel a thing.” E.T. has Kundalini energy about him—a serpent presence—or what the Occultists would gladly call, “the light bearer.” E.T. fills each shoe nicely. Steven Spielberg once told *The Best of Starlog*: “There was a severe reverence on the set shown by everybody, even the guys who swept the floors, toward E.T. Severe reverence... The kids believed in E.T. the way we believe in Santa Claus... or should believe in Santa Claus. Everybody had such a belief in E.T. as a living, breathing, organism that no one would dare go up to him and make fun of his appearance or make fun of his awkwardness. He really did seem to have a life of his own.”

“Elliott, your friend is a rare and valuable creature,” Keys tells Elliott in Kotzwinkle’s *Storybook*, “We want to know him. If we can get to know him, we can learn so many things about the universe and about life.”

Keys fictional words line-up with Spielberg’s. He told *Twilight Zone Magazine*: “I think that, in the presence of an extraterrestrial, the United States government or any government of the world would want knowledge, not conflict or hostility. I believe that we will solve all our own problems—but I would be nice to know that there’s somebody up there who likes us. It helps.”

Dare I call E.T. *Satanic*? But I will—I *must*. There is hardly a worse cause for mockery than to call anything for what it is. To call rock culture *Satanic* in a serious way or to accuse Hollywood of the same damnable falsehood is cause for a burlesque rebuttal. That is because hardly anyone—and I include much of the *Satanic Panic* generation in this—seems to grasp the implications of Jesus’ pacifism when He answered in John 18:36:

“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

The Devil had already taken Jesus to “an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory,” as Matthew records. And he, being the Devil, said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me (Mathew 4:8-9).”

Jesus did not dispute the Devil. He certainly didn’t call him a liar. It is indeed an eye-opening moment to shed the pounds of cognitive dissonance and come to the awareness that Satan fully manages and operate the kingdoms of the world—all of them. I hope I am not being cavalier. I certainly didn’t stumble upon this realization—or rather, the scales which had likely been placed over my eyes the very year I was born were not shed—until I *discovered* what the Bible said, and what’s more, *believed* what the Bible declares as true regarding the shape of the Earth. Surely, we are being lied to—by *everyone*. Every kingdom, including North Korea; Iran; China; Russia; Israel; and our very own, the United States of America; are operated and managed by Satan. The Bible does not disagree. NASA is most certainly operated and managed by Satan. It exists as an entity of the Executive branch of government. But then let us not forget the Democrats; and the Republicans. Hollywood is Satan’s dominion. Nashville is Satan’s dominion. The Boy Scouts of America probably is too. There are 192 nations currently under the UN, by my count. They *also* are operated and managed by Satan—every one of them.

Our Messiah Yeshua wouldn’t bend a knee for a single claim to fame from any of them. He did not defeat Satan by running for government. He crushed his head on the cross, and by His blood he has snatched us away from the kingdom of darkness. His kingdom is not of this world—*yet*. So why must ours? Where is the outrage? Where is the—dare I say it—*Satanic Panic*? Get out of Babylon!

Spielberg's highest ambition for the movie, he told TZ: "I would hope the film would encourage interests from off the planet to come visit us someday. That would be nice—and very rewarding." But knowing what we do of the little garden gnome and his kind, we're already being tended to. *He touched Elliott's forehead*, writes Kotzwinkle. "I'll be right here," *he said, fingertip glowing*. The last line of Kotzwinkle's narrative reads:

He went into the misty light, with his geranium.

SPACE CAMP

1

THE FIRST HALF OF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION was nearing its end when Mr. Cooper kicked Rick Hummer out of his sixth-grade class. Chicago *could not* be seen from across Lake Michigan. If Mr. Cooper reinforced this point, it is because *naturally* the earth was a globe. I mean, how could it not be? But Hummer wasn't arguing that point. Hummer relegated the observable and practical fact that he'd gone fishing many times with his dad on that very body of water, and *naturally* they could see the city of Chicago. *That's not possible*, his teacher replied. But Hummer insisted.

Mr. Cooper called Rick Hummer a *liar*.

He and his father would slide out upon the water just before the sun came up, he told me over the phone, "and you could see the light in the sky coming. But there was no ball yet in the sky, no rays of sunlight yet—it was just the color coming in, and those were the days, those were the mornings when *literally* Chicago was right there. I mean, you could see it perfectly clear, and the only thing that happened, as we went out on the water, is that Chicago got *bigger*. And some days Chicago looked *huge*. It looked like it was only 10 miles out."

Hummer told Mr. Cooper, "You can call me a liar, but you wouldn't dare call my dad a liar."

Get out of my class.

Hummer did just that. He sat in the office, just outside Principal Jenkin's door, thinking only the mother of that cute girl in his class was listening in as he made a case in his defense, arguing mostly to *himself*. "Mr. Cooper is a jerk," he said out loud, likely as only one variation of Cooper's qualities, completely unaware that his principal was listening in.

"Mr. Hummer," Principal Jenkins said, "Come with me."

But he didn't take Hummer to suspension, as he suspected he might. Jenkins, as it turns out, was in the coast guard. They returned to class, and when *that jerk* Mr. Cooper protested his prior disturbances, his principal

said: “I’m gonna stop you right there. Do you realize how many times I’ve been able to see Chicago from across Lake Michigan?”

“I don’t know.” Mr. Cooper shrugged apathetically. “You tell me.”

“All the time,” said Jenkins.

“It’s *not* in the workbook,” Mr. Cooper suggested. But his voice only seemed to weaken. “Maybe the workbook is wrong.”

Rick Hummer was vindicated—for *now*. Chicago could in fact be seen from across Lake Michigan. He knew it, his dad knew it, and apparently the coast guard knew it, *despite* curriculum. But it was 1984, and clearly, as the Reagan administration prepared for its second term, he had bigger things to worry about than the 1984 that was Orson Wells or the *shape* of the earth from across Lake Michigan. Hummer was on the verge of becoming a man. And *naturally*, the *shape* of another sex was on his mind.

Hummer never thought about his victory again—that is, until his grandmother died.

2

SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE PROBABLY in order as to why I distinctly recall the space shuttle Challenger disaster in *real time*—specifically the manner in which its memory has always been recollected. It’s literally burned into my mind. On the 28th of January, 1986 I was only five years old, and wouldn’t even graduate from kindergarten until the following year. So what was I doing at a school I wasn’t *technically* allowed to attend until September? I don’t have an easy answer for that.

Here’s another complication. The Challenger shuttle exploded over Cape Canaveral at precisely 11:39 in the morning, Eastern Standard Time. In Hawthorne, California, three hours *earlier*, school wouldn’t even begin until nine. And yet there I was, sitting in the *very* library where I would complete the eighties pouring through the “P” lettered encyclopedia in my spare time to dream uneasily about Blackbeard and his army of **p**irates, or hang gliding over a *mooring* **p**araceratherium, the world’s largest ever existing mammal, while a saber-toothed cat growl at a sad looking wooly mammoth trapped in tar, none of which begin with “p” per say, except

for the fact that I could probably find an illustration of them while reading about prehistoric times. Occasionally I might even flip through “T,” always on a trembling search for tornados—“A” for astronaut or “S” for space, not so much. I do not remember what I had for breakfast that morning, or even if I attended preschool later that day. My only conclusion is that CBC was a private school on Centinela Bible Church property, and my father was pastor. A visit was not uncommon. In fact, the back yard of our parsonage *doubled* as the school’s playground. Perhaps, and this is another fair guess, because a teacher was involved in the shuttle’s launch, I was simply invited to watch. The media, the entire schooling system, in fact all of America made a big deal of it. An estimated 17 percent of American’s witnessed Challenger’s demise on live television. 85 percent would hear of it within the hour. But one thing I am quite certain of. *That* is where I watched the Challenger shuttle get rocketed up—up—up within the box-shaped television screen, a clunky device which, when married to its gray roller, could scurry around from room to room on a whim—bulking knobs for channels. To a five year old, its 73 second flight seemed like an eternity.

And then it *exploded*.

Even now I can close my eyes and *hear* the droll, almost colorless, though collected voice of the television reporter, maybe even backed by a NASA control man, as the unexpected flames disrupt the ceremony. *Oh my god*. I can contrast that with a total gaping silence in the room. Gene MacAndrews, the school’s principal, still hastily turns off the television, every time I rewind and replay the tape in my head—soon as he realizes what is happening—MacAndrews promptly instructs everyone to return to class, or perhaps *start* class. Either way, I don’t rightly recall. If he ever gets around to talking about what they’ve seen, and most assuredly how they are expected to process the experience, I have no memory of it—*nothing* that happens before or afterwards remains on the tape reel in my skull, undoubtedly because I didn’t yet attend the school. Somebody took me there to view the shuttle launch, and perhaps that same someone escorted me out. Back to *Go, Dog Go* and *Green Eggs and Ham*, tricycles and stacking blocks. What I witnessed there on that January morning was never spoken about again.

MY ENTIRE POINT IS THIS. A MAN is purposed to live thousands of ordinary days in his lifetime. It is only once every decade or two in which those thousands of inconspicuous moments become cause for a collective, even ceremonious consciousness. The two massive explosions which blew open a 1,000 ton roof from the Chernobyl power plant in Ukraine, releasing 400 times more radiation than the atomic bomb reportedly dropped on Hiroshima wouldn't happen for precisely another three months—April 26, 1986. And yet I would imagine that I'd have a difficult time finding someone who could tell me where they were or what they were doing when news of that defining Reagan-era event happened.

On the 28th of January, 1986, Rick Hummer chose the most ordinary day imaginable to *skip* school. His decision would become part of the ceremony. “I wasn't feeling that great,” he half-heartedly maintains, though admittedly, he did dial up the symptoms just a tad—a notch above *smidgeon*, in order to secure a day home from school. His mother bought the padded groan. One only needs wonder if his mother had backed down the full length of the driveway before the television was turned on. At any rate, within moments of her departure, and with the house to himself, he was already bored. For whatever reason, Hummer decided to dig into his closet.

Maybe it needed cleaning out.

I am a firm believer that *coincidence* is simply the residue of design, for it was there in that closet that he stumbled upon a crinkled up picture of the Challenger shuttle. His older sister had married a police officer, who was stationed at Edwards Air Force Base in the Mojave desert, just north of Lancaster—Charles Johnson's backyard. In turn, his brother-in-law snapped the photo “when they were doing the test runs—when they were landing it at Edward's Air Force Base It was the one that they had piggy-back on a jet.” He ironed it out a little. “I was mad that that picture got messed up.”

And then it occurred to him.

Wait—wasn't the Challenger supposed to launch today?

In fact, that *very* moment, the television in the other room (which, mind you, likely turned on the moment after his mother left for work) seemed to speak directly at him.

CHALLENGER.

The CHALLENGER will launch *today*.

Cape Canaveral, CHALLENGER.

CHALLENGER.

Teacher, 10, TEACHER, 9, *teacher*, 8...

Get in here, Rick Hummer.

Now, 7...

CHALLENGER.

Riiiiiiick....

In an unprecedented stay-home-from-school move, Hummer made a b-line dash for the living room, feeling *miraculously* better, mind you, and plopped down onto the couch in order to catch what had already been promised to be the lift-off of the decade.

“Obviously we all know what happened,” Hummer said. “We were all told that this thing exploded *when* it exploded, and I had the most eerie feeling being there at home by myself, even though I was in the eighth grade, I was still empty when I saw that, and what they were saying on TV, and I kept thinking about those people freefalling back to earth....*if* they were alive. What would it be like when they hit the water? There was no way they were going to survive.” *Why didn’t they have parachutes in the cockpit?* “All this stuff was going through my head. I didn’t want to be home alone anymore. I felt awful.”

Hummer jumped on his bike to brave the frigid cold of January along the shores of Lake Michigan. His rode all the way to Mr. Kaufman’s office—his school principal.

“I don’t know if you guys have done this yet,” Hummer told him, likely out of breath (but what thirteen or fourteen year-old loses his breath for long?), “but I think we ought to have a moment of silence, for the crew and their families, before we leave today.”

Mr. Kaufman stared at the pink-faced teenager standing before him in awe. “You know, you’re absolutely right.”

Hummer said, “And so I ended up going to class, and it was a very somber thing, because everybody had watched it—everybody was talking about it.” There was of course the occasional kid cracking jokes, “as kids can be, but what I remember about it is that it really bothered me, because at that age I was already thinking about going into the air force. I was already thinking about what it would be like to go to space someday. I really wanted to be a part of the space program when I was a kid.”

Meanwhile, in Sacramento, California, seventh grader Shelley Lewis witnessed the immediate unrestrained tears of her science teacher.

Christa McAuliffe was a teacher.

She was supposed to be the first teacher in space.

“The whole school declared a day of mourning,” she said. “Everybody remembers where they were. Just like 9/11, when those planes hit—*everybody* has that memory.” In a way, the Challenger shuttle disaster became a personal acclamation. “It became this thing of, *well*—we don’t know what’s going to happen to the space program.” But Lewis very much wanted to be part of the space program.

Uh, Hummer thought, I don’t know if I want to do this anymore.

Shelley Lewis however *would* risk it. She put everything on the line. It would take another thirty years before shuttle Challenger became another sort of rallying cry altogether. What happened on the 28th of January, Lewis now concludes, “is the basis of mind control. Kind of like the World Trade Center falling down, everybody was watching. It’s a way to create fear and sadness and sorrow. When you create a traumatic event, you instantly remember everything about that day—*where* you were, *who* you were with. You just have that recollection of things, and you never forget it. And that was a part of MK Ultra—trauma based mind control.”

In a special issue of *Flat Earth News*, Charles Johnson maintained that the shuttle Challenger had either been exploded by NASA or had fallen victim to a divine curse. Not one for mincing his words, his headline read: ‘*Challenger Blown up by God.*’ If Johnson had the sort of research sophistication to know what the MK Ultra program truly was, he only seemed to let it out in doses. For example, Johnson asserted that astronauts are either force-fed drugs or either brainwashed into believing

the round “Earth and planets nonsense.” Once, to a *San Francisco Examiner* reporter, Johnson marveled, “Some astronauts actually believe they’ve been in space.” The greatest sensation of that day however is the fact that President Ronald Reagan, while giving televised interviews about the shuttle disaster, mentioned God and then looked up to the sky. Johnson was jubilant. The very gesture, he said, derives from a starting point (if even subconsciously), whereas heaven is above the earth, and the earth is flat.

It is rather ironic, nearly three decades later, that the teacher who hitched a ride into space would be *claimed* alive. “We know now,” Hummer said, “obviously, there’s a very good chance that some of those folks are still alive and well, some under the same names, and still using the same names—as far as I can tell.” If only Johnson had lived long enough to hear of it.

Not that Payload Specialist McAuliffe was given a parachute and a life raft or anything. In what will assuredly come across as a plot twist to yet another *Twilight Zone* episode, of Challenger’s tenth mission line-up, which included Commander Francis R. Scobee, Pilot Michael J. Smith, Mission Specialists Ronald McNair, Ellison S. Onizuka, Judith A. Resnik, and Gregory B. Jarvis, several would furthermore be claimed as those who might be counted among the living, with pictures to prove it. They were never on board to begin with. But here’s the ultimate plot *twist*.

Nowadays, they’re *all* teachers.

4

FROM THAT DAY FORWARD, SHELLEY LEWIS knew *exactly* what she was going to do with her life. Ronald Reagan was still president when astronaut Alan B. Shepard walked into the room. The thirteen year-old was *literally* star struck. And she had good reason to be. After all, this was space camp. Everything changed in that moment. Shelley Lewis was now quite certain of it. She wasn’t only going to be an astronaut. She was going to be the first woman to walk on the moon.

Shelley was sitting on her son’s bed when I called her on the phone. The time read 4:50 in the morning from my end in Ireland, nearly 9 pm at night in Sacramento. I had slept little. Her house was being readied for

the market, and for the duration of our interview, Shelley gazed back upon the *stranger* who would influence the events of her life so profoundly from a blow up air mattress.

“While we were there it was very militant,” she recalled of her days at space camp. And she loved it. “You had to make your bed every day. You had to get up. You had formation. They had deadlines. I was a payload specialist. They showed us how astronauts train underwater. So we did that. We would be building things underwater. Everything that you do as an astronaut, we did all the training.” The Challenger explosion was still very much a hot topic for discussion. The moment however that would forever alter the suppositions which construed her reality arrived while they were seated in a large room, she said, “where everything was 3-D. We were looking at all these stars through 3-D glasses, and you could see asteroids coming at you. And it was a big omnimax sort of theater. They had screens all around you. So when you looked to the left you could see things coming at you, and when you looked to the right, things came at you, and so it was a totally multidimensional experience. And then Alan Shepherd came up and started talking to us about being an astronaut and what it was like, and he took questions. He told his story about how he went to the academy and how he was selected and what a rigorous thing it was to become an astronaut.”

“I was star struck,” *literally*, “I just remember being completely star struck.” *This is what I want to do for the rest of my life.*

5

CHARLES JOHNSON RAKED IN WHAT LITTLE exposure he could—the good, the bad, and *mostly* the ugly. In September of 1986, while Challenger was still fresh in America’s collective memory, the flat earthist drove down to Anaheim, California, in order to appear on *Hot Seat*, Wally George’s right-wing, angst-driven talk show. In the five minutes which Wally gives to the flat earthist, no mention of the Challenger explosion can be found, whatsoever. Johnson certainly wasn’t going to bring it up, and Wally apparently never thought to. One might wonder *if*, despite the dribble of combative showmanship, Wally were letting him off easy. And yet, the flat earthist does very little to push the conversation forward. Johnson seems to wait for the set-up, answers essentially yes or no most

of the time, scarcely engaged, and acknowledges the crowds disdain for him all too often, while Wally comes across as if he had put so little thought into his guest's proposals as to whip up an argument twenty minutes before show time.

Hanging behind George's desk is a picture of the U.S. space shuttle. His gray slacks and blazer, white dress shirt and Republican-red tie, when combined with his platinum blond hair—combed straight down at ear-length and parted on the side—was practically a conservative trademark of the 1980's. The segment begins much as I would expect just about any *Hot Seat* episode to go. As the studio returns from its commercial break, the crowd can be heard chanting:

U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

George utilizes the first minute of an already bookended segment plugging his latest rock album, *Wally George Sings the Rock Hits!* It's the sort of LP Mom would approve of, or Nancy Reagan (practically every song has "U.S.A." in the title). From here, George's signature combative interview stylings commence; a successful tactic for conservative crowds during the heightened years of the Satanic Panic.

Wally says: "Now, our final guest, I can't believe this. But he's the head of the Flat Earth Society. He says the earth is definitely flat. Here is my guest, Charles Johnson. Let's hear it for Johnson."

His crowd, mostly young, angry, white men, erupt with a compatibility of riotous *boos*.

Wally turns towards Johnson. "Now Charles, you can't truly be serious and believe that this earth is flat!"

Though Johnson presents a calm and pedigreed demeanor from his hot seat, he seems trapped in the box of the studio itself, a willing exhibit for George and his guests, while offering little or nothing to engage the outside television audience he showed up for, in Southern California homes where *Hot Seat* is segmented.

Johnson says, "The earth is flat. It's one of the few things that you can ever know for sure in life. It is the only sure thing. You know, they talk about death and taxes as being sure, but the earth being flat is much more sure than that."

“But Charles,” George protests. “We have seen pictures of the round globe!”

“Are you serious, Wally? In other words, your proof is, I saw it on TV!”

“I’ve seen it from an airplane!” No you didn’t, Wally. “And I see its round! Are you saying everybody else is wrong and you people are the only ones who are right?”

Johnson nods, “Absolutely.”

The groans of self-pleasured mockery, which once kept curious minds at a safe arms-length away, climaxes among George’s audience.

“Don’t get excited,” Johnson responds to the crowd, “the average person over 40 or 50 years-old knows the earth is flat.”

“But Charles, if the earth was flat, you’d go driving along or you’d be in a boat, and you’d reach the end and you’d fall off the earth!”

“You’ve got it backwards. If the earth were a globe, a ball, if you tried to get to Australia, you’d go over the edge. Any direction you went, you’d go over the edge. Only a globe has an edge. Obviously and logically a flat earth would not have an edge, otherwise there wouldn’t be any water on it.”

“But if the earth is flat, there has to be a fall-off somewhere!”

“The earth has no edge.”

“But then how can it be flat?”

At last, Johnson attempts to take the conversation somewhere—*anywhere*. “According to Moses, who’s the original writer for the Flat Earth Society, the world doesn’t have a shape. It is just water—water lying *flat*.”

George delivers what I can only assume to be a somewhat common, if not signature, *migraine* fueled expression, intended to arouse his viewer’s own suspicions.

“The water is lying flat,” George says.

“Right, all water lays flat. I mean, that’s the nature of water, to lay flat. How else can water lay?”

Finally, a *good* question. Here the show host is presented with an observable fact that he cannot answer, and so returns fire in the only way he knows how—an insult.

“Charles, I think the only thing flat here is your head!”

George’s audience rips into Johnson with the salivating ovation of a gladiatorial arena. Johnson tries to get a word in to no avail.

“Charles, are you disputing our astronauts who have *seen* our beautiful round globe from outer space?” George forms a *beautiful round globe* with his fingers.

“Carnies,” Johnson dips into his Lancaster worldview without ever giving his audience a good reason for understanding why. He quips: “Carnies! Not a word of truth! No one has been to the moon.”

“Hold on. Wait a minute, wait a minute! Did you say *nobody* has been to the moon?”

“Nobody’s been to the moon.”

George can barely contain himself. Neither can his crowd. Someone cries, *Oh my god!* A wasp’s nest of agitation swells among the bleachers. George waves his hand to calm them down. “Hold on, are you saying—are you saying that our trip to the moon was all phony?”

“Phony! Totally and completely phony!”

Wally George has a migraine.

The hoax, Johnson says, “has been taught—it comes from Greece 2,500 years ago. It’s called the grease ball religion. No proof has ever been found for this insane belief.”

“What proof do you have that the earth is flat?”

“The Bible is a flat earth book. Jesus Christ ascended *up*.”

“Jesus never said the earth is flat!”

“Oh, yes. He ascended *up!* Heaven is above the earth. In fact, the only part of the Bible that is claimed written by God Himself is the Ten Commandments, and within those commandments you will find in Exodus 24. It states the earth is flat. You shall not make a graven image from heaven *above* or earth *beneath*, or the water *underneath* the earth. In other words, that says the world is flat.”

On that note, George ends the show, but not before delivering his most lasting and impressionable line. “Our time is gone. All I can say is, Charles, you’ve got a little studying to do.” For the home viewer, George seems to make the only *sensible* point. Johnson has presented us with very little to nothing to justify his disengagement with *perceived* reality, and though the Greek philosopher’s discovery of globe Earth will make some Christian fundamentals uneasy, if they even watch this show to begin with, even his Scriptural flanking seems ill-conceived. George quickly concludes, “The earth is round! I’ll be right back, goodnight, everybody!”

As the closing credits roll across the television screen, Wally George crosses the stage from his desk to Johnson’s Hot Seat, not to thank him for coming on, but to pick up his *Flat Earth News* bulletins and hold them up for the willful arrogance of his audience.

6

NOW, SCOTT IRWIN WAS BORN with a cleft hand. Through a series of varying surgeries Irwin was able to form full use of it, but the hand itself was always *recognizably* deformed. Lewis had met Irwin in the seventh grade, a year before space camp. “We were neighbors—buddies. I had been buddies with him since I was little. He would walk me home from school. And I always had a crush on him.” His feelings were mutual. “But we never dated. We went to different high schools. He always played soccer from the time he was 4 or 5 years old, and I always ran cross country.” So when he would play soccer against her high school, Shelley made a habit of looking for him.

More specifically, she’d be running cross country, a route which would inevitably bend past the soccer field. She knew to look for him and he knew to look for her.

From her sons air mattress, where she spoke with me on the phone, Shelley seemed to smile.

“He’d always come and find me,” she said.

Meanwhile, as Irwin flirted recklessly from the soccer field, Shelley Lewis went about studying everything she could about the lives of her heroes, Shepard, Aldrin, and Armstrong. “I wanted to go to West Point

because, even though Alan B. Shepard went to the naval academy, I wasn't a fan of big ships. I didn't like getting sea sick."

The army rarely needed rinsed of the salty sea breeze. Let the navy deal with it. Clearly, a better fit. But herein another problem arose. Lewis didn't have perfect vision—potentially disastrous for a young hopeful helicopter pilot. "So I actually went to an eye doctor to give me those gas permeable lenses that would allow the stigmatism in my eyes to correct for me—for the short duration that would allow me to pass the test to be a pilot."

Shelley Lewis, graduating class of 1991, thought of everything.

"I spent my entire high school career attempting to figure out how I was going to get into west point. I would spend so many hours in the career center eating lunch," dreaming of the academy. "That's what I did. I became a total nerd—yeah, a *total* nerd. Everything I could study about the F-15, the F-14. I knew everything about fighter pilots. I knew all about the different planes that they flew. Air Force Academy, Naval Academy, West Point; I knew what year West Point was founded, 1802." Buzz Aldrin, he went to the Academy at West Point too.

West Point became her flight plan. And space camp was the Genesis behind all of it.

7

THE REJECTION LETTER CAME during her senior year of high school. Lewis' SAT's were not good enough. How was that even possible? The rejection letter was a *liar*.

Better luck next year, kid—Colonel Pierce Albert Rushton, Jr.

"I was absolutely devastated, because I had spent the last five years trying to get everything that I needed to do." This included a primary nomination from her congressman. "In order to get into the Academy, it is basically following the recipe and then submitting your application in hopes that you get chosen. But really it's a shot in the dark. It's very difficult to get in."

Shelley Lewis cried onto her boyfriend's shoulder, clinching Colonel Rushton's letter in her hands. She had no idea what the colonel's phone number was, but she wasn't going to let that stop her. Lewis was aiming for the moon. It was now or never. So Lewis called West Point on the phone.

Get me Colonel Rushton, she said. I'll wait.

"Hello?" Colonel Rushton.

You don't understand. I went to space camp. I met Alan Shepherd. I ate lunch in the career center. I did everything right. My whole life has revolved around this. I'll scrub toilets I don't care. I'll do anything. Just let me in and I'll scrub toilets for an entire year—Shelley.

"The fact that you *just* called," Colonel Rushton told the young woman over the phone, greatly impressed, "has *never* happened before."

He thought about it.

"If you want to get into the Academy that bad, your scores are high enough and you have the primary nomination." Colonel Rushton shrugged. "You can enlist for a year and go to prep school."

Shelley Lewis had only one reply to give.

Yes!

JESUS TAPE

1

“I DIDN’T CHOOSE THIS LIFE,” ROBBIE DAVIDSON INSISTED over the phone. “God intervened. He chose it. It was as if God was telling me, *I have a plan. I have a purpose. You’re coming.*”

Davidson is undoubtedly referring to his former life in the Edmonton bar and club scene, a segment he refers to as *cruising around*. It was the early nineties—October of 1991 to be exact. Davidson was twenty-one years young, and though Canada had only recently survived nine consecutive weeks of Bryan Adams on the top of their charts—(*Everything I Do*) *I Do It for You* was practically bleeding through the boom box—hash, marijuana, and mushrooms conducted the transmission of his airwaves.

Cruising—and for whatever reason, his friend Don came along for the ride, “but he never came into the bar,” Davidson recalled. “I didn’t think much of it” at the time. But he was soon to find out why.

One Saturday night after cruising Edmonton Don parked his car in front of Davidson’s house, engine idling, but Davidson did not open his passenger-side door to leave. The average temperature for Edmonton each October is 10 degrees Celsius, and that’s a teeth chattering high. Records will show however that the first half of October in 1991, particularly Saturday the 12th, ranged from 7 to 21 degrees Celsius—practically a heat wave. Then again, the following Saturday, October the 19th, reached a high of only 6 degrees. In Fahrenheit terms, that’s 42. While temperatures steadily dipped into the coming freeze of another long Canadian winter, Robbie and Don defrosted their fingers over heaters, *talking*. And then, quite unexpectedly, it occurred to his friend: “Oh my goodness,” undoubtedly speaking in a Canadian accent, “It’s late. I’ve got church in the morning.”

Church...? Robbie Davidson scowled. “Your parents still make you go to church?”

Davidson grew up in the sort of household that went to church, the United Church of Canada, mind you, because it was good for the family.

Perhaps he might even revisit it someday—*when* he had a family. But he was free from that now. “And in Canada the United Church was the first church to introduce homosexuality, I think it was 84. They accepted homosexual ministers and such.”

Don shrugged. “No, I *want* to go to church.”

One thing led to another and then, “We got into eschatology, and I was really fascinated by stuff like that—end times stuff. He started comparing events that were going on in the world, like Iran and Russia.”

But in the end, “None of this really matters,” Davidson told his friend with a shrug. The man from Edmonton was a *good* person. “I’m not going to hell because I believe in God.”

His friend stopped him. “Believing in God is not enough.”

Even the demons believe, and shudder.

“And he went on to tell me the difference between believing in a God and *truly* believing in Jesus. You have to have a personal relationship, and the only way to do that is through Jesus. He went on to explain why Jesus *came* to die, why He *had* to die,” and for Robbie Davidson, “everything clicked.” There was indeed a drastic difference between knowing and belief. *This* he was certain of. The words of Jesus undoubtedly prodded at his soul, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Don never made it to church that Sunday.

Regardless, come Monday (it was two nights later by his reckoning), the man from Edmonton was clubbing again—business as usual. “Even though that was a profound conversation, and I was told the Gospel, a few days later I was out at the bar like nothing happened.” Don was a respectable man. Perhaps he would revisit church again, *someday*. After all, it was beneficial for the health of the family. But Robbie Davidson was also a good man, and in the meantime he had airwaves to attend to, with hash, marijuana, or mushrooms, whatever he could get his hands on, conducting them.

HE COULD COUNT WITH HIS FINGERS, and on one hand, mind you; *Saturday... Sunday... Monday... Tuesday...* how many days chugged by before Robbie Davidson crashed in his parent's basement, high on *something*. "I'm lying there on the couch," it was the following Wednesday, "and in the middle of the night I woke up, and there was this presence around me, and all I remember is putting up my hands and saying, *I am coming to you*. It was robotic almost. It was really strange, I can't really explain it."

If my calendar is correct, and I confess it's a wild guess, then Davidson awoke the following morning to a crisp -7 degrees Celsius, or 19.4 degrees for my American audience. At any rate, he sat up on the couch and looked to the shelf, which his parents had stocked with VHS tapes. "There were probably a hundred of them. I mean, they were one big row."

But only one of them was *glowing*.

"It was literally glowing on the shelf." More precisely, "It was *pulsating*." 21-year-old Robbie Davidson rose to his feet to follow the light, "and I couldn't even read it by that point, because my eyes were foggy." It is no coincidence, Davidson assures me; the tape which he dutifully removed from its sleeve and popped into the VCR was the VHS tape *Jesus*—the 79 movie.

Davidson describes the next 115 minutes of his life as a *spiritual smacking*. "Every word of Jesus came to life. I got on my knees. I was totally in tears. I prayed the sinner's prayer at that point. From that point on my life instantly changed." At the closing credits he gave his life to Christ. "I look at it like, I was given the truth, and then I was walking away from it, and Jesus just slapped me over the head."

WACK...!

"There was no free will on my part—in my *doing*. It was planned. It was ordained. And He wasn't going to allow me to just wander off to carry on living my life the way I wanted to. God wasn't going to let me get away with it. It was almost like God came to me supernaturally and was like, *No, no, no, I'm calling you for my service.*' He stopped me in my tracks.

He woke me up out of my sleep. If that video hadn't been glowing—then I don't know.”

Davidson paused to consider the alternative.

“I probably would have walked up the stairs out of the basement and on with my life.”

3

IN 1991 ROBBIE DAVIDSON HUNKERED DOWN IN a 24-hour diner in order to drink coffee, smoke cigarettes and, in one sitting, read the entire New Testament from beginning to end. He ate a little, undoubtedly used the bathroom when needed, but never left his table until Revelation parted from the back binding. “I was so glued—so transfixed;” the entire unfolding drama “was just popping out of the page.”

Keegan's diner was a leftover habit from his *cruising* days when he and his friends could crash in a bench seat after the bars had closed. “As soon as I became a Christian, I quit drinking. I quit drugs. I quit sex. Those habits were gone.” Other friends *struggled*, but “that was completely taken away from me.” The smoking however, and the need to camp out in Keegan's, remained. “That was right after I got saved. I sat there and I read the New Testament, and I did not leave until it was done.”

Soon staff and customers alike began to wander over, curious as to what occupied Davidson; and Davidson would talk to *anyone* who approached him. Conversations ensued, unlike any he'd ever had before in his cruising days—seeking out the next high. “It was like I was on fire.”

Reading the entire New Testament from beginning to end took Davidson just over 30 hours. “It became a joke. It was like—this guy isn't leaving until he's done with the Bible. I never had the joys of reading my entire life, and then suddenly it wasn't just the joy of reading, God was speaking to me through all these words. The words are jumping off the page. They're hitting me. They're smacking me. When I got through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, when I got to Romans, how could anyone *leave*? How could anyone *stop* reading? It was like the whole world opened up.”

“I went through staff changes,” he said.

When some of those workers began trickling back in to their next day’s shift, Robbie Davidson was still there.

The fire that was ignited within Davidson from Keegan’s off the 109 in Edmonton continued on, well beyond his initial reading of the New Testament. Keegan’s, apparently, was only a trial run. “I wanted to know *everything* about the Bible. I was *so* on fire. I was *so* hungry. I just devoured it. In school, before I was a Christian, I *hated* reading. I can tell you the only books I’d read my entire life were probably the books that I had to for school. I could not read a book to save my life.” But afterwards, “I devoured books. I devoured books like there’s no tomorrow. I read maybe 500 books in the first few years, *easily*.”

The fire would lead him to Trinity Western University in British Columbia, which he attend with Don, to Christian radio, to Christian newspaper, to Christian web companies. “I enjoyed it. I looked on all of this as an opportunity. I wouldn’t be doing any of this if it wasn’t for the Gospel.” He studied all the world’s religions—all the world’s cults. *How does one go about fulfilling the great commission?* Soon the Jehovah’s Witnesses would be arriving at his door—and maybe even the Mormons. He needed to answer them. He needed to tell them about the Jesus written about and testified to in his Bible.

“The one thing that didn’t change,” Davidson stopped to correct himself. “I shouldn’t say *didn’t change*. The one thing I struggled with in the first year was doubt. Even though I believed in it all one-hundred percent, there was this nagging whisper in my ear.” *How do you know for sure?* “I had all these crazy ideas, and believe me; I was attacked with the craziest ideas about Jesus—about the Bible. And one by one every single one of those questions was answered.”

Though it is true that the desires directly correlating with his cruising days, such as drugs and alcohol, were as far behind him as the lifestyle associated with such habits, soon *other* temptations began to trickle in. Davidson found himself in the throes of sick and twisted thoughts. And *naturally*, “my mind can’t even think that.”

You went too far this time, Davidson would tell Satan.

For Davidson, such trials of doctrine and dark, twisted thinking was essentially God telling him, *I want you to fight through this*.

Seemingly from *day one*, Davidson found himself under the persuasion of young earth creationism. “Kent Hovind was a huge part of that. I was blown away. Getting into creation science was massive—*massive*. I would devour that because I wanted to be equipped to give an answer. For me it was about educating myself so that no matter what came up in a conversation, I would have the answer and I would get the person thinking. I was blown away with how much there was for young earth creationism, or getting into six day literal creationism. I don’t think there was ever a time when I wasn’t a literal six day creationist in my entire journey.”

Here Davidson paused. “Unfortunately I didn’t take the Bible *literally* when it came to other verses in creation, and again, most likely because I just didn’t understand it.”

“Very few of us did,” I told Davidson. “We didn’t have context for any of it.”

Regardless of *context*, Robbie Davidson prepared himself tirelessly for that day of its unveiling. And yet, despite the flat earth revelation still to come, there has never been another moment in time, Davidson assured me, like that thirty-hour day in Keegan's off the 109. The spark within derived from “a revelation even bigger than flat earth—*way bigger* than flat earth,” which is why, I suppose, Davidson’s lust for truth has changed little today since sitting at that table in Edmonton, speaking with everyone he met. He sat in Keegan’s drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes, getting delightfully acquainted with the *joy* behind the unexpected cosmology.

“Every soul is worth is to me,” he said.

PARADISE

1

HE WAS A MARTIAL ARTIST AND A POET, and then finally one day in the spring of 1992 it occurred to twenty-one year old Zen Garcia that he was trapped behind four walls too many, and the view through his window was lacking. After abandoning church as a teenager he tried his hand at atheism with little success, but desert portraits and mountainous landscapes were something he could commit to. “Most people’s lives keep them separated from what is the great mystery of creation and God,” he explained over the phone, “and that deeper more profound understanding. And so inherently I wanted to break my routine and to get away from the whole corporate 9 to 5.”

Zen Garcia sold *everything*.

As proof of his determination, he published his very first book, a collection of poetry called, *Look Somewhere Different*. And that’s exactly what Zen was going to do.

Look.

Somewhere.

Different.

But he’d need a car first—preferably a van.

After finding one such contender, he dropped in a new engine and transmission and then hit the open road, pressed to the decision that he was going to take that fork in whichever direction the spirit led him.

“*Wait*, what kind of van was it?” I asked.

“It was a...” Zen stopped to ponder that fact. “80—*no*, I forget the year.” He thought harder. “No wait...” He paused again. “It was an 88 Ford Windstar Van. Actually...” Clearly, the specifics of his van bothered him. “I think it was called an Aerostar Van before the Windstar.” But getting back to the entire point of his story, being, “I had enough money coming in for two or three years that I could get to wherever I need to go.”

“And besides,” he added, “I always had martial arts to fall back on.”

Instead, the man from Atlanta learned to become a master of snowboarding.

2

HIS VERY FIRST STOP WAS NEW MEXICO, a drive he took with his father in order that they might see his grandmother before she was *gone*. He remained there until her passing.

The painted deserts of Arizona soon welcomed him—specifically Sedona. Zen paused for Zion; Mesa Verde in Colorado; the Anasazi cliff dwellings; until finally “the redwood highway, the whole redwood giant sequoias up above, north of San Francisco—the valley of the giants,” opened up and spread out before him, like something from a *Simon and Garfunkel* song. “And so I lived in a van for four years and traveled slowly across America, lived everywhere, and basically was seeking to have experience of the divine, to come to a deeper knowledge of God.” He would take the Pacific Coast Highway all the way to Seattle.

It was in Seattle, he said, where his girlfriend waited for him.

“Most people don’t know this, but the top of Mount Rainier is called *Paradise*. In the book I had published,” *Look Somewhere Different*, “I had told her I was going to take her to Paradise. And so as we were driving to Rainier, there were signs which read: 50 miles to Paradise, 10 miles to Paradise.”

Zen leaned over to his girlfriend and smirked.

“Didn’t I tell you I was going to take you to Paradise one day?”

3

FROM MOUNT IDAHO HE THEN DROVE EAST across Montana and headed south for Yellowstone. But it was Jackson Hole that nibbled at the appetites of his heart, and eventually nabbed his undying attention.

“If you’re not familiar with Jackson Hole, those mountains come right off the valley floor and rise up 14,000 feet into the air. They’re beautiful and incredible, and there’s only 5000 people that live there during most of the year. There are more animals there than people. And it reminds me of Africa because there are literally tribes of all this wildlife, and huge herds of deer and mule deer and elk and bison and wolves and coyotes and pumas. It’s just incredible. And the animals rule there. The people are very few and far in-between. And they’re only limited to one small place, whereas you have the Teton Mountains right there, and that is back to back with Yellowstone right above it. And so you have a huge swath of area which is completely unpopulated. The animals have full roam and full reign.”

Jackson Hole, he said, is civilization on the edge of wilderness. “There isn’t another town until you get to west Yellowstone.”

Zen was driving through the Tetons when all of a sudden break lights barked in front of him. Everything came to an obstinate standstill. “People were getting out of their vehicles,” he said. So naturally he walked up to the front of the line with the rest of them to see what the commotion was—hoping that nobody had died. “There was a moose lying out in the road, blocking off both lanes of traffic. He was just chilling, and people were out taking pictures of him. He was so huge.” Zen beamed with delight while evoking the memory. “Those animals are so huge. But he was blocking both sides of the road.”

Progress would have to wait on standby until nature was good and ready. *That* was Jackson Hole, Wyoming; civilization on the edge of wilderness—exactly how Zen liked it. America had much to offer, but when he happened upon the Tetons, Zen had finally found the paradise he was looking for. “I decided to spend my winters there, and ended up working on the mountain as a liftee. And that’s when I learned to snowboard. That was the most incredible place, and the most incredible experiences that I ever had.” His girlfriend decided to join him.

Once again, Zen simpered with the recollection.

“We had an incredible winter there.”

WEST POINT

1

YOUNG MEN HAVE LONG ASPIRED to run off to the military in hopes of *appreciating* the bare bones, brick and mortar façade of basic training and barrack life, and in doing so *avoid* higher education (at least, temporarily); their daily regiment being funneled down to uniformed clothing options and a shaved head for all, none of which are likely to go out of style soon. West Point decided to become the paradoxical exception to the rule. Quite unlike grunt work, the Academy would not bend so low as to *recruit*. Contrarily, young sages would beckon and beg to have their minds reshaped. The great American institution goes all the way back to 1802. But even in high school, Shelley Lewis could have told you that. The United States Naval Academy would follow nearly half a century later, in 1845, with the U.S. Merchant Marines Academy and the Air Force Academy falling in rank in 1943 and 1954, respectively. And yet the reconditioning of an unskilled worker into someone educated *beyond* the requirements necessary for battle all started at West Point. Shelly Lewis arrived in the summer of 1992.

Comfortably situated on the western bank of the Hudson River, fifty miles north of New York City, West Point inhabits some of the most remarkable country on earth. Upon visiting in 1841, Englishman Charles Dickens remarked, “It could not stand on more appropriate ground, and any more beautiful can hardly be.” By the time Shelley Lewis stepped onto the campus, *wearing make-up*, the Boston architectural firm, ‘Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson,’ had already long transformed the central cadet campus into a neogothic delight, of which the Cadet Chapel, cut from granite, predominately in a black and blue hue, stands as a grandiose example.

Like all students, Cadet Lewis instigated her plebe year among the sweltering heat of August. The brutality of it likely came with a sigh, for the wet season was nearly over. In October, the skies are still clear but elegantly *crisp*. Elongated shadows, sharply contrasted by shortened days, undoubtedly alleviated the discomfort of Lewis’ initial summer spars, as the year’s last and loveliest smile was glorified through a cobbler crust of

foliage. French Absurdist, sometimes Existential philosopher Albert Camus delighted in autumn as “a second spring when every leaf is a flower,” which undoubtedly makes New England an annual garden paradise. And yet it stands to reason if West Point’s *beauties* are capable of being appreciated, the seasonal tranquility *digested* before the biting cold of winter hardens the Hudson, among the swirling maelstrom of physical exhaustion, dizzying labyrinth of sports statistics and numbers needing memorized, and the deliberate obstacles of hazing, all of which was intended to trip the cadet, and ultimately cripple them. Of the 1,300 plebes who enter the Academy each year, only 1,000 will graduate. The *hope* is to weed them out early.

“Once you enter West Point,” Shelley Lewis explained, “it’s in your plebe year when you are indoctrinated. It’s similar to rushing a fraternity. You have all this knowledge that you have to memorize.” Her Cadet Basic Training that summer, she referred to it as *beast barracks*, was a seven week program that aimed at turning civilians into West Point cadets. “And it’s basically where you have to learn a whole book of knowledge, and you’re learning all the demands of being a cadet. And as a plebe, you have all these rules and regulations that you have to do. When I showed up to my first day at West Point, it’s called R-Day...”

Shelley interrupted herself.

“And that’s the other thing. As a plebe you’re not allowed to use any acronyms or any contractions. And you only have four authorized statements.”

Yes sir.

No sir.

No thank you sir.

Sir, may I ask a question, sir?

“That’s all you’re allowed to do. But then you have all these jobs and duties and details, and you’re literally just being indoctrinated to the system. One of the things you’re not allowed to do is talk in the hallways. You are absolutely *not* allowed to talk in the hallways or the bathrooms. The only place where you’re kind of allowed to speak freely is in your own room, and that’s about it.”

Despite several years of devoted research into the *ins* and *outs* of Academy life, backed with an eager anticipation to cadence *double time* through their hardships, Cadet Lewis clearly didn't comprehend the culture behind its rules when she got there. For one, she showed up with make-up on. But more importantly, an upperclassman *saw* her with make-up on.

“YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY A DISGRACE TO THIS UNIFORM! YOU GO UPSTAIRS RIGHT NOW AND WASH UP AND DON'T YOU EVER DISGRACE THIS UNIFORM AGAIN!”

Her name was Voightschild.

It was only the first of many more confrontations to come.

“She was *mean*.” Lewis said. “I thought when I got there, it's ten percent—it's like one woman in ten men. As a woman you want the support from other women who understood what it's like to be in an all-men's facility. To be honest, it was the women who were *worse* than the men. They were so mean to each other. That's kind of how it is. Just to get accepted is really hard and competitive, but once you got there you were considered *less* than a woman, and then you were also considered *less* than a cadet. It was mental and verbal abuse. And so there was a lot of feeling inferior, feeling inadequate. You lose a lot of your own identity. And that's what the military does. They try to break you down and make you a soldier. There's no standing out. But at the Academy they always taught us: *You're the best of the best. You're the elite. Be proud that you're a cadet.*”

“GET YOUR ASS UPSTAIRS! DON'T YOU EVER DISGRACE MY UNIFORM AGAIN!”

“And so, I remember running upstairs—*booking it*, and washing off my makeup.” Afterwards, Voightschild had it out for Cadet Lewis. In fact, she even seemed to *hunt* for her. “And then she'd haze me and lock me up at attention. And when they say lock you up at attention, there's all these rules. When you're in the hallway you have to have a perfect uniform. You can't go into the hallway unless they have what they call a *dress off*. Your bunkmates would have to fix your shirt in a way that you'd look perfect. When you walk, if your uniform gets out of alignment, you'd get hazed. And then you had upper classmen. You had to give them different greetings.”

Bad to the bone, SIR!

“At the academy they completely break you down and then they try to build you back up and recreate you in their image. You had all these different sayings that you had to memorize for each classman, and when you’re there, it’s really about trying not to get kicked out, because they’re always looking for a way to kick you out. We had to memorize books. We had to memorize the front page of *The New York Times*. We had to know about the articles contained within *The New York Times*. We had to know the *who*, the *when*, the *where*, and the *why* about it. And then we had to memorize box scores on sports pages of *The New York Times*. And we had to memorize every single meal that we were eating—what we were having. And then we had table duties. Like, what was the desert at the meal? What was the drink at the meal? And *what* are we eating and *how* many days until we beat Navy and *how* many days until we beat Holy Cross? All the football days, we had to memorize all that with other things that we had to know verbatim. There’s an overload of information that you have to know each and every day. You have to polish your shoes. Your room has to be in order, and then you’re doing these intense academics. So you can’t fail your classes, and you have to be in shape. There’s simply no time.”

You’re not good enough, Cadet Lewis!

Cadet Lewis, you suck!

“If you didn’t address an upper classman by the right greeting, *I want you to address me with Bad to the Bone;*’ if you mess that up, you get written up for that.”

I want you to address me with BEAT NAVY!

Bad to the bone, SIR!

Wrong answer, plebe!

“And then you get hazed,” she continued, practically breathless, each word flowing seamlessly from one to the next. “That’s where you go to his or her room and then they have you do uniform drills where you only have three minutes to run back to your room, change into a blue dress over white or dress grey over white, and underarms, and then you run back down and get inspected. And if you didn’t have it down he or she would waste your time. The most important thing at West Point was *time*, and you *never* had enough of it. They would waste your time to the point where you could fail classes and get kicked out. Or they would get you to

march and do stupid stuff, where you'd do a left face and recite Scofield's definition of discipline, and between each word you'd have to do a left face. And if you got it wrong you'd be hazed and screamed at and be broken down and just exhausted—to the point where you'd be kicked out because you couldn't even do your academics. So there was always this pressure to perform and do things right and not piss anybody off because you'd get hazed.”

Hazed—and then eventually kicked out.

2

SO, THERE SHE WAS, TAKING A SHOWER in the bathroom, when upperclassman Voightschild *happened* upon her.

Lewis said, “I was talking to one of my classmates, asking her if she knew what time they had to be at formation. She found me standing in the shower naked, and she locked me up at attention, and starts hazing me in the shower, screaming at me...”

“YOU'RE A DISGRACE! YOU'RE A DISGRACE! YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY A DISGRACE TO THIS UNIFORM!”

DEADHEAD

1

EVENTUALLY, AS THE SNOW BEGAN to thaw in Jackson Hole, Zen Garcia turned his attention to other horizons. He had already adapted Native American traditions for answers—and shamanism, “because I felt like the people were really spiritual people, and they still held onto a way of life, and through teachings which were outside of the realm of the corporate 9 to 5 and all of that. They did dances and pow-wows and sweat lodges, which was a really key tool for me. Vision quest, drumming, those kind of things are tools which they traditionally use to put someone into a mindset where you are in a space where you are communing with what I felt was the godhead. And I felt I did not know the Son. I only knew the Father.”

The blending of the two—*first* his ongoing exploration of America’s natural furnishings, whenever the temperate spring or autumn weather enticed him, matched with his pursuit of indigenous spirituality, quickly found application, and practicality, while following the *Grateful Dead*.

The *Dead* made their debut at Ken Kesey’s acid tests in the 1960’s. By 1967, they emerged as leaders of the Haigh-Ashbury music scene right alongside Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. The Deadhead phenomenon was soon thereafter first commented upon by *Village Voice* music critic Robert Christgau while at a Felt Forum show in 1971, noting “how many regulars seemed to be in attendance, and how, from the way they compared notes, they’d obviously made a determined effort to see as many shows as possible.” Bob Weir later told David Letterman in 1984 that the term Deadhead came about because speed heads, acid heads, and grass heads were already taken. If *Dead* fans found appeal in repeated concert attendance, it is likely first and foremost due to the method in which the band structured their nightly concerts with multiple sets and repeated song selection changes, sometimes starting out acoustic for the first half before plugging it in and amping it up for the second. By the 1980’s their two-set shows often included a prolonged drum solo by Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, followed by an extended improvisational “space” jam played by the rest of the band.

But more than anything, *Dead* shows manifested the very sort of non-organized religious experience which thousands of middle-class teenagers, mostly Caucasian, had thronged towards, but which was typically confined momentarily in time and among immovable, even unpredicted places like Woodstock and the Haight. Among the tents and tee-pees and flowery buses of migratory Dead camps, young minds could experience places of consciousness among colorful tapestries of psychedelia and the passing of joints, tapping into spiritual wells long thought lost in the Manifest Destiny blitz of their American forefathers.

“It makes me feel *larger than life*,” a young woman told Brian O’Donnell for his 1991 documentary, *Deadheads*, while seated on the ground, speaking carefree as the breeze; “like something incomparable to anything I am able to find anywhere else.”

Jerry Garcia’s biographer, Blair Jackson, wrote that the shows *were* the sacrament, “rich and full of blissful, transcendent musical moments that moved the body and enriched the soul.” Bass guitarist and *Dead* founder Philip Lesh commented, “The unique organicity of our music reflects the fact that each of us consciously personalized his playing to fit with what others were playing and to fit with who each man was as an individual, allowing us to meld our consciousness together in the unity of a group mind.” And drummer Mickey Hart is documented as having said: “The Grateful Dead weren’t in the music business; they were in the transportation business.”

Joseph Campbell once proclaimed Deadheads as “the world’s newest tribe.” That tribe was just over two decades old when, in 1994, Zen Garcia joined its ranks.

During the 1970’s, second generation Deadheads, some homeless, others occasionally jobless, who are also said to have been turned on to the music through their elder brother’s friends, had begun selling t-shirts, posters, veggie burritos, and other items at the concert, Mardi grass beads, homemade bracelets and earth-inspired jewelry, bumper stickers, hot dogs and chili nachos, in order to sustain the lifestyle. Deadheads of Zen Garcia’s 1990’s fit many of the same demographics as their surrounding grunge-fueled x-generation contemporaries, for the most part—young, white, angst driven males deriving from middle-class neighborhoods. The *mud* and the *beer* people, as they called themselves at Woodstock’s thirtieth anniversary, would wildly distance themselves from their peace loving hippie counterparts, irreconcilably so, by burning the grounds down in

1999, had already begun to manifest among Deadheads as the Clinton administration trudged on. This was particularly evident at Dear Creek, near Indianapolis when, in July 1995, rioters crashed gates and tore the venue down.

Living the life of a carny wasn't only a way to make easy money, Zen said. It was "also a way to have a really good time *doing* music. You could sell food. I had friends that sold t-shirts. All I had to do was get to a show and we could make money; enough money to survive to get to the next show, and also to get into the show and have a really good time—to be part of this whole misfit group. But they were also very spiritual people, and it was there doing all these *Grateful Dead* shows that I was introduced to a lot of spiritual techniques, different things, sweat lodges and the Native American tradition was really engrained in that part of the culture."

He and his friends always planned to meet in one particular section of the concert. "And that was on the side where Jerry Garcia played, which was on the right side of the stage. That was one of our ways of always hooking up together, no matter which city we were in." Jerry Garcia was their rendezvous point. "And back then I was doing drugs, smoking marijuana. And so that's where we would gather for smoke sessions with other Deadheads. And we would always communally put into a pile, everyone contributed, and then we'd smoke out there during the entire show."

New York City *however*, Zen did not care to attend. If Jerry Garcia and company were determined to brave Manhattan, then he'd happily flank his friends at their next meet-up. "I never wanted to go there—all the people and the noise and the traffic." He even let his friends in on it. They'd have to find their own ride. Unfortunately the whole lot of them woke up too late, having had far too much fun *working* Philadelphia in the Spectrum. If his friends were to make it to the city, they'd have to find their luck hitchhiking. Zen had a change of heart.

Get in. Let's go.

Zen, you're the greatest.

You guys owe me one.

Zen managed to park his van at a fellow Deadhead's house in New Haven, Connecticut, with just enough time to finish their journey into the city by train. That train, by the way, came free of charge, Zen claims,

courtesy of his well-networked Connecticut friend. Deadheads have *many* connections, it seems.

After the show, “we always do what we call *ground spore*.”

“What is *ground spore*?” I wanted to know.

“It’s basically where we would run around after the show when the lights came on, and you could find stuff that people had dropped. A lot of people were drunk or stoned out of their minds. So there was a lot of stuff that was dropped after the shows. So we’d scatter out and scope the whole stadium.” That night Zen found a tie-dye sweatshirt and a wallet that had \$60 dollars in it. “And I found a bag of schwag—marijuana and a bunch of lighters.” Zen took his friends into the parking lot and used the cash he’d found in the wallet to pay the guy who’d gotten him inside.

There was plenty left over for pizza and beer.

“The last train ran at One AM in the morning, and so we knew we had to make it back for the last train.” As Zen happened upon Grand Central Station, he saw a guy dressed in tie-dye, sitting on the ground, leaning against the wall. Tie-Dye looked sad. “He almost had his head in his hands, and he was having a hard time. You could obviously tell.”

Zen roamed over towards Tie-Dye. “Hey brother—is everything *okay*?”

Everything was *not* okay.

Tie-Dye sighed.

Nah, man, I lost my wallet in the Grateful Dead show. I’m stuck, man.

“Dude, I found a wallet in the *Grateful Dead* show.”

Sure enough, the driver’s license matched his mug. He got back all his credit cards, Zen kind of shrugged over the phone. “And because I didn’t have to use my ticket for the train, because of my connection, I gave him that ticket so that he could get back home.” Then again, there was the matter of the money they’d spent. As compensation, Zen offered him the bag of schwag.

Tie-dye was stoked.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANY CITY IN AMERICA, east coast or west coast. Pick any venue. It may as well have been New York. Zen Garcia was dancing crazy on the right side of the stage with his friends, and so completely *in tune* with the music, when he looked up and saw that Jerry Garcia was staring right back at him. *Neither* Garcia missed a beat as they continued locking eyes. “And I knew that we’d made contact in that moment.” For that moment—that brief albeit abiding moment, “I shared a tension with him.”

3

ZEN SAID, “THE EXPERIENCES THAT I HAD at that time, they led me to understand spirituality in a way that wasn’t just *book knowledge*. It wasn’t just something that somebody talked about in a pulpit. I really had divine experiences in doing what I did in the time that I did that—especially my part in vision questing and sweat lodges and all that. That grounded me spiritually.” After breaking away from the church and turning to atheism, the North American horizon “brought me out of that, and I realized there truly is a Creator, and there’s a purpose for all things to be as they are. Inherently, all of us are here to research and discover that. And so it really led my pursuit of wanting to know, and wanting to have direct experience of something greater. These experiences led me to the person I’ve become.”

In a way, Tie-dye and the case of the missing schwag astonishingly exemplifies Zen Garcia’s worldview, not only the *here* and the *now* as we perceive it in a pile of jigsaw pieces, but the yesterday’s before our *present being*, and in light of that perception, the person he’s become—and more-so, *becoming*. “I knew in that moment when I met him that this was some sort of crazy angelic encounter, and that God was watching to see if I would do the right thing. And I did so. And I gave him all his stuff back. Things like that would happen to me when I did these sort of shows—supernatural things—just really weird, strange things. It’s always something that worked out for our benefit.”

“My initial life really helped me to have a strong dependence and relationship with the Father, with the Great Spirit—the Father of Creation. It was after that that God led me to the Son.”

However one concludes of the *spiritual experience*—and I have my views—there is undoubtedly a glaring problem with *otherworldliness* in its every proposed incarnation, and Zen recognizes that fact. They have a habit of pointing us towards *one* spirit or the *other*. “I also feel like, for a lot of people that aren’t spiritually connected to anything, that have turned their backs to Christianity, to organized religion, to everything, and a lot of people are gravitating towards that lie that the aliens created us.” *There* is Zen’s tug of war; the magnetization towards a fixed, centralized northern pole on the plane or the vast wandering towards a southern pole which charms but ultimately confounds everything within our spiritual map. “There is disinformation that a lot of the Native peoples are involved with. There are spirits that are demonic, in that Satan purposely created a lot of religions and tied them together with drug use in order to lead people astray, in order to lead them into the use of drugs as dependence in their spirituality. In that way, these sorts of things can be terrible for you.”

Zen then corrected himself. “Of course, I don’t use or do drugs *now*. But I think that, for a certain people, they can be a tool that helps break them out of their shell—out of their mold.”

“The initial experience can drive someone to feel something greater. I think the Native peoples, traditionally, that there use of drugs, peyote, even marijuana for the Rastafarian, that those sorts of things were used to commune with the Father initially. Tools like that can be used to initially break people out of the mold of their tradition.” *Consider the sixties*. “For the people that went through the whole hippie thing, a lot of those people who used drugs for the first time, they had spiritual experiences which later helped their spirituality, their belief in something greater than themselves.”

Then again, “I think that you have to outgrow and learn to have that sort of connection without dependence on drugs because I think drugs are bad for your health and bad for your wellbeing, in that they can only be used as a tool by some people.”

Thinking back on his travels with the *Grateful Dead*, “I’m very grateful for what I came out of, and am able now to have discernment, and a lot

of people that ask me, if they're caught up in depression, if they're abusing marijuana every day, I tell them: 'Really, you have to outgrow that. You have to learn to leave that behind. You can't be dependent on something that is destroying you.' I learned those things early in life. At some point everyone had to grow up and move on and have relationships with the Godhead and leave all things that destroy you; things that poison you; things that affect you in detrimental manner, if you use them over time."

"And so I've been able to relate to people that are involved in New Age mysticism even now, and to help them to understand that there is a Savior Messiah, and why it is that we need to be redeemed through Christ, and that He paid the promise to rectify the Father, and how those two stories come together. And now I'm able to teach the whole thing about the ancient aliens—how it's all a lie. And I understand more than most people, because I studied the Sumerian teachings, I've read all of their mythology. I know how the deception ties into the truth, which is the prophetic Word."

However one ultimately feels about drug use, even *if* or *when* strictly employed as a tool, for Zen Garcia, it may be safe to conclude, there is no sudden revelation, no *before* or *after*, that changes *everything*, so to speak. There is only a series of revelations and the gradual journey, the journey *itself*, to be taken under consideration. In other words, there is only his life *then* and his life *now*. Measurements may be taken by the depths of knowledge acquired in-between.

4

YOU WOULDN'T FORGET A DATE LIKE THIS. It was September 24, 1994. Very soon the biting slopes of Jackson Hole would be calling, but not today. The *Grateful Dead* were playing in San Francisco, and Zen stood by the edge of the road, hoping to catch a ride, thumb raised.

A van stopped.

He climbed in.

The breaks went out on a winding pass. They dropped off a cliff and plummeted 85 feet.

Zen Garcia snapped his neck on impact.

MR. NELSON'S CLASSROOM

1

WHEN ASKED, LIZ BAILEY CAN STILL RECITE *the date* with regimented smoothness, as though she were simply taking a butter knife slathered with raspberry jam to bread. *I inquired.* June 21, 1996—that's the occasion in which fifteen year-old Liz Rolan asked the new kid in school out on a date.

“And I was *quite* forward,” she said.

The most peculiar, and dare I say *awkward*, perhaps even scandalous incident of all however follows Chris Bailey around on the calendar like an incurable meeting with childhood asthma. “Your readers are going to love this,” Chris seemed to bemoan having to surrender the date of his birth. He was born on October 31, 1978—Cleveland, Ohio.

Liz said, “His mother *chose* that date, believe it or not.”

Chris protested over the phone.

“No, you don't need to say that!”

Liz took that as an open door policy to continue. She laughed and then said: “She was done with the pregnancy and had a C-section,” and apparently wasn't even thinking of *the day*. “But I just find it so comical.”

From my end of the receiver, it took me precisely *this long* in the conversation to figure out the significance of the thirty-first—actually *longer*. I undoubtedly wrinkled my forehead while chewing on a pen, and then then stated as a matter of fact, “So you were born on *Halloween*,” and yet would not understand the full brunt of Bailey's inconvenience until I finally pronounced all three syllables.

Hall-O-Ob—

Chris joined in with his wife's laughter.

He said: “And then when you say that my mom *chose* that date, then you start putting connections together. People go, ‘there's a big conspiracy here.’”

Liz: “Because somebody is *always* looking for a conspiracy.”

Chris, I assume, spoke sarcastically when he ad-libbed, “*Well*, that’s my mom’s story.”

Elisabeth Ann Rolen was born on April 16, 1981—*also* Cleveland. “We both went to a very strict conservative school,” she said. That would be Heritage Christian School. “I was there ever since preschool.”

It was during Chris Bailey’s sophomore year that a short month-long stint in public school sent him right back into the private sector again. That would be Heritage Christian School, “and where *our story* began,” he said. It’s not only the intersection of their lives, but “our very first year of learning about geocentricity.”

His name was Mr. Nelson.

Ron Nelson.

Mr. Ron Nelson was a *geocentrist*.

By the time Rolen and Bailey entered his classroom in the mid-nineties, Nelson had already been teaching at the school, Liz said, “probably since the late seventies. His science curriculum—he taught all the sciences from earth science to physics to chemistry, all of it. And his textbook, what we learned from, it wasn’t even a textbook. It literally was typed out on an old fashioned typewriter, notes directly from the Bible. So *everything* that he’d derived came from Scripture, and that’s how we were taught sciences.”

Mr. Nelson “taught the Biblical model of the earth,” Chris said. “He taught that the earth, first and foremost, that the earth was the center of the universe. So that was the very aspect of what he taught. And ultimately that came with, the earth did not rotate. So he taught the Biblical model first and foremost, and then everything else followed.”

“And he backed it up with Scripture,” Liz said. “We had to memorize Scripture—fully dig into all of that and understand it.”

Liz still has the binder from Mr. Nelson’s class in her possession. Even then as a teenager “I knew that it was something special. I knew I would never find this again—*ever*. And I just kept it, when normally at the end of the school year you’d burn all your books and throw them away. I kept those.” The very first chapter in her three ring binder, “even before we’d get into anything about earth science, he had—the beginning chapter

was all about subliminal messaging, and what the media would put out, back then, through TV, through newspapers, through magazines, ads and all of that, on how they were causing a massive deception, and how we need to be able to look through all of that—look *beyond* the subliminal messaging.”

“That church didn’t even want you to have a TV,” she continued. “They were extremely strict, conservative, fundamental Baptist. So part of our rule book to go to the school, we really weren’t allowed to go to movies, listen to secular music.”

Here Chris inserted, “Listen to Christian music like rock.”

“Yeah, even contemporary Christian music of the time like Michael W. Smith or DC Talk, those were *huge no-no’s*, because the devil was in the beat, according to them. The dress code was extremely strict. The girls had to wear skirts below our knees. Shirts had to have sleeves. They couldn’t be low cut. We couldn’t dye our hair. We really couldn’t wear a lot of make-up. We couldn’t wear high-heeled shoes. It was strict.”

Here it should be noted that Liz Rolen was a varsity team cheerleader. Liz described her uniform as something *quite comical*. “They’re known as culottes. Super long skirts sewn in the middle—mid calf. We had some looks going out in public. We had to wear some body suites and spandex underneath. So if we were to do a high kick or climb up onto a pyramid, *nobody* could see any flesh—whatsoever. It was comical. But that’s what we grew up in. At the time we lived in this bubble, essentially. We knew we were odd. But we also grew up knowing that we were Christians, and that we were made to be set apart. So we shouldn’t look like the world, act like the world, that type of thing.”

“But for the most part Chris and I were really good students, and Chris coming to the school—each class had about 20-30 kids; his class was actually the largest. It had like 37. So *super* small, and whenever there was a new kid that came to the school, they were the talk of the town.”

Bailey was *the talk*.

The new kid even landed on the basketball team. Cheerleaders had to pick the guy they’d root for, and naturally, Liz picked the new guy.

THOUGH SURVIVORS OF THE SIXTIES might struggle to agree, there is nothing new under the sun—*absolutely nothing*. This is why, in 1967, while kids reenacted age old rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries by *tripping* at the Monterey Pop Festival; while NASA worked feverishly on the Apollo program, finally blending the promises of Science with the spiritual ambitions of ethereal exploration in the Mysteries of Babylon and Isis; while Israel combated its momentous Six Day War; the modern resurgence of Geocentricity reentered the stage; Cleveland, Ohio, of all places—though few were privy to it. Born in 1913, Walter van der Kamp had already immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands in 1955. But it wouldn't be until 1967 that van der Kamp put his name on the map, so to speak, when he circulated a geocentric paper entitled “*The Heart of the Matter*” to about fifty Christian individuals and institutions.

“He was teaching the geocentric model to earth scientifically,” Chris said. “Biblically, teaching it to pastors, churches—anybody that was prestigious who would listen.” Van der Kamp received only four favorable responses. Canadian astronomer Harold L. Armstrong was among them. Soon however two Cleveland astronomers, James Hanson and Gerardus Bouw, would number themselves among his early converts.

Meanwhile, in San Diego, California, Dr. Henry Morris dismembered gap theorists everywhere by bringing young earth creationism back to the forefront of evangelicalism. Morris omitted the natural revelations of geology and biology as antithetical to the gospel while promising his key supporters to keep the natural revelation of astronomy *fully* intact. The Bible could and would be adjusted to make them fit. In doing so, Morris simultaneously helped to bolster, even *glorify* the Apollo missions. It is perhaps for this very reason that van der Kamp and his disciples, like flat earthist Samuel Shenton, failed to rally support. When geocentrism returned, *so did* young earth creationism. Van der Kamp founded *The Tychonian Society* in 1971, the very year of Shenton's death. Morris founded the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego the year thereafter, in 1972. One doused out the flames of the others. For the following generation, evangelicalism had found its spokespersons.

Van der Kamp's Tychonic system, first published by Tycho Brahe in the late 16th century, is conceptually at its core a geocentric model of the

cosmos, with the immovable Earth at its center; but only so much as it is a response to the Copernican revolution rather than a mere adjustment of the Ptolemaic because, though the sun also moves around the Earth in Ptolemy's universe, the five planets revolve around the sun in Tycho's. In fact, Tycho's planets are so much like the motion of the heliocentric model that the two are in fact mathematically equivalent and indistinguishable from the other as long as no force law is postulated to explain why the planets move as described. At this point of reasoning, mathematics alone presents no argumentation against either the Tyconic or the Copernican system.

From these seeds grew the Tychonian Society and its journal, *The Bulletin of the Tychonian Society*. "Cleveland Ohio is what I call the Mecca for modern geocentricity," Bailey said. "The men who started writing this ended up being college professors of astronomy, head of astronomy, of places like Cleveland State University, Baldwin Wallace, and Case Western Reserve. Those are the top colleges right here in Ohio, right here in Cleveland."

Ironically, the Michelson-Morley experiment took place at Case Western. "And obviously we know what happened there. They failed to prove that the earth spun. They proved *potentially* the geocentric model." From the 1960's through the 1980's, "the head of astronomy was a full blown Geocentric Biblical believer teaching this model in schools, obviously the heliocentric model as well—*not* flat earth whatsoever. Gerardus Bouw eventually took over the Biblical publication that was being produced right here in Cleveland. It was a publication that went all around the world, and they were the *only* geocentric publication," comparably similar to Lady Elizabeth Blount's flat earth publication in the late 19th century, *The Earth Is Not a Globe*. "They were doing the *same exact thing*, bucking the system against Science, and basically telling you: 'They've got this wrong, they've got this wrong. Okay, the earth isn't flat.' But they started there." Bouw "eventually went to Baldwin Wallace University, which just so happens to be five minutes from our house, where we're at now. And he's still living. He teaches at a church in Aurora, Ohio. And that publication stopped in 2014. But that was the early work of getting us to think differently about the earth."

The breadth of Bouw's work truly is remarkable. His website, *geocentricity.com*, "has 1,903,523 pages, not counting all the PDF's—all geocentricity. So when somebody wants to get into depth, when they say

there's not enough proof for geocentricity, then we've got almost 2 million pages that support this."

Chris said, "All of this was coming out of Cleveland, Ohio. Our high school teacher, we *now know* that Professor Gerardus Bouw went to the church associated with Heritage. We *now know* there's a geocentric connection between these men and our high school teacher."

Mr. Ron Nelson.

"Oddly enough," Liz said, "Cleveland Baptist was the church in which the school was associated with. And the beliefs coming from the pulpit were definitely different than what Mr. Nelson taught us." And at any rate, the church and school, she added, no longer stands behind any of that. When Mr. Nelson retired, his work retired with him.

"It's somewhat phenomenal to consider that they allowed him to teach that at all," I said.

"I don't think they understood what he was teaching," Liz.

In the 1970's and 80's, the term *conspiracy theorist* was not yet in widespread use, despite the fact that the C.I.A. had earlier coined the phrase. In a dispatch labeled "psych" for "psychological operations," distributed in 1967, the C.I.A. attacked anyone who challenged the Warren Commission's official narrative by tagging that person a "conspiracy theorist." Regardless, 1970's geocentricism, and the mere conclusions one would have to come to, should one hold to such a view in light of satellite imagery and the Apollo moon missions, was not yet identified with tinfoil hats.

Then again, this is not to say that scowls and grimaces did not arise from the cheekbones of NASA's evangelical fan base. Soon after attending the youth group of *another* church, its students discovered—much to their chagrin, that Liz was not taught Heliocentricism. "The kids in the other youth group all went to public high school," she said. Liz would bring up Scripture. "This was *ingrained* in me," and they laughed at her. "They were just constantly refuting me with their Science." Upon hearing of this geocentric *nonsense*, her youth pastor scheduled a meeting with Mr. Nelson. And just to make a spectacle of it, he invited his students along.

"It's embarrassing now," Liz recalled, that they would allow Mr. Nelson to go through the ringer. "It was not embarrassing *then* because

we didn't understand. We were only taught this. The only thing we were taught" of Heliocentricism "is that this is what the world tells you it is. But what I'm teaching you is found in Scripture, and Scripture is all truth. So that's what we held to."

To this day, Liz regrets not attending that debate.

"It didn't have any resolution. They basically just agreed to disagree, and that was it."

3

IN LANCASTER, CONDITIONS HAD WORSENERED for the Johnson household. Marjory, dependent now on supplementary oxygen to breathe, was diagnosed with emphysema and furthermore required a wheelchair. Johnson was watching television one Wednesday afternoon in September 1995 when the uneasy, gleaming rhythm of a fire caught his attention. The front porch of their house was in flames. He barely managed to carry Marjory and their pets to safety before the fire consumed everything. After the smoke had dissipated Johnson was quite certain that his life's work, including a library of information and correspondences and everything that remained of Shenton's, was gone. The old couple had no insurance and absolutely no choice but to move into a dilapidated trailer.

Marjory never recovered.

Johnson's wife died in May of 1996 at the age of seventy-five. "When the house burned with all her treasures," Johnson told the Boston Globe, "she gave up the will to live."

Local authorities evicted Johnson from his trailer.

Shenton's dream, it seems, was truly, finally extinguished. Johnson would not live to see the next great *awakening* to come. He died only months before the September 11th attacks.

4

TWO SEPARATE GRADE LEVELS kept Chris Bailey and Liz Rolen from sharing any classes together. On his first day in class, he was in the 10th grade, while Heritage's career student remained in the 8th. Still, *same* building, *same* hallway, Liz said. "It was one long hallway."

Chris said, "Liz was my first girlfriend. I had never dated before. I played basketball. I did sports. I didn't have time for girls or I didn't make time for girls or I was just too embarrassed to talk to girls."

"He was shy," Liz intercepted.

It would take Liz, only fifteen years-old, calling him up on the phone after their school year was through for the two to finally meet *off campus*. There's that date again—June 21, 1996. If anything even remotely close to a date could be pulled off, another hurdle would immediately have to be mastered. Bailey was seventeen and hadn't yet acquired a driver's license.

His mom would have to drive him.

Or *maybe* not—

"I had never taken a public bus by myself," Chris further confessed. "And to avoid asking my mom to take me to the mall..." *You know, 'Why are you going to the mall, Chris?'* "...To avoid *that* I just got on a public bus and took a bus ride to the mall. Liz's mom drove us back to her house. We had other friends there. But of course I had to call my parents to pick me up, because I wasn't driving yet." To this very important point Chris quickly added: "I was in the middle of working on that."

Of course, when his parents *did* pick him up, they were perfectly capable of reading the name on the mail box. *Rolen*. It mattered little that they were incapable of pinning the *exact* girl down in the Rolan household, likely blending in among their assortment of friends. The school yearbook would fill in that very important missing detail.

"That was embarrassing," Chris recounted of his parent's quest to find out *who* the girl was. Despite being teased and ridiculed by his dad, "I wouldn't tell them anything."

Chris further shrugged.

"That's how I broke into dating."

Liz said, “We grew up in a bubble. So to go out and take the RTA bus system was like, *totally* out of your comfort zone, *way—way out* of your comfort zone to do that.”

Early dates included “a ton of put-put and movies,” Liz explained, despite the fact that movies were forbidden. “Even though we weren’t supposed to go to movies, we still did.”

When I asked to drop the name of a movie, they laughed and then shied away from telling.

Liz said, “We never really saw *a lot* of R rated movies.”

I didn’t ask if they were R rated.

Despite a forbidden movie or two, because remember, *every* cinematic feature was forbidden, and even the mall was likely an object of vanity, Chris Bailey and Miss Rolen lived lives quite detached from the world, as promoted and taught by her high school youth group.

There’s was a *hidden* world of geocentricism.

“We knew that we had to live set apart lives. Chris and I were virgins getting married. We held to those things that were deeply rooted in us. Neither of us ever smoked—never drank. We *had* the opportunity. We had many friends in our school that would party on the weekends, but oddly enough, we were friends in school but outside of school they never called upon us to attend these parties. I think they just knew that we would say *no*; that we just weren’t like that. We weren’t a part of that. A lot of the kids in that school, they only came from two households. One was extremely strict and conservative, *like*, everything they lived in school, they lived at home. And then you had the families like ours, which I would say were very balanced. They put us into a good foundation, but they weren’t extreme. Those were the kids that made it all the way through, and I would say are still living as believers. The families where the kids grew up in extreme homes, I’d say they either stayed extreme and became missionaries still wearing ankle skirts, or they went off the deep end after they graduated—and they stayed there.”

“The crazy thing is,” Chris said, “long before Robbie Davidson put on a flat earth conference, *these men*,” Cleveland’s geocentrists, that is, “*were inspiring*. We often skip over this important realm, even though they will fight us, tooth and nail, on whether or not the earth is flat—they will, they *absolutely* will. But their work has been so instrumental in us even getting

to this point. Because we see how the Father works. He may reveal and establish one truth for one aspect of a generation. And I will tell you that truth of geocentricity alone, we lived in it. It didn't change us. We didn't focus on it. We didn't even think about it. We just passed the tests. It didn't change us one bit. In fact, we have many friends who went to Heritage Christian School who are now full blown atheists. And now they'll just laugh at the Bible, because they'll say: 'That's a geocentric book.' But we know that the fullness of the geocentric and the shape of the earth, the fullness of the truth come together. Does it drastically change people's lives to jump back into the Word, to take the Word serious, to see how this is an apologetic, a defense of His Word? That's what *this* Movement is truly doing—from a Biblical standpoint. When we first heard *flat earth*, this wasn't a shock to us. We didn't even need to spend much time pondering it, because we knew half of the truth."

Chris and Liz Bailey were married in September of 2002, like-minded geocentrists because of Mr. Nelson's classroom. They knew the earth didn't move, *despite* what evangelicalism told them. They knew the earth was in the center of the universe. They knew the heliocentric model was all screwed up. But for the intervening years between then and what was still to come, they remained tight-lipped about it. Slowly, the paradigm would be broken down. 9/11, vaccinations, genetically modified foods, chemtrails, Freemasonry and satanic ritual abuse would open up the horse blinders and fill their peripheral vision. Mr. Nelson's classroom had a part in that. Despite the possibility, maybe even the likelihood, that Mr. Nelson would altogether snub the Biblical revelation to come; his two finest pupils were prepared for when that moment arrived.

Charles Johnson's torch, passed down to him by Samuel Shenton through Lady Elizabeth Blount and the Zetetics, extinguished now, it seemed, in Lancaster, California, was soon to be relighted.

From Cleveland, the Bailey's watched a most peculiar series of happenings. The Cleveland geocentric Movement, which had first begun with Walter van der Kamp four decades earlier but had grinded now to halt, began to garnish interest once more, this time in the persons of Robert Sungenis and Rick DeLano. In 2014, their documentary *The Principle* invited international attention. Geocentrism, it seemed, was on the rebound.

But it was too late.

Like Van der Kamp with Morris nearly half a century earlier, Cleveland's attempt at geocentrism would be totally snubbed by another rallying cry altogether. It would take what Dr. Morris had started, and then completely circumcising what he did not have the courage to do—the natural revelation of astronomy. “All of a sudden,” Chris said, “flat earth came in and sort of stole their thunder.”

Though, let's be fair.

The flat earth is geocentric—far more geocentric than the men of Cleveland ever dared to know.

SHOT RECORDS

1

“WHEN I ENLISTED, THEY SHIPPED ME OUT TO FORT DIX,” Shelley Lewis said. “You line up and they give you all the shots with a gun, and you have no idea what you’re getting. We had *no idea*. Line up and roll your sleeves up, soldier. They have those air guns. You just walk through, and you have no idea what they’re inserting into your body—no idea. You’re a guinea pig.” The pains in her back began immediately after receiving them. “And it was at the point where it was hard to stand up straight. Of course you *have* to do that—stand at attention. And it was like my back was completely spasming—muscle tightness, and I didn’t know what the heck was going on. It’s hard to explain, but my back would go into spasms. I couldn’t stand up and I was like, ‘*What the hell?*’ I thought it was stress.”

Lewis commented upon her pain in sick hall.

She was given only one reply.

“BUCK UP SOLDIER, YOU’RE IN THE ARMY NOW!”

At West Point, Cadet Lewis played the part of the good little soldier and did as they asked. She *bucked up*. For four relentless years, Lewis memorized her sports scores, and willed to endure the hazing. The war wound she received before even showing up to her first day of class would finally catch up to Lewis during her senior year. It was at Fort Bragg, while undergoing advanced training that they asked if she wanted to go to Haiti for advanced summer training.

A spirited devotion colored her reply.

There was however one complication. The United States Army didn’t have her shot records, *apparently*. On one hand, it seems slightly implausible that they’d actually misplace her records. But then again, on the other, this is the US Government. If she wanted to go to Haiti, they said (and eventually space, maybe even the moon), then she’d have to receive them all over again—the entire gun line-up.

“I went through the line and I remember passing out on the last *freaking* shot, and they had to give me smelling salts to revive me.” When Lewis came to, she could barely hold a hair brush. “I had tremendous pain all over my body. My whole life changed after that—completely.” At the Walter Reed Medical facility in Washington DC, nobody could figure out what was wrong with her. It took them an entire year to finally diagnose her mysterious illness.

But this was 1996, and nobody really knew what lupus was.

Lewis was offered the good news and the bad news. “Firstly,” they said, “you’re getting medically disqualified with an honorable discharge.”

“I hope that’s the *bad* news,” she said.

“The good news is you’re going to graduate from West Point.”

Oh, and one more thing...

Good luck figuring out what you want to do with your life.

Space camp was finally over. Immediately after graduation Lieutenant Shelley Lewis was a civilian again. “They never said it was from the vaccines,” Lewis said, but as she began the journey of attempting to figure out *what* had happened, and just as importantly, *how* to get better, “I had two doctors that told me, the reason you got lupus is because you got vaccinated.”

It was her very *first* awakening to truth.

2

SHELLEY LEWIS WASN’T INTERESTED IN RELIGION when her roommate invited her to a Seventh Day Adventist church. It was 1996. She was back in Sacramento again, grounded from space flight, dreams shattered—body *crippled*. Her roommate persisted.

Oh hell, why not?

As she walked into the church building, come Saturday, a *stranger* opened the door for her.

She recognized his *hand*.

Everything about the doorman “looked totally different than when I remembered him from last,” but *not* his hand. It was love at *next* sight, she insisted. There was however one complication. Shelley Lewis was engaged to be married—and to a doctor.

Irwin asked, “When are you getting married?”

“We haven’t set a date.”

Irwin retorted, “Then I don’t think you’re really into this guy.”

Lewis shrugged. He had a point.

The injured soldier weighed her pros and cons. Lewis was sick and needed better. A doctor could help. Her fiancée was technically still at the Academy—so not a doctor *yet*. But he would be. Maybe it was only a Florence Nightingale effect, a natural progression in the domino effect of her military career, lying sick in bed and staring up at her savior. With a doctor, she could get better. The boy who walked her home from school each day worked now in a junk yard. He thought differently than others. I mean, he worshiped on Sabbath. *Eh*, why weight the pros and cons? She couldn’t help herself. Lewis was in love with the man who held the door for her.

3

SHE WAS PREGNANT AND LOST THE CHILD. The pain in her body was intolerable. “I gained about fifty pounds from the inflation of lupus,” Lewis said. “Everything I ate, I couldn’t digest. I had on my face what they call a butterfly rash. I went from running marathons to not even being able to hold a hairbrush.”

They had only been married for a year and already Irwin wanted to know what happened to his wife.

“We both didn’t know,” Shelley sighed. “That was hard on my husband because he saw me at my peak. He saw me as a girl growing up, being a great athlete, and running cross country, to not being able to walk and being very heavy, and having to see myself from the best of the best to the worst of the worst.”

Lewis was sick with nowhere to go. “I was indoctrinated. You get vaccinated. You go to the doctor whenever you’re sick. Whatever they tell you—you take it. I was a *good* patient,” just like she *was* a good soldier. Cadet Lewis *and* civilian Lewis did what they were told. She took her meds, popped her pills. “I did everything they told me to do, and I found out very quickly that I was getting worse. And it scared me.” Meanwhile, she ran from job to job, and in-between, doctor to doctor seeking answers. They had nothing to give but medication. Shelley only grew sicker and sicker. At twenty-seven years of age, Shelley Lewis fell down upon her face in tears. How is it possible that she could have strayed this far? It then occurred to her:

‘I’m not getting *better*. I’m not even going to *live*.’

There’s got to be something more. ‘If doctors are so great,’ she thought, ‘then why can’t they fix me?’

So Shelley Lewis turned to veganism. She tossed out all meat and dairy, picked up a plant, and then thought: *Aw hell, why not?*

It was her most desperate hour.

CAPE CANAVERAL

1

UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN stars paved the sidewalks rather than the firmament above. Southern California was practically the only home I'd ever known, and so at sixteen years of age, Florida proved as alien a landscape as they'd come. My parents had seen me off on a charter bus, which departed from Los Angeles International Airport, and slept little in the three consecutive days it took to drive the I-10 from California to Merritt Island.

But how could I?

A missionary family in Kenya was prepared to host me over the following three months. And as an appetizer, *Teen Missions International*, which contended for an outstretched globe as its logo, afforded me my very first glimpse of a rocket launch from Cape Canaveral. This was 1997, and I can say with assurance now, over two decades later, that there on Cape Canaveral, I was watching the *occult* in action. I simply didn't know it yet. The pieces hadn't come into play. And yet the rocket, which leapt upwards for the heavens, never sat right with my spirit.

The thing is—it went *up*.

And then it went *down* again.

That pretty much sums it up. What unfolded before me was a clear arch of flame and smoke. I even said as much.

Did it land in the ocean?

I'll never forget the older gentleman standing next to me. I can still recall the double row of teeth exposed below his onion mustache as he snarled: "It went over the curve of the earth."

They were nice teeth.

I pressed both eyes upon the horizon, where the rocket was apparently entering space rather than splashing down, probably squinting, and sought answers. To the man with the mustache I was simply uneducated as to the shape of the earth. And in a way I *was*. I've said this

before. I truly believe I've always been a flat earthist—*always*. I never believed the Copernican narrative. I just didn't have a context for it. I guess you could say there was no alternative. I often think about the gentleman from Merritt Island, Florida. I've considered calling him up to let him know I've become a decenter. And I may get around to it.

If I've delayed, it's only because I prefer telling him in person, so that I might stare at his perfect teeth, which will surely be exposed below his onion mustache, to tell him that and more. To tell him his home state of Florida is so flat, it's an embarrassment to spherical earth.

2

AN outhouse is a useful tool for the proper disposal of human waste when no plumbing is made available, but an abominable place to become confidentially affectionate with—or dare I say *fond of*. I can't help but wonder if that little shack atop of the grassy knoll; the initials W.C. for a name; complete with a squatting stool and dreadfully small hole for late-night aiming—both of which were generally caked with several shades and textures of fecal batter, as a rule—still stands. From its hill I could gaze immediately east over the thorny caps of yellow-fever trees, which giraffes often congregated under—often dozens at a time—and to Lake Naivasha, with its legion of hippos, perhaps half a kilometer beyond.

This scene unfolded in the Rift Valley of Kenya, and I can still smell, even *now* while recounting W.C. two decades later, the nauseating fumes which would arise from its hellish hole in the ground as I lay over it heaving with an inconsolable sickness, and trembling from the cold. At 16 years of age and 135 pounds, I was told I had begun to resemble a skeleton. And yet, after ejecting 30-pounds of body weight—there had been at least nine consecutive weeks of vomiting, always under the crystalline night sky—the muscle spasms didn't agonize anymore as they had probably intended. I felt no pain. Truth be known, I looked forward to my nights—particularly the intervening moments between vomiting, when I could lie upon the grass gazing up at the glorious girdle of stars.

On a cloudless night there was no hiding from the Milky Way. Its brilliance was simply incommunicable to a teenager who had only

familiarized himself with the sort of stars one might trample upon back home, all of which blazed for a moment in time and then fell under the shadow of the Hollywood sign. Beyond the hill where W.C. stood, the ghost-like glow of hyena eyes, matched with their whooping-wails, haunted the agonizing yip of zebras they preyed upon. A warthog occasionally bullied a nearby bush. There were occasions when I was unable to leave my tent behind—even to vomit—due to a hippo which might toddle up the hill from Lake Naivasha to idle between myself and the outhouse. And dare I overlook those hunted zebras, which violently stampeded my tent.

But the stars!

What could I do but worship my elohim who fancied them as blueprints in His mind before the beginning of creation? There was this one moment, after the steady current of vomit had steadied, that I listened in to the gruesome gnashing of hippo fangs between two competitors in the nearby lagoon and lifted my eyes to the heavens.

I verbally praised Him for the distant suns nestled within an infinite universe quadrillions of miles away and the plurality of hidden worlds which must have surrounded them. God was guiding me—this I know—so much so that, as I lay there lifting up my voice, God stopped me.

No, that's not true.

The scolding hurt. What had I said wrong?

Recollections of my childhood returned to me. *This* present girdle of African stars was nothing like my five year-old counterpart admiring the three pale luminaries which Orion's belt offered through the smoggy canopy of Hawthorne, California, a suburb of Los Angeles International Airport. But at least *then* I also heard YHWH's guiding instructions. I recall climbing out of our Plymouth Voyager—the very same model they've got on display now in the Smithsonian—when I recognized God's unexpected yet wholly welcome voice. What I was looking at, if I understood Him right, was something like a sheet or the canvas of a tent pulled over us, and the stars were its chandeliers.

The prophet Isaiah described it like this: "I clothe the heavens with darkness, and I make sackcloth their covering (Isaiah 50:3)."

Heaven, I was quite convinced in my budding years, was just on the other side of that canvas. If the moon looked as though it

simply *hung* there with the grin of a Cheshire cat, it's because little of what I was being otherwise taught was true. All God had to do was peel that covering in the sky—I was certain of it—and there would be no more need for a sun.

How do I know it was [YHWH] instructing me—or in the case of Kenya, disciplining my misguided praise? It's because His guidance corresponded with the written Word. Oh no—*not* the New International Version kept next to my sleeping bag. Naturally, I was rather confused by the contradictions. Why wouldn't [YHWH] welcome my praise regarding an unseen deluge of galaxies? Problem was I hadn't thought to consider astronomy with the King James Version as my cherished guide—that is, the Textus Receptus, or *Received Text*—and wouldn't for many years to come. I knew nothing concerning the occult-minded pairing of Westcott and Hort and their Vatican approved Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus texts, by which nearly all other translations come into being. I knew not the Hebrew, despite a vague familiarity with the word *firmament*. But it did not win the part in my Bible translations.

The New International Version has this to say of Psalm 19:1:

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the **skies** proclaim the work of his hands.”

The New Living Translation also pronounced “*skies*,” while the ESV declares “*sky above*,” and both the NASB and ISV claim “*their expanse*.”

At least here the authorized King James Version actually gets it right.

The KJV says “*firmament*.”

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the **firmament** sheweth his handywork.”

Psalm 19:1 KJV

We can thank the translators of the New International Version for altering Scripture itself. Their antagonism towards God's geocentric creation is most evident in Isaiah 38:8, where-as “sunlight” is falsely described as having traveled back ten steps on a “stairway” rather than what actually occurred—the sun *itself* returned ten degrees in the sky.

The King James Bible correctly tells:

“Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. **So**

the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.”

Isaiah 38:8

The New International Version is a product of the Copernican Universe:

“I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz. So the **sunlight went back the ten steps** it had gone down.”

Isaiah 38:8, NIV

The NASB also unashamedly states:

“So the sun’s shadow went back ten steps....”

In *The Greatest Lie on Earth: Proof That Our World Is Not a Moving Globe*, author and flat earthist Edward Hendrie writes regarding the NIV translators, they “have removed the miracle of the event entirely by stating that the shadow went back ten steps on a stairway, rather than ten degrees on a sundial. A shadow cast by a pillar can go up and then back down steps due to the ordinary travel of the sun across the sky, however, the shadow cast upon a sundial cannot move backwards unless the sun moves backwards.”

No, that’s not true. YHWH stopped my prayer in Kenya.

The stars were *not* distant suns nestled within an infinite universe quadrillions of miles away. The three stars of Orion’s belt, piercing through the electric glow and smog of Hawthorne, California sprung to mind.

I’m right here.

To the west of the hill where W.C. stood, a handsome Masai, though rather short for his east African ethnicity, operated a dutiful fire. Daniel was his name. The local Masai village, maintained with mud, manure, and a convenient brier-patch, couldn’t have been more than two or three kilometers away. Daniel, he never bothered me. But he conscientiously kept watch over the fire—and *me*. I never recall him intervening in my habitual sickness except to gesture with a hand if I felt up to joining his crackling orb of light—wiping whatever bile remained on my lips as I approached—and its ashy glow illuminated a face equally as kind. Even then my guardian rarely spoke unless I initiated conversation. Usually we were content just sitting and listening—star gazing. His English was

good—he never brought up the vomit, which must have plagued him with concern—but I preferred listening to his Swahili tongue, if he offered it. There were our adventures during the day to consider. They could be practically comedic at times—chasing down a tribe of baboons who’d run off with cans of food from the storage shed. And then at night he’d captivate me with stories—like the lion he’d killed with only a sharpened stick.

There was of course the *other* lion, which he only thought to mention on the morning *after* it had walked right past W.C. and the tent—paw prints for proof. That lion, by the way, was hunted later in the day. It’s crime—eating human.

The stories I could tell.

I can’t help but wonder if Daniel entered the ministry—if he this very moment pastors an east African church, as he confessed aspiring to do. His dutiful service to me; managing that little fire near the outhouse on the hill while YHWH guided me in deconstructing the Copernican Universe, is not even quantifiable except by heavenly standards. Actually, I put little thought into those glorious Rift Valley skies until years later—two decades, actually—when the missing pieces of the puzzle finally came together and the *truth* no longer needed to be suppressed. Fact is, the universe became an uncomfortable back-pocket subject. I simply wouldn’t—No, I *couldn’t*—give Elohim praise for something so indescribably delightful but which YHWH also rebuked me for doing. Elohim is so good and loving—and patient—that He would think to correct me in error, even over a great chasm of time. By His providence alone I finally opened up a King James Bible and discovered the joyous cosmology.

It read:

“The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”

Even now I can close my eyes and recognize Daniel’s kind face flushed with the heat of ember. A spear adorns his arm. The whooping-wails of hyenas still advertise the hunt. And if I look up, it is the firmament of His power which garnishes my gaze.

TARSHISH

1

I MAY VERY WELL HAVE BEEN STANDING in front of Buckingham Palace the very moment in which Henri Paul was recklessly speeding Diana, Princess of Wales, through a Paris tunnel in a Mercedes S280. My point is, Sarah Carmen Flod and I *met* the following week—R.A. Millikan in Long Beach, California; and I can still recall the exact moment when she walked into my life. It was the first day of class, Biology—September 1997. This perky dirty-blonde with incessant bare legs streaming out from under the skirt of a cadet uniform appeared in the mid-morning light of an open door, and with only seconds to spare before the tardy bell rang.

What made this situation so otherworldly, aside from self-consciously covering the pimple on my chin that no Oxy Pad could apparently *scrub off*, is the external voice that sounded off as an entirely different bell in my head while measuring her glorious dimensions. Practically in the Biblical tradition, like God speaking to Abraham or Noah or Saul from the clouds, the voice said (I can still recall the exact phrase word-for-word):

“Be kind to her. She’s of importance to you.”

This isn’t some cheap pick-up line that I employ for random women on the street. *Hey babe, God spoke to me and you’re the chosen one.* You’d figure that I’ve passed millions of good looking women in my lifetime, and never before or since, when spying one ravishing woman on a subway or another across the airport terminal, has *that* voice spoken to me in like manner, let alone in any words so clear. Roughly translated to a teenager at the time, and lifelong admirer of *The Three Stooges*, such verbal intrusion was the essential equivalent of God being Moe, if I were the collective genes of Larry and Curly, in which he needed to crack our heads together for diplomatic and disciplinary measure.

Roll your tongue back up into your mouth, you knucklehead.

Why, I oughta.....

Sound advice—and it worked. Well, *mostly*. I should probably point out the sobering fact that Biology was the only class I ever failed in high school, probably because of a distraction—*cheerleading*. Did I mention how that very distraction would end up as valedictorian with a full scholarship as Presidential Scholar at CSULB? As if fate weren't already dripping with irony, my counselor mistakenly enrolled me in an academically advanced class intended for honor students—which I was *not*, making our very team-up as goggle-wearing lab partners a historical blunder. My counselor, she never made that enrollment mistake again, but I guess I had the final laugh in the end. I've often contemplated tracking down both her and that biology teacher down just to let them in on the news. I may have failed miserably at biology, and they let me know it, but I *mastered* chemistry.

Then again, I botched yet another assignment my senior year—homecoming. My video productions teacher had appointed me with the privileged task of documenting game proceedings from the sideline. To this day I can't even recall if we won or lost that game. But to be fair, I probably didn't even know *then*. I used to order from the drive-through at McDonalds where Sarah worked merely in hopes of *seeing* her. I wanted to relive the thrill over and over again of having a future valedictorian hand me a bag of *whatever it is* that I actually ordered, which I always supersized, if she asked, but rarely ended up eating anyways. So you can probably imagine the utter frustration from my teacher, come Monday morning, after learning that I'd spent the entire night focusing in on Sarah shaking those glorious pom-poms from the sidelines rather than the subject of her spirited pleas, the thirty yard line. For this act, as the official documentarian of our one and only home game, I do hereby apologize to my entire senior class. And what I wouldn't give to track down that footage.

As it pertained *then* to the woman who would one day become my wife, I imagined many scenarios and the role I might play in them. Knowing of course that I was a pimple-faced adolescent at the time, I shall leave it to you to fill in the blanks. The thing is, looking back on those formative years, I realize *now* how limited my imagination truly was, because I never once considered the greatest and most wonderful thought conceivable (and what made that intrusive introductory voice so prophetic), that this young woman would one day fill the greatest role of all.

In time, she became the mother of my children.

I'M NOT JOKING. I JOINED THE ARMY to run from God. I wanted to run as far away from the Most High Elohim as was humanly possible. Then again, though it is true that my senior year of high school initiated America's mass shooting hysteria at Columbine, on the previous summer I was standing out front of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi only an hour or two before it *blew*. For years thereafter I was strung with survivor's guilt. I should have been there. That should have been *me*. The 9/11 attacks wouldn't go down for another two years, and though most Americans were apathetic to the blast in Nairobi, I wanted the destiny I'd apparently avoided. And I wanted my revenge. So rather than catching a freighter for Tarshish I paid the bus fare for the recruiter's office and wasted little time in asking the staff sergeant: "What MOS has the highest death rate?"

The recruiter dialed his head up and away from his paperwork with a jaw slightly hung open, saying nothing. *Now I've heard it all.*

"I'm being serious," I said. I was on a suicide mission. "I'm not looking to break a leg as a parachuter. What are my chances of surviving the infantry?"

His initial shellshock must have worn off quickly because, and I remember this well, his bottom lip parted ways with his mustache, whereupon his clean shaven cheekbones cast a defining measurement as to the weight of his grin.

"No, son," he clamped his teeth together. "If it is adventure you're after, then 19 Delta's the career for you."

"19 Delta...?"

"The cavalry," he said.

"What do I do, pursue Indians by horseback—dodge arrows?"

Staff-Sargent Mustache beamed devilishly.

"*Uh-huh*, something like that."

Strange that I'd willingly throw myself into the belly of the fish when, truth be told, I never really dealt well with pain. Once captured, Al Qaeda

would probably have to slap me around just to shut me up. Only months earlier I'd pierced my nipples, and as proof of my intolerance, the woman who chiseled stainless steel underneath the pink of my flesh had to pause for a *breather*. She literally had to take a knee, probably because my own pain had knocked the wind out of her. "Damn boy," she finally said. "You have some sensitive nipples." On a rare occasion, to this very day, my wife cocks her head back in laughter, having recalled the fact that she'd see me walking down some random hallway in high school, shirt pulled up to my neck (probably hoping to impress the girls), because Busey from weight training class would call out, '*Hey Noel, show us your tits!*'

It was our Vaudeville act.

The first person I told, after signing up for Custer's division, was Mr. Bennett, my high school government teacher. Apparently, he took a turn so far left that he became *lost* in the 1960's and had only recently resurfaced. He used baldness as his excuse. I always thought Bennett looked a lot like Noel Paul Stookey of *Peter, Paul, and Mary* fame—No, not the sex offender. Whatever really happened between his commune days and then remained unseen, but the fact of the matter is, he was a free thinking sceptic who came at government with a '*question everything they're teaching you*' approach, something I would not come to fully appreciate for another two decades. No other teacher had yet to impact me like him. For obvious reasons, the American government's genocide of an indigenous people, decades before Germany's holocaust, had yet to register with me yet.

The aging hippie sagged his head at the news, and for the first, though certainly not last time, I thought: *Oh hell, what have I done?*

"Come on," Mr. Bennett *sighed*. "I'll walk you home."

The breeze felt nice as we moseyed along the sidewalk, particularly because it helped to fill in the silent gaps between us. *I was his prodigy*, he eventually confessed. That much shocked me. Whatever he managed to say afterwards was mostly construed with disheveled mumbles—something about, *everything he fought for* and how *the 1960's are truly over*. That last part I read in his eyes.

Mr. Bennett then stopped on the sidewalk, turned to face me, and finally managed to grumble what I suspect he wanted to say all along.

"You were... *different*. Why did you let them take you—*why?*"

His words still haunt me to this day.

3

THE CIGARETTE SMOKE WHICH FILLED my lungs was probably not the *first* omen. I was bunched up in the bed of some raggedy hotel near Los Angeles International Airport awaiting shipment to Fort Knox in the morning, and my bunk mate, I never even learned his name except to glean that he was a navy guy, *lit them up* while he could. Smoking was a no-go in basic. It was our very last night for sin or vice or whatever; others had skipped out for the strip joint, or so their intentions were made known; and so he sucked in such a manner until the ash tray was brimming with rubble and our room was a den of miasma.

Wheezing—I was *wheezing*.

I had already given the habit the old college try, mostly to win the affections of a woman in New York. That summer I'd callously smoke one pack and then try my hand at another, usually Marlboro, rinse and repeat in cyclic repetition for so many days, afterwards weeks, but never could get addicted. If there were any doubts before, the habit itself felt now as toxic and constricting as my own choices. Despite repeatedly telling myself that this was not at all like playing G.I. Joe on my bedroom rug as a child, I could not possibly *fathom*, though I did indeed have a notion, that boot camp has very little to do with acquired skills. The tactics employed are far too extreme for educated learning; its recruits far too stressed.

Rather than fleeing for Tarshish, as Jonah had (which some believe to be the fabled occult-mecca of Atlantis, ponder *that*), I embraced the throes of an institution designed to reprogram children into killers. (What happens in Tarshish stays in Tarshish.) In doing so, I accepted the challenge. I was tasked with *something* held higher than my contemporaries back home, all of whom I was immediately isolated from. Every member of every branch is taught that civilians are untried, unproven and take their livelihood for granted while the glorious military sacrifices everything and is better than everyone else. Everything before this very week, I would soon be told *repeatedly*, lacked any real value.

This is how cults are forged.

Over the following three months, they had in mind to break me down and peel away the layers of my own personal identity, first by convincing me to sign away all civil liberties, and then through relentless, purposeful, and ceremonious bombardments of abuse, until I was thoroughly doubtful of myself, completely trusting of the rank, and wholly indoctrinated into the perfect personification of a *certain* faith. Though it is true that I was told we'd be taken to a training facility on the following morning where a *certain* skillset would be pursued, in reality, we learned *nothing*. Absolutely no training is involved for the first few days. For the first few days you are yelled at and senselessly ordered in line to such a degree, three days and three nights *without* sleep will easily pass by unnoticed. The wet of saliva in the ear—nothing is wasted. This all serves a purpose.

Even *then*, that very moment, after being dropped off in a beat-down motel, carefully watched and quietly kept from running away, the indoctrination process had begun. By the time the United States government was done with me, *if* their ceremony were a success, I would essentially eliminate myself from the freedom of determining my own destiny. As a Christian, would I have willingly signed on for a Roman garrison under the pay of Caesar? The answer is—*absolutely not*. So why the *double think*? In reality, I would be another sort of mental slave to the beast system, fighting and killing for the beast system, so zealous to the causes of the beast system that I'd defend my own manipulation.

Already I lay there, back turned to the navy guy, staring outside at the neon blue, listening in to the screams of airplanes as they rumbled in for the runway, and choked on the smoke which bled into me, regretting a great many things. The book ends of my own cognitive dissonance were slowly closing in. I was sleepless and frightened and feeling as dreadfully alone as I'd strangely hoped for, and so wandered down the hall to feed the phone machine quarters. Linda Pfanner was my age and from Texas. We had struck up a friendship two summers earlier in Kenya (same for the woman in New York) and somewhere down the line between our first meetings and now we had mutually agreed to marry if neither of us had found a suitable spouse by 40.

She answered on the second ring.

“Are you scared?” Pfanner finally asked.

There were never feelings of *love* between us—only friendship and shriving pew confessionals of the teenage nature. Pfanner had a way of pulling candor out of me.

I told her I *was*.

I even got around to telling her I was running from God.

Naturally, Pfanner was saddened to digest the news. If either of us had planned to run off *anywhere*, it was in the direction of God on the mission field. Pfanner later got married about the same time I did. They went to the mission's field in Haiti.

In Haiti she became a widow.

There is hardly a secret which can remain hidden in the Army for long. That is to say, both of my nipples remained pierced when I stepped onto the bus. Private Hadley was ordered into the bathroom with a pair of pliers. And yet, even to save my own life, as I tugged and tugged and tugged at them, pulling and twisting my nipples into every imaginable direction, they would *not* come unshackled.

I had avoided praying to God until *now*.

A big black drill sergeant, all meat and muscle and protruding veins as large as his ear lobes, burst through the bathroom door. He was a hound dog. He had caught my *scent*.

“FOR THE LOVE OF MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD, WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING, PRIVATE!”

I turned to salute him, but I never got around to the “Sir, ripping out my nipples—I mean, my nipple rings, Sir!” as I’d hoped. The horror in his eyes, which suddenly seemed to contain very little skin around them, and his thin curdled lips, which exposed two crooked rows of yellowed teeth, answered my sorry acknowledgement.

“OH, *FUNK*, PRIVATE!” Only he didn’t say *funk*. “I am *ssooooo* sorry.” He spoke now with an effeminate voice, as though the very sight of me squeezed his groin, or perhaps he was pressed to contend with the most unnecessary horror of war to date—that I were ordered to endure my own circumcision. At any rate, he closed the door and I never saw him again.

Maybe it was just a good cop, bad cop routine—I don’t know, because the very next face to peer through the door spoke of sadism.

“PRIVATE HADLEY! I BELIEVE I HAVE A DATE WITH A PAIR OF PLIERS!”

4

SUMMER WAS STILL A MONTH AWAY when I stood on Utah Beach in Normandy with my wife and twin sons, twenty years after the army—writing *this book*. The chill of spring had yet to thaw, and so we bundled up, jackets and beanies, until the bustle of tourism otherwise informed us that the warmth had arrived. It is quite difficult standing on such hallowed ground and feeling now the slightest smidgeon of patriotism flowing through one’s veins. Meanwhile, I have come to learn, patriotism is an idolatrous horse blinder for the saint, yoked down and pulling the money cart for the church today; a man-made sanction confused with covenant identity and our Israeli inheritance to come; an extra-Biblical tradition and one of the “high places” which most pastors and educated scholars are afraid to be honest with. Even worse, indeed the worst of all, patriotism supplies a bottomless well of resources and tools for government manipulation. Hardly a war could so much as inhale and then exhale again without it.

Even for the average truther, and *despite* the deplorable reality behind 9/11, the notion that we should dutifully join the government’s causes in order to fight for our freedom, despite the fact that the same slave masters back both sides of the war in order to further advance *their* causes, is a terribly difficult attraction to pry away from. War is glorious—or so I’m told; so long as we focus on those on the homecoming team who *gave* their life, and contrarily, those villains who assigned widows in our neighborhood, rather than those who won the war by *taking* from others. General George S. Patton at least spoke in half-truths when he said, “No man ever won a war by dying for his country. Wars were won by making the other poor bastard die for his. You don’t win a war by dying for your country. You win a war by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his.”

And now I’ve stood on Utah Beach with my two boys where, nearly seventy-five years earlier to month, the allied invasion of Europe, Operation Overlord, swiftly began. It was a father and son moment. Eric and Ira were particularly drawn to Nazi memorabilia. Reminders that

Nazi's had once occupied the beach were everywhere. What child doesn't *love to hate* the swastika? I struggled understanding my own mixed emotions, particularly an unusual swelling of pride, not only because I stood on foreign soil where an American flag still flaps in the wind, but because obelisks littered the memorial, reminding me of what god, or rather *gods*, western civilization was truly fighting for.

The Mysteries of Isis were celebrated here—and ultimately, Babylon. Nimrod claimed this victory as his own.

My great uncle Jack was stationed at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, a memorial I've visited numerous times. Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zeroes were buzzing overhead, slapping the water with a barrage of fire, while Jack braved the battle to save those drowning on the USS Arizona. Years later, when he was finally willing to speak of his experiences, he said he was incapable of pulling most sailors into his boat due to the oil. Arms and fingers outstretched, he simply watched them scream for help and drown.

Within days of her impending death, I asked my grandmother Adele to tell me stories about her life, which she obliged, beginning with some of her earliest memories in the streets of Al Capone's Chicago. As a girl, she once delivered dog poop to a neighbor she deplored, delicately wrapped in paper for effect, and told her it was candy. We were sitting alone together one afternoon when she gazed out the window, undoubtedly recalling the scenery of her distant past. She said my grandfather and his brothers were always sitting around playing poker at her kitchen table. On the day when Roosevelt declared Pearl Harbor a *day of infamy*, they simply laid down their cards, walked out the door, and enlisted. Jack was there. This was about family.

For the following four years, their service would carry them through both theaters of war, to such recognized crumbs on the map as Iwo Jima, Midway, and Okinawa, and in Europe names like Battle of the Bulge ring out. Jack would have another two ships sunk from under him before finally returning home. They all returned home—my grandmother reminded me while staring out the window. One day, once the War was over, they simply walked through the front door, sat down at her kitchen table, picked up their cards, and started dealing without even saying *hello*.

Adele gasped at the memory and then grinned with discovery. It was as if all of it, she said, was nothing more than family business which

needed tended to, a brother in despair, and most of all, an inconvenient nightmare which they'd wrestled with through the night.

It was the last story she ever told.

5

WHEN I CAME TO, DRILL SERGEANT Nielson was dragging me across the floor, screaming into my ear, while Drill Sargent Kroll held smelling salts to my nose.

“PRIVATE HADLEY!”

Fort Knox—

The shots had been administered, the lots had been cast, and I had been found *guilty* of disobedience. In as little as several weeks, the pain would wreak such havoc to my bones and joints that I too would eventually be sent home. Like Lewis, I too could barely climb out of bed to cross the room.

I never thought I'd walk again.

SEPTEMBER

1

IF THE MEDIA HAS ITS WAY; and believe me, *they'll try*; then the end of the world will be met with sensationalism.

Tuesday was a practice run.

As the sun dawned over America's eastern shoreline on the eleventh of September, 2001, New York City was in a strangely *thoughtful* mood. Even its streets were quieter than usual. This is perhaps partly due to the fact that a cold front had swept over the coast on the night prior, bathing the warm and sticky wet of summer with rain and thunderstorms. The following morning delivered a pristine skyline draped in a surreal backdrop of oceanic blue. A full slate of races awaited voters on Staten Island and around the city. Children were *also* starting school that day. As the clock rounded towards 9AM, the temperature reached a clean and comfortable 65 degrees. From Brooklyn, parents espoused extra time to personally drive their child or see them off at the station, but the trains departing for Manhattan would not return that afternoon.

The atmosphere of that day is *truly* difficult to define.

At precisely 8:46AM, *most* New Yorkers experienced the wreckage to the northern façade of the World Trade Center's North Tower in precisely the same manner as the rest of us did—through a phone call from friends or by simply turning on the television. A *missile*, it was often first reported, or *maybe* it was a plane. By 9:03AM however, the moment in which the southern façade of the South Tower was pounced upon by a *second* plane (or was it a missile?), the uneasiness which had suddenly gripped the city, particularly among the countless Manhattan residents who quietly started inching their way towards the Financial District of Lower Manhattan for a better view, bled out in a collective symphony of moans.

Within half an hour, at precisely 9:37AM, a *third* collision was reported at the Pentagon in Washington DC, 227 miles to the south of Manhattan. By 10:03AM, a *fourth* airliner reportedly crashed near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, southeast of Pittsburgh.

Chicken Little wasn't shitting us.

For the remainder of the day a plume of smoke bellowed high into the sunny canopy above the Hudson, while a lazy wind blew southbound. Smells of the fire seemed to seep through every window, filling every room of every house in Brooklyn. Long afterwards, the stain from that awful September morning, particularly the pulverized steel and concrete which filled the lungs of many, simply wouldn't wash away. There are those who survived a plight of stairs down some ninety-five stories, nearly two-thousand steps, and would long thereafter wake up at night with swollen ankles—no place left to run and nowhere deeper to descend to but Sheol and the shower.

From several hundred miles away, as the crow flies, Rick Hummer was an afternoon drive jock and also the imaging director for an entire cluster for CBS Radio in and around Charlotte, North Carolina, and driving into work when the first *plane* hit. "I heard Samantha actually say on the radio, 'Hey guys, I don't know what's going on, but something just happened in New York City, and there's a gaping hole in one of the World Trade Center towers, and they're saying on the news right now that quite possibly a plane hit it.'"

Hummer picked up his cell phone and called in on the hotline, hoping to crack a one-liner. Samantha Stone answered.

"Where's John at?" he asked.

"I don't think you understand, Rick," Stone said. *John* was their boss. *John* had just received his pilot's license. "This isn't a joke."

Upon entering the building, Hummer "came into the front door, and the conference room had a big glass wall—you could see in; and they had the TV on up in the corner. Hardly anyone ever used it except for meetings." There were already people gathered around, locking their heads upwards towards the flickering television, fingers inelegantly pronounced upon their lips and noses. The very moment he walked in to join them Hummer looked up and saw an explosion.

The women in the room *screamed*.

He asked, "Was that a replay?"

"No, that's another plane!" They said.

“The first thing I thought was: ‘the radars are off. *The radars are off.* They’re sending them to the wrong place. Somebody reprogrammed the beacons for the runways.”

Hummer thought of familiar faces, and immediately returned to his phone, hoping to call friends and associates waddling among the wreckage. “And obviously you couldn’t get through at all. Right away it was hard getting through to New York.”

Susan answered.

“You wouldn’t believe it! You wouldn’t believe all the people coming this way,” she told him.

“What is going on?”

“I have no idea!”

Susan was only ten blocks from the World Trade Center, pushing against the swelling tide of pedestrians scrambling to and fro. Hummer was on the phone with her the precise moment when the North Tower fell—when the howls of hell’s torment seemingly filled his ear.

OH MY GOD! *Susan cried.*

ALL THE PEOPLE! ALL THE PEOPLE!

Hummer recalled, “Just hearing her scream, I felt like I was there. I felt so helpless. I really thought something was happening to her. What I was picturing in my mind was this domino effect—all the buildings were going to fall down over each other. The whole fear thing came over me.” While Susan rushed about helping to deliver water and towels to those who were fleeing the cloud of pulverized steel and concrete, Hummer folded into the media’s sensationalism. “I went through that with everybody else—not looking at anything *but* the terror—the awe.”

It was that very night that Bush held a televised press conference. They had already come out and claimed Osama Ben Laden as the day’s grand orchestrator. “And he said these exact words. He said: ‘We will not tolerate outrageous conspiracy theories.’ And when he said that I was actually sitting on my couch, and I said, ‘Why did he *say* that?’”

What *conspiracy theory* is he talking about?

CAMI LET HER HUSBAND IN ON THE NEWS from work that morning. In Denver, Colorado, the hour had not yet pronounced 7AM, and 40-year old Bob Knodel was lying in bed when she called. “We had a TV in our bedroom, and so I turned it on, and I was looking at the gaping hole in World Trade Center. The first thing I thought is, ‘Man, that guy must have been a really *shitty* pilot.’”

Maybe not from bed, where he “watched the news and all the sensationalism going on” and the immediate finger pointing with a growing sense of paranoia (after all, he did work in several downtown high rises), Bob Knodel wisened up to September 11th from the very beginning—in fact, that very week.

“The September 11th attacks were a self-inflicting wound. A lot of people, it took them a lot—*lot* longer to catch onto that. But just looking at things with a critical eye, especially the terminal velocity that these buildings came down at; I looked at that as an engineer and a pilot and I said: ‘There is no way that could have possibly happened that way.’” Knodel quickly began noticing other irregularities. “You look at the towers, and they fell at 10.4 and 10.6 seconds respectively, which for 110 stories is absolute freefall. So the idea of a pancake theory, as they were trying to push, one floor weakening under the other, I mean, any engineer worth half of his salt would realize that’s utter BS, and there’s no way that could have possibly happened.”

The asymmetry went *on and on* from there, “the missing gold, the cheering Israeli’s, the people that were notified beforehand—they put options on stock,” *on and on and on*. “I had concluded that it was a complete hoax. And I think one of the things that did it for me was the molten metal that was still running under the streets a week later. And I’m thinking to myself, from a hydro carbon fire? *There’s no way!* There is no way that a hydrocarbon fuel could possibly burn that hot. Not only could it not burn hot enough to melt steel, but surely it could never burn hot enough to make it molten and keep it molten for over a week. The only thing that can possibly get hot enough to make steel do that and to keep it that way would be thermite or thermate; and thermate is just a variation of thermite; there’s just a chemical added to it where it burns even hotter.”

As discussions quickly broke out in online chat rooms, Knodel even began considering the possibility that the pancake freefall denoted a controlled demolition. “NIST had not come out with their report yet stating that there was this weakening and pancake effect and all that, which ultimately turned out to be BS anyway. The only way that those could have come down at freefall speed is if the foundations were removed from underneath their floors. It had to be that they were literally, *simultaneously* destroying all the core columns, all at the same time. It also explains the reason why it fell straight down on itself. And at one point, you know, it’s interesting, because one of the towers had started leaning, like it was going to topple over, and then, you know, I guess the chargers were slightly late. And then when they finally went off, they dropped it down into its own footprint. At that point I knew—I *knew* that this was a self-inflicted wound. This could never have just happened by airplanes crashing into the buildings, spilling JP-4 fuel and having it ignite. It just didn’t add up at all.”

The University of Alaska at Fairbanks “just released a new report from their engineering department that was a four year study that talked about the collapse of WTC 7, and of course they ran through all these scenarios, and they ran a simulation, and they concluded that the only possible way to have 7 collapse the way that it did is to have simultaneous core column failures. They didn’t say that it was a controlled demolition. They didn’t go that far. But they didn’t have to. It was obvious that that was exactly what they were implying.”

And another thing, while Knodel lay in bed watching the horror unfold, constant replays seemed to show the buildings swallowing the planes whole, while their noses exited the other end, still perfectly rounded.

The planes were “an after production effect” intended for broadcast, he said. *Witnesses saw missiles*. “There was one helicopter that caught most of that footage, and that was the Fox helicopter. And essentially, the reason the nose came out the other side is, as they were filming this, and they were augmenting it, there was probably like a wind gust or something that kind of jolted the helicopter slightly, and so they mistakenly had the nose appear to come out the other side. Now again, these are all post-editing, semi-real time editing effects that were going on. So no, I don’t believe the planes were holographic because the eye-witnesses, many of them said, ‘No, we didn’t see planes. They looked like missiles.’ And the

only people that were saying *planes* were people that were actually hired by the media. Almost every single witness that was interviewed on 9/11 had a connection or was employed by the mainstream media at one point or another. But when you get to the other people, a lot of them were saying they were *missiles*. And the power of suggestion agrees that some people, if they indeed saw a missile, when it was suggested to them that it was an airliner, then their mind will go along with that. It's kind of a basic psychological tactic, especially when it's repeated *over and over and over and over* again. That's how you get people to buy into stuff, repeating it *over and over and over and over* again."

"Ironically the other really strange thing that happened during 9/11 is that all of the video and cameras, or the majority of them, were disabled, like there was some sort of an EMP that was released that disabled these devices, so you didn't have a whole lot of amateur footage. But then what you did get was people coming forward saying that this was *posing* as amateur footage. The same sort of CGI errors and glitches were going on in those as well. And they were consistent with each other. Of course, in 2001 the techniques weren't *nearly* what they have today. So there were things like a disappearing wing or disappearing tail sections that would fade in or out. You would have perspective errors that didn't add up, things like that. Nowadays, if they were to pull that off, the production value would have been so much better. It would be pretty convincing." Still, "this was a massive—massive psyop to try to convince people, complete with amateur witnesses—the whole nine yards. They had almost every contingency covered. But obviously no plan can be perfect, especially when you've got a good portion of the world population scrutinizing over it, and especially the amount of engineers and scientists out there that are looking at this."

On the morning of September 11th, Bob Knodel sat there in bed and contemplated the media narrative before him, and then for the longest time afterward he thought about it some more, until finally he thought, *My God.*

It's a self-inflicting wound.

We've been lied to again.

"These are all conclusions that I came to within the first week to the first month of the September 11 attack, based on my experiences as an engineer and as a pilot. I know there's simply no way that that happened

as they say it did. It defies the laws of physics and everything that I knew about science.”

As Knodel went around telling people this, the typical reaction was to be expected. *You’ve lost your marbles, old man.* But “I persisted, and managed to piss off a lot of people. And these were my customers too, by the way. As time went on they started taking heed to my word, and saying, ‘You know, Bob, you were right. There is no way that this could have possibly gone down the way they said that it did.’”

All of this, Knodel concluded, was to lay the ground work for what’s *still* to come.

3

“I THINK WHEN THE EVENT FIRST HAPPENED it caught *everyone* off guard,” Robbie Davidson said. Davidson was at home, running his internet company on the morning of September 11th, and like almost everyone else, he didn’t catch the drama until moments before the second plane hit.

“It’s hard putting into words the feeling you actually have when you see this unfolding.” And for almost everyone who witnessed that event, the outrage was almost instantaneous. Among a profusion of swirling emotions, Davidson settled comfortably in upon the anger. *People need to pay for this.* “I think it really created that patriotic attitude of, ‘Let’s move forward,’” Davidson said, and by that he means:

Let’s bomb the crap out of these people.

“I fell for it, for sure. There was no hesitation. There was no doubt in my mind. The event happened *the way* it happened—the way the news told us it happened. At that point, I would say 9/11 was pivotal in this truth journey for so many individuals, because it really awakened people to how dark and how evil this world truly is. How in the world could an entire government, in the very least, allow the event to happen, and at its very worst, be complacent in *everything?*”

“And here’s the really interesting thing, even when that event happened, it wasn’t like there was a lot of YouTube videos on the subject. There weren’t a lot of people talking about it—*not* that I came across.”

It's almost as if the truther community, tens or hundreds of thousands of voices, *woke up* at the same time. In fact, if it hadn't been for September 11th, the flat earth Movement may not have happened at all. "If you look at everybody's timeline, they all woke up at the same time. I find that fascinating. Rob Skiba's story, he's sitting on a plane. He hears people talking—questioning the official narrative. And he's mad. He's upset. I mean, here's a guy that is in the army, he's all about being patriotic. And yet, here's some people questioning the official narrative, and it made Rob *mad*. I think that was for a lot of us at the same time. At first you're like, 'No, this can't be.' And yet when you get sucked into it you find out that there's a mountain of evidence, and I mean a mountain of evidence to support the fact that the official story is definitely not the truth—whatsoever, in the same way as when you get into enclosed cosmology, there's such a mountain of evidence."

People often ask Davidson: "What will it take for you not to believe *what* you believe?"

Davidson's reply: "And I'm like, you have to understand, there are *so many* aspects to this."

"I have friends that thought I was crazy when I was bringing this up, and they really knew structural engineering. A few of them were into building themselves. When I brought up Building 7, they stopped, and they said, '*Woah*, buildings don't fall like that.' It took Building 7 for a lot of friends that I knew. Everything else wasn't resonating with them. But when it came to Building 7—no planes had hit it. There was no structural damage. There were a couple of fires going on; and yet at freefall speed, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon or whatever, all of the sudden it collapses into its own footprint." *Something's going on.*

In fact, when the 9/11 Commission Report was released on the 22nd of July, 2004, its glaring omission *was* Building 7. "That was the issue that woke up a ton of people. There were a lot of researchers, a lot of people, not just in America." In the years after America's tragic involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, a deluge of documentaries started gushing out onto the web and filling every crack and crevice of the rabbit hole, for anyone simply willing to peek their head in. "This led to engineers for 9/11 truth; it led to firefighters for 9/11 truth; the police. I mean, when you start looking at it, there were many credited scientists that were coming on board. Demolition experts all over the world were chiming in outside of America and saying, 'I'm sorry, but that is controlled demolition.' *There is*

so much proof. There are so many people adding their voices to what's going in. I think one of the most powerful testimonies is victims—parents who lost people in the actual event itself, speaking out the loudest and crying foul.”

“We could talk for days about everything that went down. We could talk about thermite. We could talk about how the steel beams were cut. We could talk about the fact that they were one of the strongest buildings ever. You have people on record saying that it would take multiple planes, and it *still* wouldn't come down, the way it was created with a net, created to withstand almost anything. And yet on September 11th, at freefall speed, these buildings collapse into their own footprint.”

Davidson said, “The Pentagon—that was the craziest thing. They confiscated like twenty-six cameras, CTV cameras from every gas station and hotel. It was an issue of national security. If you are going to hide something from the public, first of all, it's a plane crashing into a building. What is unsecure about releasing the footage from the CTV cameras from all the adjacent hotels and gas stations? It made no sense that they would confiscate all the video on that. Not to mention that the only release was a freeze frame, three frames of—you can't even see it; it's hidden—something hitting the Pentagon.” It looks almost like—a *missile*. “It's so mind boggling when you get into every aspect of 9/11. The fact that the plane would actually do an aerial maneuver in which pilots even came forward and said, ‘We can't do that with that jet.’ It's almost practically impossible from the highest level combat pilot. They had to do this aerial maneuver, circle around, sit there, and then go into the pentagon, basically at the area where nobody was present. It was all under construction. If you're a terrorist and you want to take something out, then you want maximum damage. Why would you come straight down and go conveniently into the place where there's nothing going on?”

Interestingly enough though, the striking point “was where all the financial documents were, and all that stuff was destroyed. A lot of stuff mysteriously disappeared, like the gold in the vaults.” 2.3 trillion dollars. “The fact that people were placing *put options*—if you understand the stock market, you can place calls and puts. A *call option* is when you think the stock is going to go up, and a *put* is when the stock is going to go down. They were putting *put* calls a day before 9/11 on American Airlines and United. You can see a spike on the put option that was placed on the two airlines. *Somebody was in the know.*”

“When you get into Pennsylvania, the coroner went on record and said, ‘I’ve never been at a crime scene where I couldn’t find blood.’ There was no fusel lodge. There was no engine. There was no luggage. There were no bodies. In Pennsylvania, there was just a hole in the ground. Same thing with the Pentagon—Where were the wings? Where was the fusel lodge? Where were the bodies—the blood—the luggage? I mean, on any plane, there’s *a lot* of luggage. Where’s the luggage? *Nothing*—it just evaporated inside that hole inside the Pentagon.”

Attempting to harvest *facts* from the tares, the false media-saturated narrative of 9/11, is a Pandora’s Box in and of itself. “From there you basically can’t shut it off. From there I went into learning about the monetary system, the Federal Reserve, researching the Bohemian Grove, Skull & Bones. For me as a Christian, I wanted to understand the spiritual implications as to what was going on in the world. I wasn’t so much fascinated with the physical aspects. I wanted to know the spiritual aspects that were going on. When I found out that almost every president had been a 33 degree Freemason; when I found out that the higher elite, the Rockefeller’s and the Rothschild’s were pretty much controlling *everything*—they were controlling both sides of the war; when I studied the world itself from a spiritual angle, I discovered that Satan truly was the god of this world. Even though I *knew* that Satan was the adversary, I never understood the level of infiltration he had in the world. I looked at him more as an abstract force. He was there; he was going to be there; he was going to cause trouble; but I didn’t see him *inside* world elite systems; *inside* the presidential office; *inside* the political parties—the democrat *and* republican; I didn’t understand the high levels of Satanism within the world structure.”

The Bohemian Grove, what President Richard M. Nixon once referred to as, ‘the most-faggy *god dammed* thing you could ever imagine,’ should be a deeply unsettling discovery for every Biblical believer. Davidson said, “Alex Jones broke that open. What’s going on here when you have the most powerful men in the world each year meeting in California, worshipping Moloch, a carved owl, doing mock human sacrifices and chanting in a forest, wearing robes? For me, that was showing Christians, *look*, look at the people going to these events! These are the most powerful men in the world, and yet this is true, full-on Satanism. This is what is warned about in the Bible!”

September 11th was so pivotal, Davidson says, that if someone has looked into chemtrails, looked into vaccinations, or the lies of Scientism, *especially* the flat earth, “I would bet that most had an introduction through the 9/11 event. The majority of people will say they’ve gone into this research,” and all because of the September attacks, “for a number of years leading up to what was coming next. So I always look at it like, these things are coming at different points, because it’s all a part of *His* story [**H**istory], it’s all a part of His awakening. Truly, this is not something that we’re wizing up to. It’s not something that we’re suddenly smarter than the rest of the population. It’s not that at all. For whatever reason, we’re being picked. We’re being *chosen* to be a representation of this truth and bringing it forward—even with all the opposition and attacks coming our way. For whatever reason, there are certain individuals that are called to face this ridicule and persecution. Moving forward, there’s more to come. And I think of everything that has been going on, and I can’t imagine things getting crazier in the world. But still we’re going to be getting to a point where there’s going to be a lot more happening in the future. To me, 9/11 is pivotal to this entire discussion, because when people understand how dark and evil this world can be, you can’t really hold anything past anyone when it comes to how sophisticated the lies will go, especially when it comes to NASA—when it comes to the creation of the space agencies. When you start connecting all these dots, you have the same players; you have the same connections. The world is a stage. It’s a show. And *they* control everything. We’re here, not to be a part of it, but to bring hope and to spread the truth.”

If only the individual can overcome the spiritual blinders of patriotism—and I admit, this is a tall order; after looking into, and attempting to *separate*, the glaring errors from the facts. And yet, this is the hope. If only the critical thinker can “get past the whole, *rah—rah—America, the government can do no wrong!*” attitude, Davidson concludes, “When presented with the facts, they’re going to be left with, *hmmmm*, that’s interesting.”

NEARLY A YEAR AFTER 9/11, RICK HUMMER had moved back from Charlotte to Indiana in order to take care of his ailing father. The fact that his wife decided to stay in the Carolinas seemed to imply, in rather broad and bitter strokes, that their marriage was over. Despite the fact that his father died almost immediately thereafter, Hummer never returned. He simply hired a private investigator to catch his wife *in the act*, and then hunkered down for the prolonged divorce proceedings.

It took yet another year *after* America's invasion of Iraq on the 19th of March, 2003, for Rick Hummer to finally *wake up*. In the meantime, he beat the war drum.

"I was doing country radio, so it was really my job to play the patriotic tunes," he said. Alan Jackson, '*Where Were You When the World Stopped Turning?*' and Darryl Worley, '*Have You Forgotten?*' comes to mind. "I was even on an NBC affiliate talking about how it's our duty to be patriotic and back our troops. I was so brainwashed—full blown brainwashed. I had no idea that I had been programmed by the system. Even when people were trying to reach out to me at that time," irate over the fact that we were going into Afghanistan and Iraq, "I was like, you guys just don't get it. *They did this to us*. We need to go in there. We need to get them. We *need* to get them."

Hummer may have very well been playing Worley or Jackson when a veteran of the Second World War called into the station.

"You sound *stupid* to those who know the truth," the grizzly old voice told the disc jockey.

"What do you mean, *I'm stupid?*" Hummer replied.

"Well, let me ask you something..."

Hummer shrugged with indifference.

"Can I ask you three questions, because you keep banging this war drum, *son*, and I've got to ask. Every day when you get off the radio, when you're leaving your show, you say, 'Have a great day, God bless you.'"

Yeah, so...?

"What God are you talking about—the one in the Bible?"

Uh, yeah—

“Well the God of the Bible doesn’t talk about married women like you do, like Shaniah Twain and some of these other women you’re playing on the radio. You sound very *lustful*.”

Hummer’s throat went dry.

“We weren’t on the air,” he recalled. “I mean, I wasn’t putting the man on the air with me. I was just playing music in the background. And he basically said to me, ‘You sound *stupid* for saying *God bless you* and simultaneously banging the war drum’ when I wasn’t talking anything about what the Bible taught. I was proud and haughty, a get in your face shock jock at times, doing prank phone calls, airing them, and having fun.”

“He basically just broke me down, out of love. He was knocking my character down. It humbled me. I stood there and listened because my grandfather was a World War 2 veteran. By that point in time I had already looked into what happened at Pearl Harbor, and why some of the generals were going over to the other side of the island.” *That smells fishy*. “How did we not know there were planes coming to bomb Pearl Harbor? I always felt bad for my grandfather, because he told me what he went through in Europe, watching his friends die; watching some of them freeze to death; how they would take the socks off of dead men to keep themselves warm. It was awful—just some of the worst conditions imaginable.”

The old man then asked him, “How many buildings fell on 9/11?”

Hummer thought about it, “Five or six...?”

“*No*, there were only three.”

Hummer recalled, “When he said *that* a lightbulb came on.”

“You’re right. I think a third building *did* come down.”

“Son, you need to goggle building seven.”

“You mean *Google* building seven?”

“*Whatever*. Look it up.”

Okay.

Hummer typed *Building 7* into his search engine, hoping to multi-task, and promptly asked: “What’s your next question?”

One of the first things he saw was, 'Building 7 omitted from 9/11 Commission.' *Hub?*

The grizzly old voice did not wait around for reality to continue nipping him in the intellectual buns, and asked, "What if the media and the government are lying to you?"

"I wouldn't like that. Nobody likes being duped."

"Well then, *son*, I'm going to ask you one more thing. When you finally figure out what the truth is, what are you going to do with it?"

Hummer recalled, "I knew exactly what he was talking about. I heard the confidence in the man's voice, and I was stunned. Here was a guy who'd been listening to me for a couple of years and knew me probably better than I knew myself at that point in my life, and he gave me exactly what I needed to hear. I got convicted."

The disc jockey stared into *dead air* for a matter of seconds.

"I don't know," was his response. "*I don't know* what to do."

"Just tell the truth, son," the old man said. "That's all we're expected to do." He then added, "If I were you, rather than slamming shot glasses down, I'd be getting on my knees more often."

The truth, as they say, set Rick Hummer free.

But he wasn't the only one. In the months after the 9/11 Commission Report was finally released, the *truth* set innumerable people free.

DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

He found him in a desert land,
And in the howling waste of a wilderness;
He encircled him, He cared for him,
He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.

Deuteronomy 32:10

1

Y2K WAS A TOTAL BUST and the *Backstreet Boys* made a killing in record sales, but for the man from Massachusetts, the turn of the second Millennium was not so kind. Rob Skiba was broke, divorced, homeless, and bankrupt; a thirty-three year old Army veteran living in a Dodge Stratus with everything of value that he owned, and by December of 2002, ready to drill a bullet into his head. “I was a *total* mess. And my uncle,” on his mother’s side, “*fortunately* for me, but unfortunately for him, he was going through the exact same thing I was going through.”

Uncle Mac was his name.

In Richardson, Texas, just north of Dallas, Mac was attending a faith-based program called *The ROAD Adventure*, which intended to help its attendees overcome past emotional damages, when he learned of Skiba’s distress. “He told my mother, ‘I’ll pay for everything. I don’t care what it takes. Get him down here. He’s got to go to this program.’” Skiba agreed. “It was a three weekend deal, and so he flew me down for parts *one* and *two*.” Mac was already on his *third* and final weekend during Skiba’s introductory outing. “Parts *one* and *three* overlap in the same weekend, and they do something where the people from part *three* come into the part *one* weekend. It’s crazy, it’s funny, and it’s kind of out there. But I was in so much pain, and I see my uncle dancing, and knowing that he’s going through the same thing that I’m going through—but laughing and singing and having a good time.” In only three weekends, *The ROAD Adventure* program had saved his uncle’s life. “And I was sitting there going, I don’t know what they’re doing to the people over there in part *three*, but whatever it is, I gotta have it.”

After two consecutive weekends, Skiba found himself back in Massachusetts. Already it was killing him. And so on December 18, 2002, Skiba packed up his car with everything that he owned, with no idea where he was going to go or what he was going to do, except that he needed to attend the third part of that weekend more than anything.

2

THE ROAD TO TEXAS FROM THE BERKSHIRES forks between Tennessee and Missouri, both of which passes through Arkansas. Skiba will likely never forget “the biggest billboard” he’d ever seen in his life, somewhere near the Arkansas state border. “This thing was massive. It was like a *huge* billboard.” And it read:

Saturday is the true Sabbath. Sunday is of the devil.

Skiba squeezed the pedal.

I'm getting the hell out of Arkansas as fast as I can.

3

ITS NOT EXACTLY LIKE TEXAS was a beauty mark on the map either. *Texas?* “I never wanted to live in Texas,” Skiba said. “It was a hundred degrees all the time here. After finishing my third weekend I figured, “Thank you, Uncle Mac, for everything you’ve done. I’m heading out to L.A. to make movies.”

And yet a problem seemed to manifest every time he attempted to break free of the Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex. “I was headed for L.A. I figured if I was already living in the van down by the river, I’ll be the next *True Hollywood* story. And yet every time I tried to leave, it was like I was hitting a force field. It was this ugly, nasty *feeling*, like I just couldn’t leave the metroplex.” So he sat behind the wheel of his Dodge Stratus while the grizzly thought moistened his neck and breathed down his neck—or maybe it was just the humidity. ‘Oh God, you’re trying to tell me something here.’

You're trying to tell me something, aren't you?

Texas.

Please, no.

Not Texas.

“And I’m looking around, and there’s hardly any trees. I mean, I grew up in the Berkshires” surrounded by rolling mountains and dazzling autumn forests. Regardless, everything in the rearview mirror was killing him, and Texas apparently wasn’t populated enough, because “God wouldn’t let me go. I’m living in my car thinking, ‘What am I doing here? They don’t even have trees here. This place is a desert.’”

Skiba stopped by a convenient store and bought a road map in hopes of finding a place to get alone with God. Perhaps He might even suggest an *alternate* destination—something with more shade to it. Trees were clearly important to him. “I was *crying*. What am I doing in Texas? There’s nothing for me here.”

He was sitting in the desert hoping for God to speak with him, waiting on a burning bush, *anything*—when his Bible blew open to Deuteronomy 32. His eyes honed in to verse number ten. There are an estimated fourteen *silent* years between Saul’s conversion on the road to Damascus and his eventual commission to that mission as an Apostle while he quietly lived his life working, listening, perhaps visiting the Sinai mountaintop, and waiting on God to speak with Him. After that day in the desert, with a roadmap and a Bible for his guides, Rob Skiba would not have to wait *quite* that long.

In time, he would call his newly adopted home his *Goshen*.

4

THE FOLLOWING YEAR HE WAS a bachelor *Texan* living in a sweltering apartment complex, rife with hot women. As the recipient of a cheating wife and an agonizing divorce, Rob Skiba stood naked and alone under the shower nozzle, desperately attempting to relate to being a man *and* the bride of Christ.

“The temptations were unbelievable,” he said. “And they were everywhere.”

The year was 2003, and Skiba was *going crazy*. “I spent most of 2003 praying a lot, crying a lot, and reading my Bible a lot. That’s all I did for the whole year. The shower sort of became my prayer closet. And I was like, *Okay, I’m physically naked and I’m spiritually naked before you, Father*, and I’d have very long prayer times until the water got cold.” Skiba spent so many days locked in his apartment that it literally felt at times like a tangible, *knowable* presence dwelt right beside him, dispensing riches of revelation, and his prayer times would last for hours. In fact, it was the closest he’d felt to God in his entire life.

That is, until God “pulled a *Song of Solomon* on me.”

Skiba paused on the phone. “Have you ever heard the phrase, *the dark night of the soul?*”

“Yes,” I said.

“Are you familiar with the concept of it—what it represents?”

“Explain it to me.”

“Well, it’s basically *the Song of Solomon*. Here’s this great romance, right? All of the sudden, the husband distances himself, and he watches her from behind bushes and stuff, as the woman kind of goes crazy, like, *Where are you my beloved?* What is she going to do? Is she going to seek after him to try to find him and never give up or go off with someone else? You know, it’s like this test.”

Skiba soon found himself weeping in the shower and pleading: “Father, I need a touch, a word, *something*. I need to know you’re still here.”

His answer came when God gently whispered into an ear.

That’s what happened to your first marriage. That’s why your wife left you.

“I was a workaholic,” Skiba explained. “And you know—men and women have different needs. And she had gotten to the point where she needed a word, a touch, something to show that I still cared—even though I did. I just wasn’t apparently showing it enough for her, you know. And she went off and found another. But I got to take responsible on my part for why the marriage fell apart.”

His mentor in Texas told him, “Rob, I know that you’re not enjoying the single life, but this is your opportunity to work on your relationship with God. Work on *that*.”

Together they studied the ten love languages and Skiba began to notice something. Not one of his needs was being met. “I was single and going crazy,” he said, “And I felt like God was telling me, ‘*Yeah, I know what you mean. I get it.*’”

“I feel like the Holy Spirit was impressing upon me, if I’m married to God, we’re made in God’s *likeness*, then how do I apply these ten love languages in my relationship with God? Well, all the ones on the woman’s side I can pretty much spiritualize enough, but on the male side, you’ve got *sex*. That’s the number one, right? *Sex*. How does that work with God? I’m his bride, and like, *what and how...?* And I started thinking, if sex is the act of one person willingly opening themselves up, so to speak, to receive the other in an intimate relationship, where the two become one, I could see how, spiritually speaking, I could work that with God. Like, opening myself up to receive Him, and try to be one with Him, and work on that. The other typically second in the line of the five love needs of men is an attractive spouse, and that goes back to number one. Men are visually stimulated. A man wants and needs someone who is attractive. How attractive am I being to God when I’m wallowing around in a pig-sty—not making myself pretty to God, so to speak? How pretty am I to God when I’m sinning?”

“When I had that *Song of Solomon dark night of the soul* moment, all of the sudden I understood what it was to be that bride, that woman, crying out needing that word; that touch; any show of affection from her husband, because I wasn’t getting any. God was trying to tell me, ‘*Look, let’s work on you first. And let’s work on us.*’”

In the meantime, hot women surrounded him. “That’s one of the reasons I locked myself in my apartment. I was like, “I want *that*. I want *that*. I want *that*. I need a woman. I need a woman! But God was like, ‘Okay, maybe you’ll understand this now for your second time in marriage.’”

That is, if you get a second time around.

NEW HERIZONS

Then [YHWH] Elohim said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”

Genesis 2:18

1

ALBERT EINSTEIN SAID, “YOU CAN’T BLAME GRAVITY for falling in love,” and *this much* is true. Globe Earth hinges upon gravity to survive. Regardless, that moment of *realization* happened for me shortly after leaving Phnom Penh—excluding a one night layover in Bangkok—specifically while crossing eastward over the International Date Line for Los Angeles International Airport. It was the *reality* of love which besieged me. The date was July 5, 2001. I remember it well because its hours flowed, quite *naturally*, somewhat backwards into the dawning hours of July 4, which I was purposed to relive all over again. Likewise, the sun bookmarked an abnormally shortened night. That was perfectly fine by me, because I couldn’t have slept anyhow. Asia was already moribund energy. I was so painfully in love with a woman in southern California that the very thought of her increased my ability to live. And yet by no mere coincidence I was quite certain that the ever-shrinking world, that celebrated playground for my fingertips, had suddenly become *too* large to maneuver. Or rather, I had no desire to explore its exotic avenues without the woman who had *become* my world. She was, quite ironically, the only gravitational force which has ever sent me spinning.

Actually, two alien landscapes flooded me with a deluge of inquiries. There was the unexplored geography of *love* of course—which I shall only briefly here acknowledge—but there was the mystery of the supposed globe to consider; an endless archway of water and land which surely existed *beyond* the flattened horizon itself. For this reason flying had always made me somewhat uncomfortable—not from the fear of falling or crashing or dying, though I reckon those would all be rational. Rather, I’d sit by my window gazing at the material plane below and praise [YHWH], YAHUA THE MOST-HIGH ELOHIM, for His creation. My educated

beliefs simply didn't match my observations. On that fateful trip across the International Date Line the Pacific Ocean's horizon continued rising-rising-rising—endlessly rising; always suspiciously flat and at eye level. I never once had to look down upon the horizon. Whether I were standing six-feet off the ground along the shores of the Pacific or cruising 33,000 feet over the Hawaiian Isles, the horizon always has and continues still to maintain its eye-level.

What I observed in no way described the globe which had first been handed to me as a child. In only a few words, Auguste Piccard—the man who would later inspire Gene Roddenberry's fictitious captain of the U.S.S. *Enterprise*, *Star Trek's* very own Jean-Luc Picard—innocently chronicled what I was witnessing, but with far greater authority. Seventy years earlier, on the 27th of May, 1931, Piccard and Paul Kipfer took off in a grand balloon from Augsburg, Germany, and reached a record altitude of 51,775 feet. The August 31 edition of *Popular Science* would describe Piccard's harrowing journey to a curious public, in which it is reported that—from 50,000 feet up—the whole earth seemed like a “flattened disk with upturned edges.”

Throughout the following decade I practically lived in airports, despite marrying that woman from the California coast, and airplanes became my usual mode of commute to and from work. Wedding photography dominated my life. It was an intoxicating career pulsating within my very veins. Essentially, I was *purposed* for a life on the road. The camera carried me everywhere. Alaska, Chicago, Maine, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and practically every state in-between filled the ranks—dozens of times over. Long travel weekends became the norm. More precisely, I was absent from home most of the year. Boston, New York, and Washington DC were frequented destinations.

You may have seen me. I was the guy sleeping on the floor of an airport terminal, using his carry-on luggage as a pillow. The cash started flowing in quicker than the grime of adventure under my fingernails, and my phone was swamped with inquiring couples. I worked alongside actors and comedians, contracted musicians, commercial models and city architects, state politicians, the entire casts of television shows and even network presidents. This sort of penthouse elbow-rubbing was what we photographers referred to as a *Champaign lifestyle on a beer budget*. And yet I was a fly on the wall throughout it all, mainly because I never felt like one

of them. And I never wanted to be. It was the sky itself—the unsolved riddle of the incessant eye-level horizon which beckoned me.

And another thing, the horizon *always* remained flat. Where was the proposed curve of the Earth? Only multi-billion tax dollar government agencies like NASA unveil the supposed curvature.

Quite similarly, the ground remained stationary—*every time*. Whether crossing over the Rocky Mountains or the great Midwestern plains from 33,000 feet up, I never once observed the earth sliding in any direction as parlor tricks like Foucault’s pendulum suggests. If the earth were truly spinning eastwards at 1000 miles an hour, we wouldn’t need an airplane to get us there. A hot air balloon should suffice—and nothing nearly so complex as what Piccard observed “the flattened disk of the earth” with—simply hovering from New York to Los Angeles in as little as three hours.

If the Earth has a curve to it, then we should see far away objects like tall buildings and mountains bending away from us, as the curve of the earth would dictate, but despite seeing tall objects with the naked eye many miles beyond what curvature calculations allow for, such a thing has never been observed, and *never* will.

These thoughts troubled me.

Of course, flying with the spin of the Earth would prove much longer than the five hours it takes to fly *against* the spin. Actually, if a plane is traveling at 500 miles per hour, the spin of the Earth would promise that the destination become further removed at every given moment, and would—quite humorously—catch up to tap us on the shoulder from behind. Actually, if the earth is really spinning at 1000 miles per hour, landing a plane would be next to impossible. I distinctly recall flying over California’s San Bernadino Mountains and considering the gun toting sniper, who supposedly positions his long-distance target by adhering to the regulations of the Coriolis Effect, and yet an airplane pilot does no such thing. A pilot can line up his runway directly ahead of him from miles away and land perfectly every time. Projectiles launch just as far in all directions, north-east-south-west, and with as much precision and accuracy.

I tried speaking with others about my observations. But they always fell on deaf ears. Actually, I was *ridiculed*.

An airplane would continually have to dip its nose so as not to climb altitude while flying over the curve—which never existed anyhow. I've looked up these estimates. A commercial airplane would climb to 80,000 feet in just half an hour. I don't think most people have any clue how fast the world is supposed to curve by calculations.

Eight inches per mile squared.

By the way, the same implies for submarines. Neither pilots nor submarine commanders claim they do any such thing. Pilots are indoctrinated with the belief that their high-tech equipment continually adjusts their elevation with the curve, when the very makers of that equipment have no such knowledge of the proposed-technology. Ironically everyone navigates this earth of ours as though it were flat, despite contrary beliefs.

Likewise, we *must* believe in sideways gravity, which magically drags the entire lower atmosphere in perfect synchronization with the ground below our feet. That is why—I was told upon inquiry—a helicopter can hover over the same spot for an entire hour without floating from Orlando to Houston. It doesn't matter if we're outside or trapped inside between four walls and a roof—it simply picks us up and carries us and everything in it and on the world around us *perfectly* with no further effect or fanfare. There is apparently no consequence to the brush of force between that and the non-spinning, non-gravitized, non-atmosphere of an infinite vacuum in space. Gravity is a force strong enough to hold the world's oceans at bay and apparently keeps people from falling upside down into the vacuum of space, yet it has no effect on birds, bugs, the massive amounts of water in our atmosphere, let alone a plane. This tooth-fairy theory, which Einstein rightly insists *falling in love* must not be blamed for, has never been successfully tested nor proven outside of the fantastical imagination that aligns itself with a spinning globe, and is quite easily debunked by rain, fireworks, birds, bees and other insects, clouds, smoke, planes, and any other number of aviation objects or projectiles that can be observed with the naked eye, which would behave quite contrarily to the proposed stationary earth to atmosphere belief on a spinning globe. The whole of ball-earth hinges on this one theory.

A globular belief *insists* that everything about our perspective is relative. The very notion that planes are flying upside down or at any other constant variable of angles like ninety-degrees as it constantly realigns itself with the curve of the globe is a complete absurdity. The idea that a

man digging a hole straight down could eventually reach sky on the other side is ludicrous, let alone digging a hole at an angle and having his direction of gravity changed accordingly. Common sense tells every free-thinking person correctly that there truly is an up and down in nature. Nature is not relative, as Einstein proposed.

These observations I contemplated—and more. I praised [YHWH] for the material plane below my feet. I prayerfully considered all that I observed. And then I pushed the contradictions into the back of my skull.

After all, I was a *globe* trotter.

2

WHAT A STUPID MOVIE, she thought.

A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Moon? Astronaut Alan Bean should have done far more than to tell that moon hoax creep Bart Sibrel to get the *fork* out of his house. Buzz Aldrin graduated from West Point. The only funny thing about that movie was the fact that Aldrin punched Sibrel in the face.

It's not exactly like Shelley Lewis hadn't become *self-aware* of one or two men behind the curtain. Lies could be managed on a worldwide level. Her thirty day juicing diet, all plant-based, *worked*. Shelley Lewis had gotten better. Afterwards, the West Point graduate set out to learn everything she could about herbs and the immune system and how to become a herbologist and lymphologist. "It took me about ten years to get both of those criteria done," she said. In time, Lewis would become a holistic health practitioner. "After I got medically discharged, I kept running from doctor to doctor, and nobody could really help me. I got better just by detoxing and going on a plant based diet. And it wasn't until *after* that, I started looking into vaccines."

"The cool thing about being medically discharged is I got access to my medical records. I wanted them. So I actually have all of the shots I was given." Holistic doctors began suggesting that it's because she had been vaccinated that triggered an auto immune deficient issue within her body. "And I believe there are certain additives—I want to say aborted fetal tissues, in MMR. And it makes sense that if you—let's say you got a

vaccine and it has aborted fetal cells in it, and you have no idea what cells those are. It could be the lung, the liver, the kidney, the colon; it could be the digestive tract, whatever. So when your body recognizes this is a foreign invader, but it looks just like your own lung cells, the body is going to go and attack that foreign invader. It's like getting a lung transplant. In order to survive that lung transplant, you have to get anti-rejection medication. If you're getting these aborted fetal cells injected into your body, it would only make sense that your body would start attacking something. And then it may even get molecular mimicry, where it confuses and begins to attack its own cells that look like that. So it's really a corruption of the immune system that they're doing. And though not everyone, I believe, gets sick from those initially, it sets you up for a critical mass for sure where it could be anything that would trigger you, stress or whatever, to where it would manifest. And there are medications that are time released. Maybe people don't get sick right away from a vaccine, but later on they do, and they might not put two and two together."

As Lewis began to get better, she found herself dealing with food allergies. "As you look into vaccinations, a lot of these allergians such as peanuts, eggs, wheat, GMO's, yeast—these are all in these vaccines. It's crazy how many things tie into vaccination. When you normally get sick, you rub your nose and you get sick that way through the mucous membrane, and then the body creates something called Immunoglobulin A. IgA is an antibody that plays a crucial role the immune system of the mucous membrane. The amount of IgA produced in association with mucosal membranes is greater than all other types of antibody combined. The only way IgA is made is *through* the mucous membrane. So now if you can image you bypass that and you get ejected through your arm, and you bypass the normal way in which IgA gets made—your body can never pull it out of you. So you're constantly fighting against—not just the MMR, the live vaccine, but all the additives that go along with it, such as mercury, which is thimerosal. And so your body is constantly set up fight against this."

"Parents know that their children are sick. One day they were fine and the next they're sick. Of course the medical people say, *causation doesn't mean correlation*. But that's not really fair, because they're *forcing* these vaccines. A doctor gives you a vaccine. You sign a release saying you take full responsibility for them administering that vaccination. The vaccine manufacturers, they get a hall pass too. If anything happens as a result from you getting the vaccination, if you have anything wrong with you,

they have immunity. When we talk about immunity, it's really the vaccine manufacturers that get the immunity, not the children, because if anything happens to them, they cannot get sued. So what the government did is they set up this vaccine injury court," the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, "that says, if the child gets sick they can go to the vaccine injury court, and if it's determined that the vaccine was actually a cause, then the parents can get compensation. But guess who pays for that compensation? *We the people*. The vaccine manufacturers, they can make as many mandatory vaccines as they want, and they don't care, because they're not ever going to get sued. And they want to push this, which they have done in California, making it mandatory that, if you don't get vaccines, you can't go to public school. They're saying the parents who don't vaccinate their children are the dangerous ones—even though the children who are vaccinated, why would they care if my child isn't vaccinated or anybody's child isn't vaccinated? So it's becoming very dangerous in terms of our rights and our bodies. We should have our own choice."

After Scott Irwin lost his job in the crash of 2008, Shelley went back to work so that he could stay home with their children. "And so I told him: When you find something, bring me home, because we never wanted to put our children in regular school." Imagine her grief then when her husband utilized his subscription with Netflix, back when they were still renting DVD's, to tell her all about the moon hoax documentary.

Irwin spoke about it with a heavy breath.

"I...I don't think we went to the moon."

Wait, are you serious? Do you not know who you married?

I wanted to be an astronaut! I went to West Point to become an astronaut!

The love of her life had allowed his mind to become warped by those moon landing deniers. He had become *one of them*. The subject hung in the air, but it no longer lingered in their conversations, and if it did, she brushed it off as completely absurd. Moon landing deniers were attempting to capsize the anti-vax truther Movement that had revolutionized her thinking. It wouldn't be until 2014 that the Apollo moon missions would come back up again, only this time it was paired with the craziest idea of all—the flat earth.

Scott Irwin would not live to see it.

On May 2, 2010, within weeks of his moon hoax revelation, Scott Irwin was riding a bicycle down by Sacramento State when he was hit by a car.

They told his widow that he was killed almost instantly.

3

THE TALL, DARK, AND HANDSOME standing on her doorstep was the *very* tall, dark, and handsome from her dream—quite *literally*. To put it in slightly other terms, she had dreamt of this very scenario earlier that morning. Even his clothes were indistinguishable. Karen was going through a divorce when the man whom she'd met in high school, and who she cares not to name, entered her life again. It was October of 2008. Karen was living in Sacramento. He was in the navy, stationed in San Diego.

'*Synchronicity*,' she thought.

It was the very first thought that entered her mind as he entered through the door of her home and into her life again—otherwise translated, *I'm going to marry this man*.

'That's really weird, Karen, why would you think that?' thought Karen.

Maybe, just maybe, because *this* was a real life fairy tale. He was good looking. He had his life put together. He had a great career in the military. He was smart. He said all the right things. He opened doors for me. He paid for dinner. He was tall, dark, and handsome.

They never really argued.

Oh, and another thing. He was never *violent*.

Yet—

"It was there," Karen said in hindsight. "I just never saw it. I'd never been in an abusive relationship before. I didn't know the warning signs."

They were married for a couple of months before the honeymoon came to a close. The first incident materialized over Christmas 2009 while they were staying at her mother's house. "We got into an argument over

something *really stupid*.” Come to think of it, every single verbal altercation which ended in physical contact was stupid—they all were.

Synchronicity looked in his bag and realized she hadn’t packed enough socks to last the trip. He may have been onto something had she actually packed his bag. “But for some reason it was my fault,” she said. *Synchronicity* insisted that her negligence was to blame. And so he yelled across the yard in front of her mother.

It wasn’t *Merry Christmas*.

He initially apologized, Karen said, but later that night, with the door to her bedroom clamped shut, the argument continued. She doesn’t remember anything that was said. Like so many insignificant confrontations to follow, Karen simply cannot recall any meat or substance—so many senseless syllables. But the fact that she suddenly found herself on the floor, pinned down, with her husband’s arm across her neck, and he was choking her, that was *real*.

“I couldn’t breathe, and whenever I told him to get off me he choked me harder so that I couldn’t talk. And he had me pinned down like that for at least fifteen or twenty minutes.”

The man from Karen’s dream only released her on the promise that she wouldn’t try to nab the attention of her parents, who were on the other side of the house. “Nothing like that had ever happened to me before, and I didn’t understand *why* it was happening. But I accepted his apology, because I loved him—a lot. I thought I was supposed to be with this man forever.”

As 2010 rolled around another round of irrational arguments only seemed to invite his hands upon her neck or an arm twisted behind her back. “He was really good at not putting any marks on me. You see all these women who are victims of domestic violence. I never had any of that. I never had a black eye. I never walked around with a busted up face, because he was really good at doing things that didn’t leave marks.”

He knew.

“He knew better than to leave marks on me.”

Perhaps *Synchronicity’s* success can be amounted to Karen’s skewed perception of *herself*. She couldn’t possibly be one of them. “I thought this is something that we could both get over. Because I loved him so much,

if I expressed to him that this wasn't okay that maybe he would stop doing it. I don't know—very naive thoughts. If you're not around abuse, or haven't been around it before, this is what you think. I was never abused as a child. I never had anyone close to me abused. I never witnessed abuse. It was all very new to me. I knew what he was doing was wrong, but I think I thought I could make him stop, and I was wrong."

His own mother would watch it happen.

She did *nothing* to stop it.

Karen has even lost count as to how many of those arguments, almost always something different from the last, ended in physical altercation. "You go through one experience where something triggers the abuser, and they get set off and do things to you, and so you think, 'If this situation comes up again, I'll handle it differently.' But what you don't realize is; you don't know what's going to set that person off. You don't really know. You *never* know. I never knew, and it was always something so trivial. They were so insignificant. There are things which you would never think sends someone sailing off the edge like that." But she knew when those moments were about to happen—when senseless syllables manifested themselves into matters of the flesh. "His eyes glazed over, and his pupils were—he looked like a different person, almost like he was possessed. And he'd be coming after me and I'd be running, literally running away from him."

If his mother made a disapproving gesture towards her son, *Synchronicity* would keep on running right past her. "She couldn't do anything. And now looking back, why—why didn't she call the police?"

"You shouldn't say things that make him so mad"—his mother.

It is indeed strange that Karen's husband watched his own father beat his mother. If his mother was powerless to stop it then, she certainly did little to nothing to stop it now. "And I didn't know that until well after the fact. He never touched me that way before we were married. It was like after he married me I became his property."

Then again, if and *when* Karen went for the police, and "don't think I didn't try," he'd unplug the landline from the wall, or take her cell away. If she tried to drive, *and she tried*, he'd jump onto the hood, reaching through the driver's side window to rip the keys from the ignition. Tall,

Dark, & Handsome controlled everything in her life—even the escape plan.

It's your fault. You're the reason my son acts that way.

After her husband's military career came to an end, "switching to the civilian life, because he was a nuclear machinist mate, he ended up getting a job in a nuclear power plant on the east coast in North Carolina," Karen said. "He wanted to control every aspect of my life—our life. I didn't want to be that far away from my family, but I agreed to it because he convinced me that this was the best for us. Now looking back, it's like he had the perfect excuse to isolate me, and get me away from all the friends and family that I knew."

And *that*, she said, is *exactly* what happened.

4

MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THIS ABOUT ME, but for nearly a decade of my adult life I was a nationwide "renowned" wedding photographer. I rarely talk about it anymore. History has moved on without me. It is by my own decision and design—and I am gratefully forgotten. Based out of Long Beach, California, I was "commuting" to work, if we can call it that, almost every weekend through the portals of an airport terminal—not forgetting thousands of additional miles logged by rental car. New York, Washington DC, and Boston, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Alaska, Maine, Boulder, Colorado, and everywhere in-between. Even Mexico. I probably photographed this great continent of ours dozens of times over. The earth from 30,000 feet up filled in countless hours of philosophical or religious inquiry. Why I was rarely hired in my hometown of Los Angeles is a mystery which is left for God alone to explain.

Strange being a homeowner with my wife, and yet I spent most of those years feeling somewhat homeless. In order to save money, it wasn't uncommon to spend a night under a chair at the airport or in the trunk of my rental car; a couple of times on the rain drenched sidewalk of a tropical or island paradise, forsaking sleep in order to keep my photography gear dry. I even have the rather fond and mostly non-eventful memory of making the pee-infested NYC subway my bed, riding the #2 red line from

Brooklyn across the East River to Manhattan and on up to the Bronx before returning back again, holding conversation with a transvestite for some of it. Rinse and repeat until sunrise.

Most of the motels I stayed at were mired with adultery. You know, couples who parked in separate cars, met for about thirty minutes during the workday lunch hour (one would slink into their room with such suspicion that I might have concluded they were married to the FBI, with their partner falling in line maybe five minutes later). They were rooms that could be split between the two, \$20 cash from their lunch money, no questions asked back home. I guess I'd know, since I chose bed-bug infested budget motels for \$40 a night. If there was any question as to what they were up to, the pulsating paper-thin wall, which even managed to slap my own bed board across the back of my head, often seemed to answer. And it wasn't terribly uncommon to hear porn videos being filmed for several straight hours.

I distinctly recall this one prostitute somewhere in Pennsylvania, where the smoke stacks blended with the corn fields and late-night train whistles could have doubled for the chilling cry of a ghost. In-between the comings-and-goings of her clientele—it was nearing the midnight hour—I caught sight of a cigarette glowing in-front of my balcony window, and so stepped outside to strike a conversation. Life had not been kind to her. There was a distinct scar upon her nose, and though she had no doubt adorned herself with the natural grace of beauty only several years earlier, she already wore the disfigured burden of her lifestyle, steeped no doubt in drugs, which was striking when one considers the fragile decade of her youth had not yet transpired.

But it was her eyes, mainly. Deep, impenetrable, and black—as though there was no spark of life left in the pupils which had no doubt once kindled the spiritual fire of every little hopeful girl, filled with dreams. Prostitutes have always fascinated me—to some degree. That they could offer their entire “self” to a man for one or two-hundred dollars, often less, and yet hide the very soul which God intends when a man and woman are united together (in the binds of marriage no less), burying it so far down into their catacomb of bone and marrow that it is entirely impenetrable, not only from the man who pays for her, but likely from herself.

I take it most will agree that she and others like her are not so dissimilar from the “woman at the well,” which Jesus spoke with in John

chapter 4. I have tried to strike many loving God-centered conversations with prostitutes on my journeys across America, but to no avail. To convince them that God the Son has the water of life to offer, which will cause them never to thirst again, is not so easily done. They have given themselves to men—endlessly. They have granted them everything they want—and in doing so, they hate them for it.

I'll never forget that hotel in Washington DC. The Capitol building was a block or two away, with Pennsylvania Avenue rounding the next street, and perhaps three or four prostitutes worked the corner 24-hours a day. I witnessed several “unmarked” cars slow down, with a hand of some mysterious Washington worker rising from a crack in the back window to signal one or two of them to climb in.

It was raining one night and, after three days of grueling work photographing a Sikh wedding (with another wedding the next morning in Williamsburg, Virginia—busy schedule) I swooped into the last available open slot, which just so happened to be managed by two of those prostitutes huddling under a single umbrella. I apparently parked, as my wife later explained, in their “drive-thru” window, because the following morning my tires were slashed.

Let's just say they were standing by and they weren't willing to strike up a friendly conversation with me later. Contrast all of this with the bride and groom on their wedding day.

In Charleston, South Carolina, the home town which my wife and I would soon thereafter adopt as our own, a “massage parlor” sits within a short walking distance of our house, convenient for the home owners in this rather well-to-do neighborhood, a former rice plantation. It's run by a white woman who fits all the same striking resemblances to any other woman at the well. Likely stunning to behold at one time, her career and life choices have disfigured the flesh which men thoughtlessly crave for their own—disposable as the cigarette she smokes, I suppose—and which she kindly offers. But it's mostly her eyes. I catch sight of them often as she's smoking out front between clientele. Deep, dark, and impenetrable—they must not crave her soul. And what remains is impoverished.

Her car is nice though. It's a convertible.

I used to pray that [YHWH] would shut her business down while on my walks. But I was wrong. I was terribly wrong—dead wrong—in

praying that. Men crave sex without the unification and rib-partnership which God designed it for, and they'll have their meaningless depraved sex, always hopelessly starving for fleeting moments of intimacy. And they'll do it to anything that moves or beeps or expands with air until the end of time. Shut down one whorehouse and another will rise in its place. There will always be prostitutes giving men exactly what they want—and all the while they'll hate them for it.

No, no—I walk now past that massage parlor praying that she'll find the light of Christ. I long that she'll drink from the water which will cause her never to thirst again, that it will rejuvenate her spirit and make her the beautiful woman which God intended her for, first from within.

Time is short.

I can't seem to keep track of the seasons anymore. The summer heat swelters and then the sky grows crisp and the leaves litter the dew. Presently they're thick and deep green. And meanwhile, our bridegroom's wedding day approaches.

It doesn't matter what she's done. The water of life is a free gift for anyone who wishes to drink of it. Yeshua is that well. And His water is a delight. Blessed is he or she who searches for and finds it. Yeshua turned the water into wine, and I can only imagine there will be an endless supply in His coming kingdom—each serving brimming-over with joy.

All He asks is that we confess our sins and repent of them. Turn from this wicked world. Make Jesus the shepherd of our life. That is my prayer for the woman down the street from where I live. My heart longs to see her delight in Jesus. I long to see her become beautiful again.

I long to see her become a sister in Christ.

RICK HUMMER WAS HALFWAY OUT THE DOOR, bags packed and passport in hand, his thoughts pressed upon Norway, when he met *a girl*. Their feelings were mutual. He liked her and she liked him. He looked twice at her. Then again, she did too. "When we met there was obviously an attraction. Neither one of us said anything to anybody. Nothing was

really done about it.” After all, Hummer was *ditching* America, and besides, she was involved with somebody else.

Her name was Tabitha.

In a very short while, Hummer would call her *Tab*.

“I already knew that the Fannie Mae—Freddie Mac bailouts were coming. I’d already prepared, when *that* happened, that I was going to leave the key under the mat for Wells Fargo, because I wasn’t going to give them another dime, and they collected insurance money on my house.”

The bailout occurred on September 6, 2008. I flew to Boston-Logan that day, with a wedding to photograph in New Hampshire. I remember pumping gas at a station when somebody approached me in a panic. *The end of the world*, he said, *had begun*. The following week I walked down Wall Street as men tucked their chin into their chest, trying to make sense of the funeral procession.

“I wanted to get out of America. I was sick of the apathy; sick of warning people of what might possibly be coming to our country, knowing how proud and haughty we had become; how we were justifying killing innocent women and children. The liberal side of our country had me worried more and more that it was going to be filled with a fascist state that would eventually drag us to where we are today—to where they’re basically trying to say that pedophilia is *not* a condition, that it’s a sexual orientation rather than a crime, a perversion or a sin, and I was *sick*. I was sick of everything. And I say that, not that I was sick of my friends or family—I was heartbroken. And at the same time I felt like my life had ended.” After Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, “the life that I once thought I was going to live was over. I was never going to get that life.” Rather than the white picket fence of Hummer’s country radio days, it “seemed more like it could be prison bars. And I thought: ‘how in the world could I function at this point in time?’”

In walks Tabitha.

Or *Tab* for short.

Problem was, *initially*, Tabitha was dating this other guy he knew. Then again, his friend was a cheater. “He was dating six other women at the same time.”

One of my favorite songs just so happens to be, *What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?* I'm not exactly sure how Hummer instigated their eventual interaction, but their very first date landed precisely on January 31, 2008. They went to a mutual friend's house, stayed up all night talking and eating, rang in the New Year, and then the two of them went back to his place.

Their date lasted for *three* days.

Tabitha crashed in his basement studio. Hummer cooked and sometimes they ordered in, talking all the while. As the hours wound around the clock Rick and Tabitha knitted an intimate and seamless quilt of conversation, despite the occasional interruption of sleep. "We sat in my basement reading the Bible. I witnessed to her about what was going on in the world. I had her read Matthew 24. I had her read Matthew 10. I had her go back and read—I think I was showing her stuff about Sodom and Gomorrah. All the stuff—I was basically giving her a crash course." The former DJ showed her "how pop culture, pop music has been literally a tool of the devil. And she had no clue about any of this stuff."

Tabitha didn't run up the basement stairs screaming.

She did however keep asking, "*Why* are you moving to Norway?"

"To warn people about not being apathetic," he answered, "for not keeping a watchful eye."

Hummer was sitting on the Ottoman, "I called it the lily pad. I was sitting on the lily pad, and she was sitting on the couch in front of me. We both had Bibles. And I'll never forget. She looked up at me and said, '*He's real.*'"

Jesus, that is.

She said it again. *He's real.*

Hummer nodded, "Yeah, He's totally real."

Before their first date Hummer said, Tabitha "had *proclaimed* but her heart was far from Him. She *said* she believed, but she didn't really know anything. It's like I did this whole reverse engineering thing. I didn't scare her into it, like she was going to hell. I showed her how real it is right now in our time."

Do you even know where we're at on the clock? Do you even have a clue?

Hummer thought to himself right at that very moment, *I'm going to marry this woman.*

He said it to himself again.

I'm going to marry her.

Yeah, I'm totally going to marry her.

They were married seven months later—July of 2009.

That following October, Rick and Tabitha Hummer flew to Norway together.

6

WHEN THE FUTURE MRS. SKIBA *finally* CAME INTO HIS LIFE, Rob was immediately drawn in by her desire for acumen of a spiritual nature, particularly “the way she was really pressing in,” he recalled, “and attempting to understand the gifts of the Spirit.” Their church however, it was a Baptist denomination, had chosen the seeker friendly path. And no surprise, “their sermons immediately became watered down.” Something in her *spirit*, in fact in both of them, simply didn't sit right. It was the 21st century, and so they tried the internet.

Rob Skiba grew up in the church. He was saved by the age of 7. His early biography might even read as follows: Whenever church doors were *opened*, Rob Skiba *entered*. Ministry surrounded him. The habits of his upbringing spoke of the finger game nursery rhyme, but never a virtual house church. But at last he found something to groan about, and groan about with a spiritual partner.

“We went from being on fire to becoming starving to death in the desert,” Skiba said, recalling his Deuteronomy 32:10 days. But it was a *necessary* crawl through the entanglements of theological tinder. Their friends Kevin and Amanda encouraged them to attend a Bible study of *another* nature.

Torah.

The very word which entices the Hebrew Law of YHWH, with its 613 rules for righteous living, essentially the first five books of the Bible,

is anthropological for most, and likely just as equally frightening. Dispensationalists shudder. And yet Mr. and Mrs. Skiba were weary of the abstract. They were hungry for something to chew on. And so they accepted their invite. Skiba even remembers the day in which his thirst was finally quenched. It was the day after Good Friday, 2010.

Sabbath.

The Torah portion that week covered Joseph's unfortunate *tumble* into a ditch. The facilitator told everyone to take a sheet of paper and write Yeshua on the right and then Joseph on the left, with a column down the middle, and then see how many parallels they could come up with. Just off the top of his head Skiba came up with 25 parallels. The group came up with 50. He was awed by their knowledge of *both* the New and the Old Testament. Torah apparently gave brilliant insight to the lives of Jesus and His Apostles—who knew?

That was his introduction to **Torah observance**.

“It was a new depth and richness to our Bible study to what we had before,” Skiba said. “Weeks before that we were studying the differences between law and grace and I had literally taught: *‘Yeah, you want to get under the Law, pick up sticks on Saturday and see how that works out for you.’* I was quoting from Numbers 15, where the dude went out and picked up sticks on a Saturday and was stoned to death for it. And then, of course, anything I would have said would have been from Paul. Naturally, I had the same knee-jerk reaction as everybody. *What about Paul?*”

Not so long afterwards Rob and Sheila were sitting around listening to the internet again. The passage focused on the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11. Jesus was at the Temple in Jerusalem teaching, with a healthy crowd gathered around him, when the teachers of Torah and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery, even going so far as to salute her for His audience. The story follows that Jesus, having been asked what **Torah** instructs on the matter—or rather, demanding that she be stoned; bent down and wrote in the dust. His antagonists demanded an answer, and so before resuming His letters in the dirt, Jesus stood up and said, “Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”

His accusers of course slipped away, one by one, until only Jesus and the woman remained in the crowd. He then asked the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”

“No, Lord,” she said.

Jesus responded, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

To this effect, Skiba said, “Sheila had the suggestion, what if we replace the generic word with the Biblical definition of sin, which is given point blank in John.” She is of course referencing 1 John 3:4, which states: *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.* “So she’s caught in adultery, and Jesus says to her, ‘Go, and transgress the Law no more.’”

Upon hearing it suggested for the first time, Skiba just sat there in his chair, and thought *hub, that’s an interesting way to look at that.*

Yeah, but what about Paul...?

Paul, indeed! Skiba then set out to revisit all the writings of the Apostle where he talks about sin. “And Paul talks about sin a lot. So if you just replace the word *sin* with the *Biblical definition* of sin, you’ll see Paul is saying over and over and over and over and over and over again that we shouldn’t transgress the Law, aka sin. A friend then told me, ‘Well, when you can get Paul to agree with himself, come back and argue with me,’ and I thought, *that’s a brilliant statement*—because, if Paul is saying we shouldn’t sin, aka transgress the Law, and you think he’s against the Law, then you’ve got a guy that is constantly contradicting himself. That—or we have to reevaluate what we *think* Paul is saying.”

The reality of Paul’s *actual* message, oftly misunderstood, must have swept over Skiba with rapid clarity and succession, and in a likewise manner as he excitedly rehearsed Scripture for me over the phone, and I frantically set about to scribble them down.

“Should we therefore sin that grace may abound? God forbid!”

Also, “It is the carnal mind that is enmity to God, and cannot be subject to the Law!”

And then, “1 Corinthians 11:1: Imitate me as I imitate Christ!”

Skiba continued, “Well, if I look at the life of Yeshua, he lived his life in perfect obedience to the Father. And John backs Paul up. 1 John 2: *Whoever claims to abide in Him must walk as Jesus walked.* So how could Paul say *imitate me* if he was going around saying we don’t need to obey God anymore? Scripture says you need a minimum of 2 to 3 witnesses to establish truth. So if you believe Paul has a message that is contrary to the

other 43 plus authors of Scripture written over 1400 years, where is your second witness? Because if you cannot find a second witness then you are by Scripture mandated to throw Paul out.”

“And Deuteronomy 13 is even *worse*,” Skiba was caught up by the breeze of his excitement by this point, and barely had time to breathe. “It’s called the Deuteronomy 13 test—the litmus test for who is a true prophet. And one of them is, if he’s going around telling people that we need to dismiss the Law of Moses then you’re supposed to kill the dude. He’s a false prophet.” To this Skiba concludes. “Luckily *my Paul* passes the Deuteronomy 13 test, and *my Paul* is not in contradiction to everyone else. But Peter, this was a huge revelation to me—if you read the introduction to 1 Peter, in the list that he gives, Galatia is his audience for his first epistle. His second epistle is written to the same people, because he refers to the first one. So when you read the last chapter of 2nd Peter, he’s writing to the Galatians, saying: ‘*You know what?* Some of Paul’s writings are difficult to understand, which the ignorant twist and distort to their own destruction and fall into the error of lawlessness.’ It’s written to the Galatians!”

With that stunning realization, Skiba’s future in the *history* of the church was defined. Within two years he would create the Virtual House Church online. In time, Jon Pounders and John Hall of *Now You See TV* would partner with him. It was a project, he concluded, by which he gleaned more from Scripture in the first year of doing than in forty prior years of entering through the doors of the Baptist church. But his greatest battle for Scriptural integrity was still to come.

7

SKIBA SAID, “I THINK THE ORIGINAL PLAN WAS, God wanted to marry this people group—Israel. God was going to deliver them out of bondage in Egypt, and then at Mount Sinai he was going to marry them. That’s why I look at the Ten Commandments as wedding vows.”

“A friend of mine, Chad Schafer, he said, ‘I don’t think of the Ten Commandments as a *Do* and *Don’t Do* list. I look at the Ten Commandments as an *I Get To* list.’ When you married your wife, you didn’t say, ‘I command you to do this and you can’t do that.’ No, you

made promises to her, and she made promises to you. Well, now if you look at it [the Ten Commandments], God says, 'If you will be my bride, I will become a part of you, and you will become a part of me, and as a result of that, you're not going to kill people. You're not going to commit adultery. In other words, if I'm in you and you're in me, these are things you're not going to do. And these are things that you will do. I'm going to be your only husband. And I don't want you having any other husbands but me—the first commandment.' If we're looking at them as wedding vows—if He's truly in me, then I'm *not* going to do those things that He says not to do, and I *will* do the things that He says I should do, because that's Him in me working through me."

"But what does any of that have to do with the start of the church?" I asked.

"The church *began* at Pentecost, but *not* the one in Acts 2," Skiba said. "The Pentecost at Mount Sinai, *that's* when the church began. Stephen defines the church as the church in the wilderness. Well, what's the church in the wilderness? It's the assembly—it's the congregation that was at Mount Sinai. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. So how did He love and give Himself for something that didn't exist until 50 days after He was killed?"

"That's a good point," I said.

"The church was *already* in existence. And what did Yeshua say? He said I have come only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

"What changed then for the church at Pentecost?" I asked.

"I look at the whole thing as one big marriage issue. The Ten Commandments are given to us in Exodus. But when you get to Leviticus—and I think Leviticus was not really intended as a *Plan A*—I think God's proposal was for everybody to be king priests. And they were like, *Nope! Moses, you speak for us!* Then there's the golden calf and basically, the bride cheated on her husband *on* their wedding night. You know, that's pretty huge. And after that, after Moses smashed the Ten Commandments, God was like, *Okay, if this is how you're going to work it, this is the way it's gonna have to be.* And then we get to Leviticus, where you have all these regulations and rules and the Levitical priesthood, and all that. Well, in Deuteronomy chapter 24, one of the laws that is laid out is the law of marriage, where it says, if a husband divorces his wife, and she goes to be with another, and let's say that other husband dies or she wants to

come back to her first husband, it says the first husband cannot take her back again *because* it's an abomination. Okay, we see throughout the Prophets that God refers to Israel as His bride over and over and over again, but in Jeremiah chapter 3 it says He divorced the northern kingdom."

Uh-oh.

"So imagine you are married to God, right?"

"I'm imagining," I said.

"And He divorces *you* because you got caught sleeping around, and then you finally repent. You want to go back to your first husband, who is God, and He's like, *Nope, I can't do it—sorry, it's an abomination. I can't take you back.*"

That's bad news, Skiba said.

"And it's also why the Gospel is called the *good news*, which is actually preached in Isaiah. When we think of *good news* we think of the New Testament. Yet when you read the book of Hosea, it's all about how He's going to take her back again. So, now we've got a problem, because Deuteronomy 24 talks about, if you sin and God chastises you, and you don't learn your lesson, then you get seven times more the judgement than you got the first time. Okay, this is very interesting, because the northern kingdom was told to repent, and because they didn't repent, they went into exile. The southern kingdom went into exile for 70 years but they repented and got to go back. Well, there's no evidence that the northern kingdom ever repented. Hosea has this whole thing about them whoring after other gods. So they received a 2730 year sentence. The initial judgement was in Ezekiel chapter 4, I believe, where there was 390 years of judgement, and they didn't repent, having gone into captivity in 720 BC, so they got 2730 years. 2730 years later, seven times the initial judgement of 390, we come to the year 2009, when all of a sudden, without a leader, without a church denomination, people all over the world decided to go back to Genesis and start over again."

We should start keeping the Sabbath. We should start keeping the feasts. Stuff like that.

"Well, what's going on there?" Skiba continued. "Go back to what Jesus said. He said He only came—He only came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now, when you read through the Prophets you see that

there's two houses, the house of Israel, also known as Ephraim, and the house of Judah—two houses. Well, he didn't divorce Judah. He divorced Israel. So He's standing in Judea, and He's saying, I've only come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. What's He doing?"

It would take the Apostle Paul to figure the whole thing out. This is Skiba's pet peeve with certain members of the Hebrew Roots Movement who want to throw Paul out. "When you read from Romans 7-11, he's *quoting* from the book of Hosea. And he's talking to those who know the Law. And then he talks about the husband. *If he be dead, then she is free from the Law.* What law? Well, the law of the husband. So in other words, God marries Israel. He divorces Israel. He can no longer take her back unless He dies."

Skiba added, "That's the greatest love story ever told!"

And this is the problem with the horse blinders of dispensational theology. "As soon as you insert the word *and*, as in the church *and* Israel, then you've completely missed the point. The church *is* Israel. Stephen says it point blank in Acts chapter 7, in his testimony. What Paul tells you in Romans chapter 11, *if* you believe in Yeshua, *if* you believe in Jesus Christ; even *if* you're a wild olive tree that has no blood relation to the house of Israel, then you get grafted into the cultivated olive tree, and that's Israel. But Romans 11 is in the context of Romans chapter 7, where Paul repeatedly quotes from the book of Hosea. So if you want to understand who the Gentiles are, because he's an Apostle to the gentiles, he tells you the gentiles are Ephraim, and Romans 7-11, it's the lost sheep of the house of Israel who Yeshua said He was going after. So that begs the question, what is a gentile? Essentially it's everybody that is out of covenant with God, because the one nation that is *in* covenant with God is the house of Israel. But when he divorced the northern kingdom, they became the gentiles. Well guess what, in the prophecy of Genesis chapter 48, when Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, he prophesied and said that Ephraim would become a multitude of nations. Paul resolves the whole thing in Romans chapters 7-11."

"So if you're going to call yourself a believer in Yeshua, then you can no longer call yourself a gentile. You can't say, *I'm a gentile believer*, because there's no such thing as an out of covenant in covenant person."

That, Skiba said, is an oxymoron.

ROBBIE DAVIDSON'S CHRISTIAN VERSION of *Yahoo* had *everything*. “It had instant messenger, e-mail, classifies, clubs forums—I mean, you name it, in the early days of the internet, I had it for Christians.” One such component was a Christian dating site. That “was amazing, because a lot of people were married through it. I used to get e-mails, invitations to weddings and such.” He eventually partnered with a Canadian company called *Christian Café*. “They were a Christian singles site based out of Toronto. When I ended up selling the company, I sold everything to a company in Tulsa Oklahoma, and part of that agreement is they wanted me to move down there for two years. Well, I had a daughter at the time. And so we worked in the clause that I wouldn't be away for so long. I would work one year remote, and in that year I could come home every three months to spend two weeks with my daughter.”

The Tulsa based company never did much with Davidson's company. Though his entire purpose for moving to Oklahoma was to train them into some sort of practical transition, “they never really did anything too big with it, and moved on to other properties.”

Regardless, *Christian Café* still existed, and years later Robbie Davidson was on it—kind of scoping out the scene. He met the future Mrs. Davidson through the very company that he'd helped to create.

Actually, when he first stumbled upon Rachel's profile, the *kimi* had already been in Canada for a couple of years, “and when we started talking, she wasn't in Canada. She was *back* in New Zealand.” Everything about it smelled fishy. “There's a lot of scams online, and so I was waiting for her to say, *I need four-hundred dollars to leave my country*, because there's a lot of people online who scam through dating sites. There are different techniques, but one of them is, they're from your city, but they're on vacation and then they have some Visa problems and can't get out, and you want to get them back. So you pay. But long story short,” Robbie Davidson and Rachel ended up talking. “Everything checked out. She was over there for her sister's wedding,” he said.

And then Davidson popped the question.

How about we meet in a restaurant when you get back?

THAT'S NOT *EXACTLY* HOW RACHEL Davidson remembers their first encounter. Robbie's profile *winked* at her profile. He was twelve years older and divorced, she said. Rachel ignored him.

Davidson needed a change of tactic. So he wrote back.

Hey, beautiful Calvinist.

Rachel smiled, "And that got my attention."

I WAS IN A BROKEN DOWN HOTEL A FEW MILES WEST of Charleston, South Carolina when the call came through, and the Texas-sized cockroach (only here in the Carolinas they call it a Palmetto Bug) had suspiciously inched across shag carpet closer to my bare toes, despite lying capsized on its back, legs sprawled out, and having the satisfactory appearances of being *wholly* dead. I'd just escaped the sweltering wet of summer, after a *hungry* truck driver pulled up in his cab and asked if I were Bubba, and chose to wipe the perspiration from my forehead before answering the familiar ringtone.

My wife was on the other end of the cell, some twenty-five hundred miles away and knowing nothing of Palmetto Bugs, but choking anyhow on her tears. She said she couldn't do *this* anymore. And I knew what she meant by it. My serial flights, all-night travels through the interwoven quilt of America (rolling down the driver-side window, hanging my head out and singing Elton John's *Tiny Dancer* while sipping burnt gas station coffee simply to keep awake) all in the obsessive pursuit of a career in wedding photography. I could have gone on like this for decades, endlessly even, despite seeing the approaching fork in the road. And *this* was it—the intersection of decision. Decidedly, my wife was weary of sleeping in bed alone, and she'd reached her breaking point.

NOT EXACTLY *small talk* FOR A FIRST DATE; but then again, Davidson insists, “we were on *Yahoo Messenger* talking about all the things that nobody in their right minds talk about—real serious stuff, like homeschooling, and who’s the leader in marriage? We weren’t exactly messing around. We were throwing around stuff like, how many kids do you want?” The native New Zealander, Davidson assured me, “was all structured.”

“My dating techniques before I met her—I would meet women and I would say: ‘Here you go, like it or not, I don’t care, you want to run away, it doesn’t matter.’” Rachel didn’t run away. “I was so brutally honest and transparent, because if you’re lying to someone, you’re just wasting time. Say it, the good, the bad, the ugly, whatever—it doesn’t matter what you believe in, even if it freaks someone out, because it’s the truth.”

“Our roles, and that was one big thing too, I knew that the roles had to be in sync. Regardless, we had to agree with them and be happy within them. And so she knew that her future husband was going to be a leader and be the head over her. In our marriage vows, I mean they are so *direct* that most would probably cringe when they hear our marriage vows because they’re that strong. Unfortunately in this day and age, even Christians are shying away from traditional marriage vows, i.e. *obey*. I mean submission may be in there, but obedience? Throw that out the door. And to me that’s what love is all about. How do you love someone through obedience when it comes to the hierarchy? They always talk about submission but obedience is a prerequisite to submission.”

By the time Robbie and Rachel met for their first date, their doctrinal statements were a perfect match. The Calvinist pick-up line obviously worked. They were both reformed. Even their family goals lined up. But then again, even the most obedient of family-oriented, homeschooling Calvinists mock moon landing conspiracy theorists. “I had a lot of women telling me I was way too picky. I needed to chill out. I just needed to find a good godly woman with all the same morals, but don’t worry about the conspiracies. And I said: ‘I can’t have my future wife thinking I’m crazy.’”

“I wasn’t even going to bring it up,” Davidson said regarding the moon landing. “It wasn’t even important to bring up conspiracies on the first date. I could have waited until the second or the third. I don’t

remember how it even came up.” Regardless, the moon landing *did* come up among their *small talk*.

Immediately Davidson thought: *I’ve got to test her on this.*

He said: “You don’t believe they landed on the moon?”

The way in which Davidson phrased it came with a half-mocking delivery, “almost like you’re a moron for believing it, just to see if she would stand her ground or retract it.”

Rachel looked directly at Davidson and said: *Nope.*

“I had met a lot of great women. They’d be godly. They’d be great and all that, but when they came to the conspiracy or the Truther part I knew that I couldn’t have my future wife think I’m crazy. And now here’s a woman who *never* believes we went to the moon like me...? I knew that everything I was going to bring up to this woman, from 9/11 to JFK to the Boston Bombing to Sandy Hook, it didn’t matter, she didn’t believe they landed on the moon. I never had to worry about her thinking I’m a crazy person if I bring up any other conspiracy, because they were all under that umbrella.”

And right there, Davidson said, on their first date—at that very moment...

“I *knew* I was going to marry this woman.”

12

SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE THE BIG MOVE, Karen remembers the sushi. She remembers the drive home from eating sushi. And she even remembers standing in her living room. But she remembers nothing of what happened *between*. She cannot even think to rationalize what could have possibly been said in the fine print that set him sailing off into the throes of madness. What Karen remembers most about that night however; when *Synchronicity* started coming at her in the living room, the *look* in his eyes had returned.

“I recognized that look in his eyes—when the flip switched. You know, when it goes from a normal argument to, it’s going to get violent. His face would change, and I recognized it.”

Get the hell out of here, Karen.

She took her own advice and made a beeline for the front door.

Her husband did too.

Karen managed to escape the threshold. In a *jiffy* she would make it down the concrete walkway—in another *jiffy* to the car or the street. And in yet one measlier *jiffy*—this time she was quite certain of it—she might make it into the cradle of the world beyond.

He caught up to her in a *jiffy*, exerted little effort in picking her up, and then in another *lickety split* altogether, thrust her down upon the concrete walkway which she had hoped to use as the tarmac of her plight.

Karen climbed up to her feet again, determined to run.

“I didn’t even know where I was going to go. I was just running away because I was so scared.”

He caught her again.

A second meeting with the concrete walkway nearly knocked the wind from out of her. *Still, breath remained.* Karen climbed to her feet and ran. He caught her a third and final time, and then slammed her body into the ground.

Every breath in her chest was gone.

“I literally could not breath,” she said.

If her husband allowed Karen to climb to her feet again, and indeed he did, it was only because she had agreed to return to the house, humiliated, gasping for air—utterly defeated. Over the next twenty minutes, she attempted to recollect her breath alone in the bathroom.

North Carolina, here we come.

The next day it felt like she had been hit by a big rig. As always, he apologized. He was sorry for chasing her out the door, grabbing her, and then hurling her onto the concrete. He was sorry for doing it again. And once more, he was sorry for doing it again. Maybe he was even sorry for doing it again, thrusting her down a potential fourth time, had she not agreed to return home. And then, just to let her know how sorry he truly was, he threw money at her.

In the end, despite her threats to stay, they moved to North Carolina. “I did it voluntarily, because I thought we were going to build a life together. I gave up everything—everything. We wanted to have children.” He apologized. But Karen didn’t care if he was sorry.

She wanted him to *stop* doing it.

13

A PASTOR BROUGHT ME INTO HIS OFFICE, closed the door, and then criticized my decision to throw a prestigious career as a nation-wide wedding photographer into the garbage. But that’s *precisely* what I did. My exploits behind the lens of camera were dutifully over. He simply couldn’t understand it. And yet there was someone more worthy of my love and devotion than the sweet-scented aroma of the American dream. I don’t know—perhaps a divorce would have been easier swept under the rug. In his defense, he simply didn’t understand why I couldn’t juggle an interminable flight schedule and a career which countless others had salivated over with marriage. I guess I can’t expect anyone to. I dumped my website into the dot-com graveyard, even sold off my camera equipment to the highest EBay bidder, and found temporary work as a bartender before taking up the mantle of a dad with twin boys. I made the right decision. And there hasn’t been a moment where I’ve regretted it.

I can still recall gazing down at that cockroach in my broken down hotel room a few miles west of Charleston—what I affectionately refer to *now* as a Palmetto Bug—still sprawled on its back but suspiciously inches closer to my bare toes than it had been a moment earlier. Among my wife’s sobs an oath was declared. I was through—with my career, that is. I still had two years of contracts to fulfill; two tiresome years of airports, all-night drives and broken down motels. But I wouldn’t take another single gig. Not one. I was coming home *for good*.

To just about everyone, I was a fool for doing it.

Not even I had the foreknowledge that very moment that the world itself would *become* my home. Though it is true that I chose my wife rather than a compartmentalized career, in turn we set out to see the world together. Name *any* place; *any* American city or state; *any* country—there is barely a night we’ve slept apart since. But more importantly, name the

shape of humanity in any given place; we've unraveled the onion peels together.

And just think—

I came *this close* to having taken the wrong flight home.

14

THEY MOVED TO NORTH CAROLINA in *desperate* hopes of starting over again. Karen B and her husband even purchased an additional 20 acres of land, directly across the street from their own residence, in further confidence that their fairy-tale life might be erected upon it. From this foundation they could have *more* children, raise a family—forget the quarrels of their past. But it was 2011, and they would not begin clearing trees, nor laying down their dream foundation, for an additional two years. It wouldn't take nearly that long however for Karen to learn that *something* lived in the woods. In fact, the creature, whatever it was, would make itself known in as little as four months after their arrival.

In time, she would learn to call it, or rather *them, the forest people*.

It was eleven o'clock at night and Remington needed on final potty break before bed. "I was trying to walk around the perimeter of the yard, because that's what she likes to do normally." Karen started following her dog towards the tree line, and the dog stopped dead in her tracks. "She wouldn't move. She was frozen, looking into the woods."

What is wrong with my dog?

"I smelled this smell, almost instantly. This *horrid* smell just filled the air. It was like dirty nasty wet dog smell times one-hundred—it just filled everything. It wasn't there one minute, and then the next minute it was everywhere."

Karen took a step towards the trees.

That smells awful. What is that?

She then heard footsteps within the woods—*Huge* footsteps.

Crunch... Crunch...

“I can’t imitate it,” she said. “But whatever it was, it had *huge* feet. It was big and it was heavy, and it took two steps into the woods, and my heart fell out of my chest.”

“There’s something in the woods,” she told her husband.

“Maybe it’s a deer,” he shrugged her entire experience off.

That’s no deer.

15

SHE WAS 2,400 MILES AWAY FROM EVERYBODY that she loved and nobody *knew*. Karen was standing in the shower, six months pregnant with child, when her husband entered with his hands around her neck. They knew *nothing* of the abuse.

“It’s not like it happened daily, or even weekly. Sometimes he could go even months without laying a hand on me. And it would get to the point where I would finally be comfortable, and I’d think: ‘*He stopped—he stopped.*’ And then something would happen, and it would set him off again, and it would be back to square one.”

People often ask: *Why didn’t you just call the police?*

“Because it’s not that simple—it’s *never* that simple. It’s not that simple when you’re already married, and you have children, and you’re pregnant—I was pregnant.” He was arguing about something she couldn’t even recall—*those eyes*. “I’d be naked and pregnant in the shower with his hands around my neck.”

He did this many times, she said—*many times*.

If only I told somebody.

“I didn’t even tell my own mother. Nobody knew this was happening to me. Nobody could see it. So I didn’t tell anybody. That’s something I regret. I should have told my mother.”



Above and below: Shelley Lewis, West Point, class of 1996



Above (middle): Shelley Lewis and Scott Irwin Junior high, 1980's, and wedding, 1998

Below: Shelley Lewis, model





Clockwise (above left):
Zen Garcia traveling with the Grateful Dead, 1994;
Fighting, (early 90's); Fencing, (after accident);
Zen Garcia and Laurel Austin with Stephen Pidgeon
at the Globe-flat earth debate in Atlanta, 2017;





Top:
Robbie
Davidson
(1989)

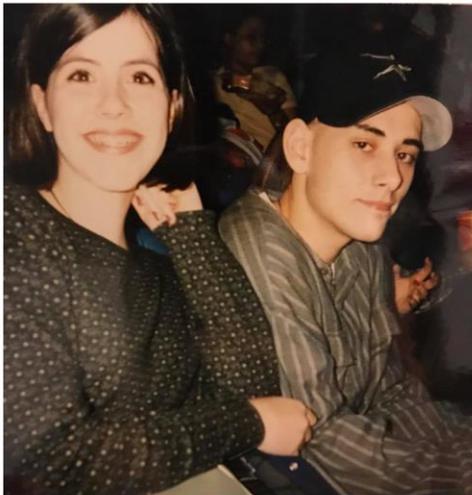
Above middle:
Davidson with Don
shortly after his
conversion in
October of 1991.

Right:
Robbie
and Rachel
Davidson



Below:
Chris and Liz Bailey's wedding
on September 14, 2002.

Below:
Chris Bailey and Liz Rolen in 1997 (ages 16 and 18)
Heritage Christian School Cavs Game





Noel and Sarah Hadley
(through the years)





left to right:
Rick Hummer
North Liberty, IN
1984

Rick Hummer
H.S. Graduation
1990

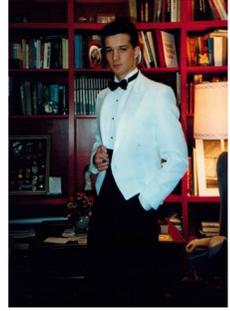


Clockwise (left to right):

Rick with his sisters, 86/87; 1992 US National Team; WB backlot with basketball partners George Clooney and Will Smith, 1998; Rick with country act, Montgomery Gentry, 2004; Billy Zabka, aka Johnny from The Karate Kid, 2007; Rick and Tabatha on their first date, New Year's Eve, 2008; Rick and Tabatha, 2009:



left to right:
Rick & Tabatha
Hummer and family.



Rob Skiba
through the decades
1980's - 1990's



Above:
Rob and Sheila Skiba



Below right:
The Chicago experiment
with Rick Hummer, 2016





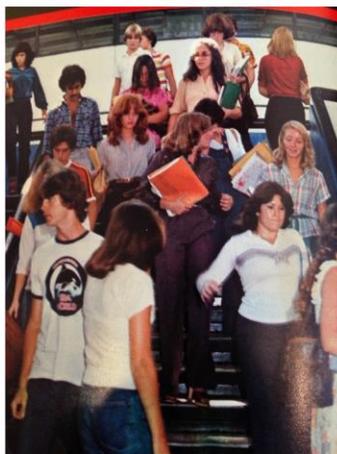
Top:
Mark Sargent
Cairo

Bottom:
Mark Sargent
Whidbey Island





Top left to right: Patricia Steere, 1965 & On vacation in Miami, 1966



*Patricia Steere in High School
& Homecoming Court*



*Bottom right: Patricia Steere
while working radio in California*

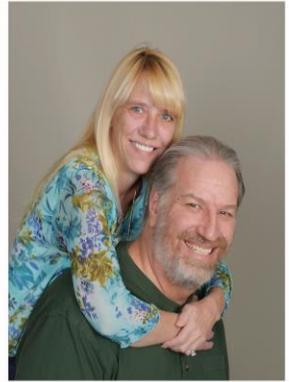


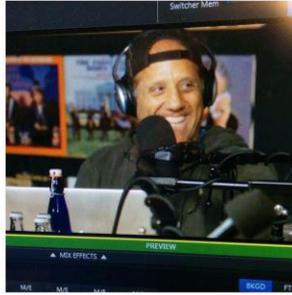
Below:

Bob, Cami, and Jaren Knodel

Above:

Chris Van Matre
(through the years)





Clockwise (above left):

Deep Inside The Rabbit Hole podcast 2012; Kiteboarding; 4th of July 2016; Dave and Paige hiking Windham Mountain, NY; Dave and Paige at *Gathering of the Vibes* music festival 2013; Cape Cod MA;





*Top (left to right):
Karen B on her North Carolina property;
and Karen in the Blue Ridge Mountains*



*Clockwise
left to right):
Paul Lindberg
and Star Wars,
2014-2016;*



*Paul Lindberg
with Mark Hamill
and Carrie Fisher
2015;*



Clockwise (above left):

TOTW poster; Chris and Liz Bailey; TOTW 2017; Zen Garcia (with Mark Sargent) at his flat earth debate in Atlanta; early FEIC 17 promo; Patricia Steere on Hot Potatoes; Mark Sargent staring at the total solar eclipse on August 21, 2017



HOT POTATOES + CLUES

1

IN AS LITTLE AS 300 WORDS, Missy Wilkinson, a journalist for the New Orleans based newspaper *Gambit*, managed to capture the Patricia that tens of thousands of flat earthists, perhaps hundreds of thousands, have come to either love or hate. Dated January 27, 2012, the article in question is called *Shopgirl style: Patricia Steere of A Girl is a Gun*, and features a picture of Steere posing for the camera precisely as Wilkinson describes her, applying a “precise auburn coif, beauty mark and perfectly fitted dress.” The woman who’d spoken to *Gambit*’s reporter over the phone with a melodic yet articulate voice, pleasantly cool and clipped, “would have been intimidating if she wasn’t so nice,” Wilkinson admitted, adding, “I’m still a little cowed by her sharply defined aesthetic.”

When Wilkinson asked the store’s owner to describe her fashion sense, Patricia responded: “I am not attracted to trends. I find them boring. I have a look that suits me and is me. It’s not ‘*what’s hot now look.*’ I don’t pay attention to what celebrities are wearing, either. I wear vintage-inspired clothing that I carry in my store *A Girl Is A Gun*, but not in a literal costumed character way. I’m not trying to look like I’m back in the 1940s or ’50s or like someone famous. I look like Patricia Steere. I keep it simple accessory-wise and always add something off kilter. As Dorothy Parker said, ‘*A little bad taste is like a nice dash of paprika.*’”

“It was a cute little store,” Patricia recalled during our exchange. “The dresses were modest below the knee length and in the mid-range price point. I enjoyed creating the store but didn’t like running it. I got bored standing around in it all day.” *A Girl Is A Gun* was no more than a year old at the moment of Wilkinson’s visit, and wouldn’t last more than three in all. It was sold in 2014—the very year her mother died. “And I got the money in 2015, some of it anyways,” she said, referring to the well-to-do life that had resulted from her parents career in radio. “But there’s always been a Steere family trust, so I’ve always had a life like that.”

“Patricia loved the store,” Chris Van Matre explained. “She loved setting it all up. She didn’t *love* being the salesperson. She didn’t really like being in the store and running the store. She ended up selling the store to

one of her friends, and that guy never ended up paying her for the store. So they were no longer friends after she left.” Years later, her tormentors “tried to say that she sold satanic stuff. In the store she actually sold dresses. It was a woman’s boutique. The guy who took over did start selling Goth stuff, but there’s a lot of people out there who don’t understand the difference between Goth and satanic.”

His name is Kelly Scardina, someone whom Patricia refers to as “straight edge,” meaning he doesn’t drink or smoke, and though “he is a victim of a smear campaign,” in Patricia’s words, “he probably doesn’t know anything about it.”

In the years to come Patricia’s tormentors would finger Scardina as *proof* that Patricia Steere is in league with Satanists. “I met him in 1999 after moving to New Orleans to work for WRNO. He was working in a coffee house. The fact that he is in this story at all is so stupid. Kelly is a printer from Pearl River, Louisiana, who makes t-shirts, tote bags, and stickers for New Orleans local boutiques and bands and sells Goth and metal rock t-shirts to other stores,” Patricia explained. “It’s a one man printing operation called Sublimedia. The French Quarter has lots of Goth stores and he was interested in dark things due to being raised Catholic, I think. New Orleans is a Catholic town. Medals of saints and things like that caught his attention. That stuff always seemed creepy to me. He prowled estate sales and junk shops and collected odd antique things. But he also printed shirts for my brothers clothing store in the French quarter of New Orleans and he ended up doing shirts for *A Girl Is A Gun* too. When I got fed up standing around all day in heels Kelly said he’d take it if he could pay in installments.”

Patricia liked his offer.

Scardina however never paid her for the store.

“He simply cut contact with me. I’d known him for a few years and thought we were friends. He turned out not to be an honest person, but a Satanist? No. He was in essence an unmotivated, slightly unscrupulous Goth guy who still lived with his mom, who never grew up and had a dishonest streak. His dad was in jail for petty crime. I think he is just a lonely guy who wanted to be something in life and ended up lost and misdirected.”

The question lingered over her now—with New Orleans finally behind her and Houston on the horizon, what would Patricia Steere do with her life?

It is often and just as repeatedly told how Patricia's New Orleans brick and mortar project would follow her footsteps into the flat earth Movement only one year later as an inconvenient specter of sorts—always grabbing at her heels, as if she were standing over a grave of her own design, secrets *in plain sight* which she had hoped to remain hidden, and plaguing her lofty ambitions.

I disagree.

Her tormentors will gladly direct your attention to the fact that Patricia's portrait in *Gambit* includes two identical Andy Warhol inspired canvas prints, conveniently hung on the wall behind her, both of which depicts the closely detailed features of a woman's lower face, most notably a red lacquered finger nail poised over her mouth, as if to suggest a secret is in motion.

Sshh.

The twin prints, appropriately titled *Sshh*, originate from British pop artist Deborah Azzopardi. Though her original is valued at half a million pounds, IKEA has sold millions of them for as little as 10 euros. Flat earthists would later interpret Patricia's IKEA store bought prints to mean she was employing a masonic *Sshh* sign as yet another scattered clue, puzzle pieces really which, when assembled together revealed her true agenda, *the bigger picture*, most notably that she was a male agent posing as a woman and that she had planned her infiltration of the budding flat earth Movement all along.

“I didn't know about Masonic signs in 2011,” she said.

In the following years, reports of nefarious dealings would plague Patricia Steere by members of the very community that she had helped to create, and *hoped* to nurture. Kelly bought her store in 2014. Since *he* was a Satanist, or so the claim went (he certainly dealt in Baphomet imagery) the next *logical* conclusion is that Patricia is *also* a Satanist. The probability that every one of her accusers has an uncle or a cousin who dresses in Goth, or a co-worker for that matter, and by their own logic are also therefore Satanists, will not be overlooked here. In fact, if we're being precise, HaSatan means 'accuser.' And besides, “they say I look like a man

in the picture.” So there’s *that*. Before Patricia’s tormenters were through, they would speak of her brick and mortar boutique in terms of a revolving door with transgender models always coming and going, devilishly plotting the infiltration of a Movement which had yet to be born. The store itself, apparently, was only a front for something far more sinister, essentially a complete subversion of Mark Sargent’s own *flat earth clues*. But even the very title, *A Girl Is A Gun*, would be twisted and writhed into a wrangled implication. The idea, Patricia explained, was that a woman is dangerous and unpredictable, even deadly. “Flat earthers would later take the name and *insist* I have a penis.”

Sometimes you see people in the streets “looking like they don’t care,” Patricia would tell journalist Angela Hernandez several months later—same magazine. “My inspiration is to spread the care.” *Patricia Steere advocates dressing to the nines every day*, Hernandez wrote, because, as Steere would say, “what is your life if not one grand special occasion?”

Clearly, *Gun* was a reflection of Patricia’s sartorial point of view. Missy Wilkinson had made a point of the fact that she left Patricia’s store wanting to dress like her. Such a suggestion would later prove an insult to flat earthists everywhere.

No—No, *brick and mortar* didn’t haunt Patricia Steere’s tenure in the flat earth Movement.

Quite contrarily, Patricia Steere haunted Patricia Steere.

2

IN 2009 THE FLAT EARTH SOCIETY was quietly re-established with little to no fanfare. Its founder, a man named Daniel Shenton (no proposed relation whatsoever to Samuel Shenton) claimed succession from the Zetetic astronomers, Samuel Rowbotham and those under the umbrella of the Universal Zetetic Society in 1884, as well as Samuel Shenton’s Flat Earth Research Society, founded in 1956. No mention of the Texan was made. “While the Society’s focus became more religious throughout the 20th Century,” Daniel Shenton wrote, “the Zetetic underpinnings remained intact.” In the 21st century, Shenton assured his new audience, the Flat Earth Society would return to its original scientific focus.

Actually, Daniel Shenton's Flat Earth Society was *unofficially* resurrected on a web-based discussion forum five years prior. 2004 is written in my own memory as the year my wife and I, practically penniless, rented a garage in Long Beach, California. Our room had no central heat or air conditioning, not even a bathroom or kitchen; just a bed and an arm chair, two dresser drawers and a desk—leftovers from our adolescence. I had heard somewhere that *people*, be it only a handful, still believed the world to be flat. There was no sense of mockery on my part as I wrestled against the afternoon heat and powered our computer on from the garage, just pure childlike inquisition and curiosity.

I wanted to know—

—and yet learned little to nothing at all.

Among Daniel Shenton's rectangle-shaped boxes of discussion I undressed an uninvolved, uninspired earth, lacking any hope of intimacy. Nothing religious, let alone Biblical, came to my attention. Observable science seemed completely absent from the discussion. It wasn't even *practical*. Dare I say, Daniel Shenton and whomever he was engaged with in discussion seemed bored. *Alas*, I thought, the flat earth wasn't for dimwits, and it certainly wasn't for pragmatic thinkers. The flat earth, or so I thought at the time, must be deeply esoteric—and boring. And so I left Daniel Shenton's conversation disappointed. *I wanted to know*. It is a meddlesomeness which I never forgot, and even then promised to revisit at a later time, perhaps when I'd finally attuned my own sensibilities with *Gnostic* thinking. And yet the flat earth would be completely neglected for another decade.

This may or may not be of interest to my reader to note that Daniel Shenton's Flat Earth Society was formally founded during the very first year of Barack Hussein Obama's two-term administration as president of the United States. The former U.S. President anxiously referred to it, once famously articulating: "We don't have time for a meeting of the Flat Earth Society!"

No—President Obama did *not* have time. This is perhaps due to the fact that he was too busy committing war crimes against people. And killing people he did. Despite candidate Obama's pledge to sweep away Bush's entanglement in Iraq and Afghanistan, no other US President fulfilled the unexpected legacy of two full terms at war. He is the very definition of a wartime president, and unlike his predecessor, Obama's

killing rampage was spread worldwide. During his final year in office alone, a stunning grand finale of 26,171 bombs were dropped—that would be 72 per day—and US special operations were active in 70% of the world's nations, totaling 138 countries—a 130% increase over the Bush administration.

While filling in the breadth of two bloody-terms, thousands of innocent civilians were murdered, a total number which will likely forever remain unknown, and nearly 3 million people were deported from US shores. Though his successor would ramp up the rhetoric, where was the liberal outrage then? Even the ex-Nobel Secretary, Geir Lundestad, regretted Obama's peace prize. "No Nobel Peace Prize ever elicited more attention than the 2009 prize to Barack Obama," he wrote in his memoir, *Secretary of Peace*. He added, "Even many of Obama's supporters believed that the prize was a mistake. In that sense the committee didn't achieve what it had hoped for." Indeed, the man who promised peace set the world ablaze. The Iran nuclear deal and the opening of diplomatic relations with Cuba stand alone as President Obama's successful uses of diplomacy over hostility. Even Iran is criticized as a terrible farce. And history—*true* history, if permitted to be written—will alone be the judge as to his and Senator John McCain's full participation in the formation and further strengthening of ISIS, unlike what we are currently led to believe among the gatekeepers of our media.

To the liberal, Barack Hussein Obama was painted as a reluctant warrior—a dove of peace; when in fact he was an iron-clad eagle of war with both talons spread.

Obama's embrace of drones has led to a preference for killing rather than capturing terrorists. And killing, such machines are certainly proficient at. Not only have women and children been slaughtered as part of its collateral damage package, but young men of military age who the Obama administration preemptively counts as combatants—they too became acceptable moving targets in his worldwide hunting grounds. After condemning Bush for detaining terrorists in Guantanamo, he upped the ante by not only keeping the prison open, but terminating people worldwide without trial.

I suppose if you're going to run an Empire, you're going to commit war crimes. Certainly not an excuse, but it's impossible not to, seeing as how America is an Empire on par with Rome, unless your Calvin Coolidge and you like to sleep by the fishing pole. Barack Hussein Obama

liked golf nearly so much as he salivated over the thought of dropping bombs, and he liked to hit his targets. Perhaps that's why, when it came to committing the *deed*, the White House Situation Room employed the use of a polar azimuthal equidistant map.

That would be the most popularized flat earth map.

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), a polar azimuthal equidistant map is accurate in displaying continents and oceans. Globe maps, oddly enough, *are not*—particularly where air and aquatic navigation is concerned. To this day the equidistant flat earth map is employed for such purposes—air and sea perfection; or in the case of the Obama administration, for dropping bombs. And yet the USGS enforces a disclaimer that the equidistant map is only reliable for measuring a precise distance from the North Pole to any other longitude-latitude line on the map. Contrarily, many seafarers—braving the Southern Hemisphere—have been tormented, delayed, and even pronounced unexplainably off course for grossly miscalculating Antarctica's size, and the distance between outstretched continents in that hemisphere, when calculating their course on globe maps. As many flat earth proponents know, the equidistant map has issues, as does any map, and yet retains a *certain* reliability. And the government, despite filling every classroom with a globe—which is completely useless for any sort of navigational purpose except to fill the child's mind with superstition regarding a plight from Earth, which will never happen—knows this too.

It is difficult for most people to understand the layout of the flat earth, and are largely incapable of committing themselves to further research on the Zetetics, because since they days of the diaper they have opened up their mouths and said, “*Abbbbbb!*” for the magic *choo-choo* as Plato's globe was spoon-fed into them. Those who are incapable of getting off the magic *choo-choo* at the next stop will find themselves laughing right along with Scientism's prominent enforcer and children's actor Bill Nye the Science Guy, who uses his apparent scientific prestige to deceive globe proponents with psy-op fabricated falsities by mockingly telling flat earthists to “drive to the edge and take pictures” as proof.

It is a shame that Bill Nye the Science Guy, during his White House visits, never once asked President Obama if he could tour the Situation Room, just so that he could better acquaint himself with a polar azimuthal equidistant map—sufficient at least for aerial missions, deploying troops, and dropping bombs.

Among his unprecedented wars and killing sprees, I am reminded that Obama spoke of being on *the right side* or *wrong side* of history more than any other U.S. President. “History will end up recording that at *every juncture*,” Obama claimed regarding his administrative actions in the Middle-East, “we were on the right side of history.” Did you hear that—*at every juncture*? It seems Obama is a moral man. He knows much about it—*future* history, that is; who is on the right and who is on the wrong side.

Those whom he appoints as terrorists, unknowingly and without trial for example, are on the wrong side of history—as are flat earthists. Former Secretary of State John Kerry, when speaking at his usual Climate Talks, said: “Members of the Flat Earth Society are on the wrong side of history.”

You know, that really hurts, Mr. Secretary.

But I guess I can’t take it too personal, kind of like when he accused ‘climate change’ skeptics of believing, with “the melting of the ice and the rise of sea level, all that extra water is just going to spill over the sides of a flat earth.”

I can’t take it too personal, because he also would know something about that, wouldn’t he—those who are on his *wrong side* of history—particularly since he would be intimately familiar with the equidistant map in the Situation Room, or the UN logo, for that matter, having set his mind upon one or the other repeatedly, and undoubtedly sat in on some of the killings.

Obama did not have time for Daniel Shenton’s Flat Earth Society, but *then again*, and this should be dutifully noted, Daniel Shenton’s Flat Earth Society did not have time for the world, particularly other flat earthists. While many began waking up to the flat earth in 2014 and 2015 through Eric Dubay and Mark Sargent and afterwards, even while Robbie Davidson planned his Flat Earth International Conference in 2017, the Flat Earth Society remained oddly quiet. In fact, ten years after its re-emergence, the world has yet to hear from the Flat Earth Society.

“YOU’VE TOLD YOUR STORY probably two-hundred times already,” I told Mark Sargent on the phone.

“*Oh*, probably more than that,” he said.

“Tell me about it. When did you discover the flat earth?”

It wasn’t discovery, he said. “I really *revisited* the whole concept. I mean, everybody’s heard about it. I’ve never run into a single person that’s said: ‘Flat earth, I don’t know what you’re talking about—never heard of it.’”

“When did you rediscover it then?” I asked.

“*Oh*, that would be the summer of 2014.”

He was living in Boulder, Colorado, and had tired himself out of every conspiracy. Flat earth “wasn’t even on my bucket list,” he said. And though it is true that Sargent had looked into the hollow earth theory that very summer, this time with Admiral Byrd’s apparent involvement in it, he’d already combed through those details several times before. It was in turning *hollow earth* over at the tip of his fingertips again, as any investigator might with a cold case file; that *something* finally popped out at him. And though it is certainly an easily overlooked detail, it was hardly miniscule.

Flight paths in the southern hemisphere weren’t lining up right.

That is, *if* we lived on a globe.

“There was some guy in Germany with a YouTube channel called *Cae Sar*, and he was talking about how flight routes in the Southern Hemisphere don’t make any sense unless the world is flat.”

Cae Sar was using an AE map.

“This can’t be real,” Sargent told himself, carefully examining the map. “I should be able to shut this thing down,” which is precisely what Sargent set out to do.

Flat earth is stupid and ridiculous and everybody knows that—Sargent.

Over the course of a single weekend Mark Sargent was confident that he could satisfy his own curiosity. Nine months later, as the 2015 calendar year rolled around, Sargent was *stumped*. “I couldn’t figure it out. I could not prove the globe in a court of law anymore.”

On the 10th of February, 2015, Mark Sargent released his first of twelve *Flat Earth Clues*, premiering a new episode nearly every day. “I

thought for sure that somebody would destroy it. Somebody from academia would call me up or write me and say ‘*Okay*, here’s where you went wrong. You can shut the whole thing down.’”

“And in fact, the entire *opposite* thing happened.”

4

“IT’S NOT A BIG SECRET,” SARGENT SAID. “The Christian community was coming at me pretty hard by the time I got to *Clues* number seven, because I hadn’t been addressing religion in regards to flat earth. They said I was dancing around the issue too much. And so finally I decided to make a clue, *they are hiding God*.”

Mark Sargent was raised a *born again* Christian. I stress *raised*, because Sargent left the church years ago, openly acknowledging no apparent desire to retrace those steps. And yet e-mails began pouring in from people “so pumped up about it,” the flat earth, that is, that they eagerly began “to look into the spiritual side of things.” Sargent paused to ponder the paradox—the floodgates of religious zealots that were released upon the internet under his watch. “I’ve never seen *anything* bring so many people back to God as the flat earth does, mostly because of its shape. I was in tech for years and years—twenty *plus* years. If it is built, if it is a building, a structure, and if it was built by somebody, and whatever your opinion is, I’m not saying it’s going to kill atheism completely, but it’s going to severely damage it. If it was built then you’re just splitting hairs. You’re talking about an advanced civilization or the divine. It’s got to be one or the other, but either way you’re not alone in the universe.”

“When I got into flat earth I *had* to acknowledge Christianity had the edge because of the Bible’s literal stories that refer to a flat earth.” But that’s not to say, according to Sargent, that the other four religious houses don’t have a stake in this too. “I think they’ve all got pieces of the same puzzle.” And yet, where religion was involved, it wasn’t Islam or Judaism which observably began gushing forward in those early months, once the levee broke. It was almost unanimously Christians who seemed so eager to raise the banner and lead the charge. As an added stipulation, if Sargent was ever to turn back towards Christianity, then the bountiful harvest of Christ followers surrounding him “makes it easy for me to do.”

IN 2015 52-YEAR OLD PATRICIA STEERE was on YouTube, kind of just meandering around, clicking on links which might quench her curiosity, looking up things of note. She had already settled upon the fact that 9/11 was an inside job, “and because I’d been down that conspiracy rabbit hole on YouTube, things of that nature kept getting suggested to me.” That’s when Patricia stumbled upon the 2001 documentary, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Moon*, and then it’s 2004 follow-up, *Astronauts Gone Wild*, both Bart Sibrel films.

Wait, we never went to the moon? The very notion fascinated Patricia. *Why would they lie to us?* “I looked at both of those films and wasn’t quite sure what was being said other than the fact that we never went to space.” So she followed the rabbit trail, which YouTube haphazardly led her on, directly around the orbit of the moon landing hoax until she stumbled upon a man inhabiting the deepest unexplored pocket of cyber space named Mark Sargent. But when Patricia first discovered him, specifically YouTube’s recommendation that she watch *Flat Earth Clues*, “it wasn’t his clues as they are today, compiled all into one video. They were a series of clues, at that time as many as 10—I don’t really remember. But they were still coming out, is what I am trying to say. So I would devour them, and then would watch his new clues as they came out, which would be up to clue 13 by this point.”

“*Flat Earth Clues* took off really, really fast,” Mark Sargent said. “And again, considering how old YouTube was when it took off, it was really flattering.” Fact of the matter is, *Clues* was easy to understand. Sargent included pop cultural references that people could latch onto, and within its first six week run Sargent had found himself getting interviews. By May of that year *Coast to Coast AM Radio* contacted him for an interview. From there he was offered a *Truth Frequency Radio* gig and by the end of the year, book publishers were calling.

“The whole thing started snowballing to where the *Clues* were really easy to understand, and people were mirroring them. In fact, I was getting more hits on the mirrors, people that were putting them on their own channel than I was on mine. Some of these videos have millions of hits, and I didn’t get nickels for them—which is fine. I didn’t have the channel

monetized, and I didn't even allow comments, or thumbs up or thumbs down."

While Sargent was suddenly finding himself entering the throws of YouTube stardom, and as a *runaway success*, mind you, flat earthist Eric Dubay was enjoying the same treatment. Roger Ebert has said of his childhood that Marilyn Monroe was known among burgeoning boys as neither Marilyn nor Monroe. She went by one name only and that was **Marilynmonroe**. So it was among germinating flat earthists. There was neither Eric nor Dubay, and Sargent was often spoken of with enough calibrated ferocity to add an expletive between Mark and Sargent, as one might New York *blankety* City. Very few flat earthists in the Movements dawning hours would come to embrace a complete alteration to their reality without either of them.

So too would Patricia turn next from Mark *blankety* Sargent to **Ericdubay**. And just like practically anyone who first discovers *flat earth* online—relishing in the find; days went by while she fed her obsession.

Eat, sleep, poop, flat earth—repeat.

Up until March of 2015, Patricia had been straddling the science of reason that found little effort in bleeding atheism with the agnostic, "and I said to myself after a bit of time digesting, 'I need to do something. I need to help. We've been lied to. Money has been stolen that could be used to feed and educate and clothe and fight disease, but instead it's being pushed into space.'" And then she thought about *space* in its precarious relationship with the *shape* of the earth, and for the first moment in her life she finally realized, "It's a spiritual thing."

"And at that time I was not—I wasn't an atheist—but I was just one of those people who believed in evolution and science and, you know, probably God didn't exist, and it didn't make sense how God *could* exist, due to the way we've been taught science." For Patricia, it was all *old philosophy* from a less civilized age. "But then I realized, after I had digested a lot of the flat earth material that, in essence, what is being hidden from us is God—the Creator. And who had conspired to do the hiding? I wasn't quite sure. A lot of videos told me different things. But I got the *why* of it—definitely." They were *hiding* God, which only begged the next question. If God existed, and if it was the agents of Scientism who had lied to her about the *shape* of everything, then was religion still within

reason? “And I thought, ‘What religion has a lot of good advice in it and good ways to live your life?’”

In those regards flat earth became a quest—one might even say a spiritual pilgrimage. But rather than take the ancient road towards Jerusalem, the destination remained undecided—for *now*. Meanwhile, something needed to be done. “There have been so many things in this world that have really bothered me, wars and famines, injustice, and persecution, 9/11, but I never did anything about it. I just watched it go on by.” She had always stumbled upon the problem too long after the fact. “But since it was so early in this awakening, I thought I could get on board immediately and start to make a difference, because it was somewhat new to the internet.”

“So, I said to myself, I’m going to start a channel on YouTube, something I’ve never done before. I had toyed with the idea when I became vegan, because I didn’t want to hurt the animals. I wanted to hurt the least amount of animals possible.” Then again, the problems of the world always seemed *too vast*, her concerns for them always seemingly arriving *too long* after the fact, “and though I’m a passionate vegan, I don’t really participate too much in vegan anything. I’m not part of vegan groups. I don’t do protests.” But “*this* grabbed me—this *flat earth*.”

Her vegan friends did not appreciate the sudden emergence of flat earth material in her social media life. It was, she said, “to the chagrin of many.” Patricia simply *hated* to let them down. Regardless, it was a recently acquired social media friend, Michael Lewis, who appreciated the fact that she was both a vegan *and* flat earthist—the only one he’d since met. It was Lewis, she said, who drug her into the fight. “*Stars are Souls*, that’s his YouTube channel, he eventually got sick of the drama and quit. Most of those flat earthers from that time have since gone.” She paused to consider the faces of those who helped to kick start the Movement, names and personalities which very few flat earthists today, in as little as a few years, likely remember or know. They left “probably due to the drama and stress, I would imagine. Nobody seriously gets into flat earth and returns to the globe. That just doesn’t happen. It’s just the bullying, the drama, the stress, and sometimes personal family issues. Michael Lewis left flat earth because his footprint wouldn’t fare well with his work.”

The documentary in which Lewis interviewed her for was supposed to take ten minutes of her time, but ended up consuming two hours, at the end of which he and Patricia found themselves talking and laughing.

Patricia suddenly blurted out, “I’m starting a YouTube channel *tomorrow*. Will you be my first guest?”

There was however a complication to her request. Patricia had been putting off her proposed endeavor for months. “I’m the least technically minded person ever. And for me to even start a YouTube channel—I’d wake up in the morning and say, ‘I’ve got to sit at my computer and do technical stuff, figure out how to make a channel—that’s horrible. I’ll do it tomorrow.’” It was a conversation which greeted her, and which she purpose to hold, each and every morning.

Wait—did I really just say that? Did I just invite Michael Lewis onto a YouTube channel which doesn’t actually exist...?

Lewis agreed.

She was taking a shower when the title *Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes* came to her. “Nobody would remember Patricia Steere, *really*. But with a name like *Hot Potatoes* I could talk about flat earth and other assorted things. I could talk about 9/11. I could talk about chemtrails. I could talk about *anything* that has to do under the banner of hot potato issues.” Lewis was her very first co-host. “I think we did three shows together, with *Stars are Souls*. And while doing shows with him, I wanted to interview people. That was the idea.” The dawning hours of the flat earth movement are almost unrecognizable to the personalities which seek to fill it now. “Back then many people didn’t even use their real names. It was often just pictures with voiceovers, or an experiment. Sometimes people did use their physical appearance,” like Math Powerland or Eric Dubay, “but hardly any really.”

“Here’s the thing on *Hot Potatoes*...” David Weiss fondly recalls those early days on Google hangouts, when flat earthists would get together “and have long Skype calls all night long, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 of us, however many Skype would allow for. And we’d just be talking about what we saw in flat earth, and we’d be discussing ideas, and experiments, and Patricia was in there, and I think *maybe* Mark was in there, and Martin Liedtke, and a whole bunch of people, and one day Patricia interviewed somebody,” and when they were on Skype, Weiss said, “That was a great interview, *you* should do that as a weekly show.”

And she said, “Hey that doesn’t sound like a bad idea.”

According to Weiss, “that’s how *Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes* started. I don’t know if she was ready to do it or if she was planning to do it, but I suggested it, and she was like, *alright, that doesn’t sound like a bad idea.*”

Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes went live on August 23, 2015, and with it a new vision for the blossoming Movement. For Patricia, this wouldn’t simply be a back alley scuttling of anonymous gurus, like something out of *the Matrix*, who dial the homes of truth seekers, such as Neo, and wake them from their sleep. “I wanted to find out who these people really are. I know who *I am*. I know how I got into this. I know what I went through. But I felt alone in a way, because nobody in my real life had these thoughts. I wanted to find out who that guy Mark Sargent was. How did he grow up? How did he come to this idea? On *Flat Earth Clues*, I didn’t hear him talking about himself. Same with Eric Dubay—him and Math Powerland—even *Stars are Souls*. I mean, I wanted to know who all these people were as *humans*. What connected us, what created in our mind this awakening?”

“And so, that was what my channel was destined to be, a channel that delved into the *human* aspect of flat earth—not the experiments, *not* the proofs, *not* the demonstrations, *not* the religion really, but *who* the people were. And if the people happened to be Christians, and if the people happened to do experiments, well, that would be included in there. But I wanted to find out *how* they grew up, *where* they grew up, *what* they thought about it, *how* it effect their thoughts and their personal life and their career. I wanted to find out what makes people tick.” And so Patricia Steere of *Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes* set out interviewing other flat earthists. “And in a way, as my channel started to grow, I knew I could interview other channels smaller than me, and give them the leg up. And I could also reach out to bigger channels than me, like Mark Sargent, and get them to say, *sure*, because people were hungry to connect—and it was the right time. And so I interviewed many, many people.”

The very jukebox that had sat in the lobby of her father’s radio station since the 1970’s became a set piece behind her as she broadcasted her interviews on YouTube. *Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes* would last for four years and 294 episodes.

MISSING CURVATURE

1

ONE DAY IN THE SPRING OF 2015, 55 YEAR-OLD Bob Knodel got to thinking. Firstly, he thought about his training as a pilot—and then gyroscopes. He thought about space and satellite imagery too. Something didn't add up right.

“I was always, for the last 25 plus years—I guess you could kind of call me a conspiracy theorist. I never trusted the government. I always knew there was something wrong with it—with the world in general, honestly. But I couldn't put my finger on it. The biggest thing was with wars. You know, why did they have so many wars, for property or what? They'd spend billions of dollars on wars and they never made any sense to me. Why didn't they just spend that money to fix the problem? As I grew older I started to have more and more distrust for the government, and the system in general. I never really liked it instinctively.” Among Knodel's earlier choice conspiracies were the Apollo moon landing hoax and the creation of the Federal Reserve, particularly “how that was done so underhandedly.”

Bob Knodel was born on Sunday, November 6, 1960. Elvis Presley, Chubby Checker, Connie Francis, and Brenda Lee were topping the American musical charts while elsewhere, in the political forum, Dwight D. Eisenhower was finishing his final terms as president. It is very unlikely that Knodel has managed to retain memories of the succeeding Kennedy administration, elected only two days after his birth. But Knodel was after all a baby boomer, and the space race—which Lyndon B. Johnson, then Senate Majority Leader and leader of the Democratic political party, had already muscled Eisenhower into nearly three years earlier after raising such a controversy over the Soviet Union's *Sputnik* launch—had a lasting impact.

Knodel loved space.

While Knodel was yet 6, *Star Trek* mesmerized American households with tales of the unexplored. His was a first generation *Star Trek* household. Only three years later, on July 20, 1969, Walter Cronkite would

have everyone convinced that the *seemingly* was indeed possible. Like anyone else alive and conscious in the 1960's, Knodel remembers. Nearly a decade later, while Knodel was only 17 years old, *Star Wars* would shake the foundations of his imagination. But he wasn't alone. Gene Roddenberry and George Lucas, it seems, made just about everyone pregnable. Knodel's affection was further nurtured by men like Richard Hoagland and Boyd Bushman. On July 25, 1976, an entire year before *Star Wars*, the *Viking 1* satellite had *acquired* the image of a Martian mesa which seemed to depict a humanoid face. Hoagland later popularized the notion that the Cydonia region of Mars was once a Martian civilization, complete with pyramids and a ruined city. "Richard Hoagland was sort of a NASA spokesperson. He supposedly had worked for NASA for quite some time, and was a guy who had worked under Walter Cronkite. I really liked his work. In my mind the existence of extraterrestrials was absolute. And it still is to this day but just in a little bit of a difference context."

"I was well aware that the footage they were putting out was fabricated. It was very obvious, the moon landing stuff—everything they did was clearly fabricated. But what I was trying to figure out—I figured they were just trying to hide the existence of extraterrestrials, maybe there were fantastic structures on Mars and the moon, and there was this whole other world going outside of this, and they didn't want the general public to know about it."

They're *hiding* something.

"But the thing I could never figure out about NASA is, even if there was a secret space program, why couldn't they take some of those real photographs, supposedly from the secret space program, and augment the obvious, blatantly obvious CGI. And remind you, this is before I was ever a flat earther." Knodel could only look at the state of the world and then gaze up towards the infinite blanket of space imagined for him and *hope*. "If this was the crowning achievement of God's creation, then we're in trouble. There had to be more intelligent life somewhere out there in the universe."

By the spring of 2015, *Clues Forum* had become a regular fixture of Knodel's online reading. "They went far and deep into the Apollo hoax, showing all the problems with the space shuttle launches and the ISS." And then suddenly somebody posited the idea of a flat earth into the conversation. "He went into fairly decent detail on it. And by the time I was done with his post on that forum, I thought about it and I was

convinced. Like, *that's it*. That has *got* to be it. They are *literally* hiding the shape of the earth.”

What could possibly have been racing through Knodel’s head as he read that flat earth post?—Airplanes and understanding gyroscopes, “especially from an engineering point of view. And it occurred to me that we never ever compensate for any curvature. It is not taken into consideration while plotting or piloting a flight plan. From day one in pilot training you’re told to pick a point on the horizon and fly towards it.”

Knodel had *never* seen curvature—ever.

“And then I thought back, because I’m also an RF engineer, a radio frequency engineer, and I worked specifically with satellites, believe it or not. Satellite headends, point to point terrestrial microwave, which are those big towers which they broadcast across the land, and they have lots of data that goes across those, and I also worked building cellular sites, two way and trunked radio systems, and pretty much everything RF. So radio frequency communications was pretty much my forte.”

“And I thought about that and it was like, you know, when I was working building these point terrestrial microwaves, the typical microwave shot is around 60 miles. You think about that, and okay, that’s cool, because the microwave towers are always set up on high ridges, high land elevations or mountains or anything like that, but then there were occasions where we would need to do path level adjustments, and sometimes we would need to skip back and bypass paths, and sometimes we would do two of them, which would bring us close to 200 miles going across Kansas or Nebraska, and the towers were only 100 foot high.”

He thought back upon his entire life and was like, *Wait a minute*.

Taking 8 inches per mile squared into consideration, “you do the math and there is no way we could have ever even come close to making those microwave shots on those test runs, and we had an absolutely beautiful signal on them on the next site down, and yet it was 200 miles away. I never thought anything about it. And now all these things sort of just came flooding into my thought process.”

“There it is,” he said.

I’ll be damned.

THE HOLLOW EARTH THEORY was apparently something to be tinkered with in 2014. Mark Sargent doodled with it. So did Chris Van Matre.

Admiral Byrd, *check*.

Flying saucers, *check*.

Woolly Mammoth, *check*.

One thing led to another...

Eric Dubay, *check...?*

Van Matre immediately turned his thoughts from the hollow places of Jules Verne lore to flat planes, as presented by Eric Dubay, for three or four nights. “I *hate* to say it, but he had some good material.” He considered all that this *so-called* flat earth offered in contrast to what could never be seen nor measured, or experienced for that matter, in a hollowed out earth, and in light of his lifelong professions—a land surveyor and also a pilot.

He said, “With my pilot experience, whenever we were flying, you could get up to an altitude, and the smaller airplanes, they have what’s called a trim tab, where you can go on cruise control. It’s almost like auto-pilot. You can fly at a standard level for hundreds of miles without having to tip the nose down to make the adjustments for it. And they also teach you to pick a spot on the nose of the airplane so that you can reference it to your instruments and stay flat and level.”

On his third consecutive day of contemplation Van Matre concluded, “It was right there in my face the whole time.”

“It took only about a week for it all to sink in, and I got to thinking about the land surveying I’d done, and I was questioning the State Plane Coordinate System. They basically take the globe and they turn it into a flat plane. When we use GPS, that’s what we’re working off of. I started questioning the map, and none of it made sense.”

Differential leveling is a technique used to determine differences in elevation between remote points. “It’s one of the most accurate instruments that we use. In FE Core we just did an experiment called *Force*

the Level, where we went out and used a digital level, and that was one of the things that hit me was, back in the day they ran differential leveling from coast to coast. I started to look at the earth's curvature. They would have picked up—because those levels will pick up a slight difference within a thousand feet—they would have picked up the curvature. And then they come back with the argument that the level bubble follows the curve of the earth. That's preposterous! A level is a straight horizontal line. It's not a curve. They try to explain it away as a level is actually a curve. And most people don't realize that. Their explanation of a level is *not* a straight line. *It's a curve.*"

Chris Van Matre was raised a Jehovah's Witness. But in 1981, at the age of 18, Van Matre walked away from religion totally. *Science* did that to him. "That's one of the main reasons they fed us all this BS to begin with. Science totally denies God. It doesn't even want to recognize the Creator."

"When you start looking into it," *planet* Earth, "when you start looking at the numbers, and I tell people almost every day—you know the 666 number? I call it the Science number. When you look at the 8 inches per square mile, its *point* 666, and it goes forever, but you round up to 6667 at some point. The globe tilts at 23.4 degrees. You take that from 90 degrees, you get 66.6 degrees. The earth circles around the sun at 66, 600 miles an hour, and it's just all over in Science."

The flat earth, in errant contrast to planet earth, would cause Chris Van Matre to believe in God *and* Satan again. The flat earth changed *everything*.

"I take my dad out to breakfast every Sunday. That's something I started doing with flat earth. I barely ever talked to him, and when I got into flat earth, the family came to the forefront, and has become one of the number one things that I focus on. And so I started taking my dad out for breakfast or lunch every Sunday for the last two and half, three years now. So we talk about it." They got talking about religion, and "I said: 'God instilled in us—you know when you're doing something right or wrong. You truly do.' So I think if you operate or live your life doing the things that are morally right, then I believe you're following like He wants you to do. And I truly believe that in my heart."

“I believe there’s a God,” Van Matre *stressed* this point. “I used to be non-religious—an atheist. I now believe one of the biggest reasons they put the globe, why mainstream Science puts it there, is to *hide God*.”

Quite contrarily, *planet* Earth, he would come to acknowledge, is Satan’s backyard.

3

WHEN LISTENERS BEGAN SENDING DAVID WEISS *flat earth* videos in 2014, he deleted them—every single last one. “I wouldn’t even look at a single minute of video,” he said. Flat earth was bad for business. And besides, flat earthists, it seemed, were derailing the very truther movement which he held so dear.

Weiss and Timothy Rothschild met while working together at a company, the name of which, Weiss insists, is not necessary to the narrative. It was during lunch hour that their *career* in conspiracy theory, or what Weiss refers to as “truth seeking,” *unofficially* began. Here Weiss recalls, “We’d be talking about the Federal Reserve and how it’s not real money, and it’s a private bank, and nobody believed us.” Regardless, “it turned out to be a thing. At lunch time everyone would gather around us in the lunch room, because we’d be talking about truth that the main stream media doesn’t tell.”

“Conspiracy theory is a weaponized term. From the very beginning I was a *truth seeker*. When I hear something that doesn’t make sense I look for the truth.” Quite contrarily, “a bunch of Arabs with box cutters hijacked four planes and knocked down seven buildings in NYC and one in Washington while the fourth buried itself so deep underground in Pennsylvania that it cannot be recovered—that’s the definition of a conspiracy theory.” In other words, a conspiracy *theory*, such as the *official* 9/11 lie, is not to be confused with truth, particularly one’s search for it. Or more recently, while writing *this* book, there’s Jeffrey Epstein “in a maximum security cell on suicide watch. He hung himself and nobody saw it,” Weiss added, referring of course *only* to the official narrative. “*That’s* a conspiracy theory.”

Initially, *DeepInside the RabbitHole* was Rothschild’s idea. “Tim had a good friend who offered the opportunity for us to do a show with him.

Stand Up NY Labs was a podcast studio in New York City, and they were looking for something conspiracy minded.” The weekly podcast highlighted the two as truth seekers, Weiss said, while “Mike Canon, the comedian, he tried to debunk us. Mike always tried to make everything we said a joke because that was his job.” The thing about Canon is, “we would discuss all of the false flags and hoax events that were happening in the world, and he slowly started to see that the stuff we were saying was real.” But in the end, “he kept to his comedy.”

Sleeping people, Weiss added, *loved* the comedian but hated him. Then again, the woke loved Weiss and seethed their teeth at the comedian. It seems as though *DeepInside the RabbitHole* had a nerve to poke and prod with just about everyone. Their very first episode, *9/11 is Dave's Baby*, premiered on August 24, 2013. The show was a hit. “We did it every week for three years until it blew up.”

Speaking of which...

In the third year Weiss began receiving messages from flat earthists. “I started banning people from our social media for repeatedly saying such stupid things. And I wouldn’t even look into it, and then one day I was speaking with Sofia Shafquat, who made one of the first 9/11 movies, called *911 Mysteries*, and we became friends, and we were talking about how there were a whole bunch of hoaxes and events that were happening.”

Weiss said: “It’s amazing how much deception there is in the world,”

And then Shafquat said: “Oh David, it’s worse than that.”

I think the earth could be flat.

“I was bowled over,” Weiss recalled. *This*—coming from a fellow researcher whom he had so much respect for. “I had just spent twenty minutes banning a bunch of people from social media.”

What do you mean the earth is flat?

Shafquat sent him an assortment of video links, and one of them was Mark Sargent. After stumbling upon Eric Dubay’s *200 Proofs that the Earth Is Flat*, Weiss had had enough.

That’s it. I’m going to debunk this.

“And for the next two weeks I researched every hour of every day that I had available to *disprove*—just come up with one proof that the earth

is a ball. That's all you need, just one." Weiss paused over the phone. "And I couldn't do it."

After Weiss began introducing the flat earth into his podcasts, "they didn't want anything to do with it. They said: *You're discrediting all the work we've done.*" It's not like Weiss didn't see that coming. "I actually didn't bring up flat earth on the podcast for quite some time, because I figured that people would freak out."

"And I was right," Weiss concluded.

They did.

4

WINTERS IN JACKSON HOLE AND THE HIGHWAYS of America, with Jerry Garcia as his pied piper, were ancient history by the time Zen Garcia picked up the world's oldest book for another *thorough* read.

Enoch—

A life of paralysis had given him ample time to study. Perhaps it was the carefree hours; perhaps a change of perspective, but quite suddenly Zen found himself reading "the Bible in a manner which I had never previously." For starters, it wasn't until after he began reading Scripture and combing through extra-Biblical material that he "came out of the New Age. And immediately the Most High was leading me to things that weren't taught in mainstream churches."

Things like, *Serpent Seed*.

Things like, *Pre-existence*.

"But the big one for me was Genesis 6—the sons of god mating with the daughters of men, creating a race of giants known as the men of renown; there were giants on the earth before and after the flood."

Zen Garcia read that with an added connotation.

"I wanted to know more about the context of the chapter," he said. "And I discovered the book of *Enoch*. That was my introduction to a group of fallen angels, their mating with the daughters of man, creating a race of giants, and then reading things like Numbers and Deuteronomy,

the sons of Anak, the giants in the Promised Land—even David and Goliath.”

‘Why are people not talking about this?’ he thought. ‘Why isn’t this taught in seminary and Sunday school?’ *Perhaps* for similar reasons that they neglect teaching about cosmology. For two long decades, Zen held the deeper secrets of cosmology in his fingertips, wondering why nobody was talking about *this*, while simultaneously wanting *nothing* to do with *that*.

Regardless, it should be noted here that, unlike almost every other public figure in the Movement, Zen Garcia can claim a unique entryway into the flat earth reality *without* the help of Mark Sargent. Sargent wouldn’t begin publishing his clues until February. Zen was onto the flat earth scent one month earlier. “I was unwilling for the longest time because I didn’t want to waste my time on something that I felt was basically settled 500 years ago. And something I was very familiar with was the planetary systems, the universe, the galaxy and all that, had come into being, and had evolved into where we are now. I was totally unwilling to examine it.”

Listeners had begun to ask if he’d please look into it.

Just give it a chance.

It’s testified to at the tip of your fingertips.

“The thing with all my listeners is to remain open. And so with all the other controversial teachings that I bring forth, and realizing that I asked them to be open minded, I realized that I had to do the same. And so it was either look at it openly or prove myself a hypocrite.”

So Zen Garcia set out to debunk this silly theory with the fullest intention of returning to his broadcast and telling his listeners why he thought they had asked him to comply with lunacy. “But then I quickly realized that there was no curvature. And things like line of sight, things that could be seen in every part of the world, extreme distances that should not be possible, confirmed for me that there was no curvature.”

Only *afterwards* did Zen examine ancient Scripture. He read Genesis afresh. He saw Hebrew cosmology explained *before* his very eyes. The Creator Elohim had testified to it all along. He then turned towards extra-Biblical material.

“There was a portion in the Book of Enoch, the courses of the heavenly luminaries, which I was never able to understand. When I

learned that there was no curve to the earth, and again, studying the Bible, re-reading Genesis, that there was no motion, no movement to the earth either, then I had to really reconsider.” Essentially, Zen Garcia had to re-examine all of the material that he acquired over two decades, every jot and tittle, all over again. He had it *all wrong*. He’d been scrutinizing the universe with presuppositions and Copernican shades for reading glasses. “And I realized what Enoch was describing with the movement and the motions of the sun and the moon and the luminaries was what we see in time lapse photography of the star trails over the course of an evening, that Enoch was *literally* describing them moving in a circle from east to west to north and back to the east in a circle, and so I was able to then apply that to the earth being a backdrop for those motions, and that the earth was the foundation, and that all of the luminaries were moving, and the earth was stationary and fixed and unmoving.”

This unexpected cosmology unlocked and further spread open entire concepts, practical truths, which had beguiled him for decades. *Polaris*, that unmoving star, Zen said, is where the throne of God is, “at the center of the vaulted dome, and from there he was instructed from the angel Uriel on the motions, the movements of the sun and the moon, in what are called the six gates of heaven. And the six gates of heaven are spaces. It takes the sun six months to move back and forth between the tropic of Capricorn and the tropic of Cancer. Once it reaches the tropic of Cancer for summer solstice it reverses course and begins heading back towards the tropic of Capricorn. Basically what is happening is the sun is bouncing back and forth between those two points, and that’s what created the seasons, and also what Enoch called leaders of the days, which were the two equinoxes and the two solstices.”

Even further *reaching* extra-Biblical texts, such as the *Book of the Jews* and the *Second Book of Enoch*, would describe for Zen seven heavens and seven hells and a mountain in the center of the earth’s face, at the north pole.

By June of 2015, Zen released his ninth book, *The Flat Earth as Key to Decrypt the Book of Enoch*. Clearly, everything about what Enoch was even talking about had changed. His book “brought out knowledge that people can now use to reinterpret what Enoch is describing. And he’s basically talking about a fixed foundation, and that it is the luminaries, the sun and moon included, which move a circle above what he calls the circle of the earth, in the tabernacle of the sky.”

In June of 2016, exactly one year later, Zen released his tenth book, *Firmament: Vaulted Dome of the Earth*. “Another key for Biblical cosmology, which was not being spoken about, and which nobody was talking about, was the firmament as a solid structure.”

Through these books Zen started *Sacred Word Publishing*. “And we have published numerous old out of print flat earth books. So that sort of cemented my place in this community.” Exactly one year later, in June of 2017, Zen Garcia would personally commission me to write a book for his burgeoning company. I immediately rejected any such offer. And then I thought about it and finally *agreed*.

The book would be premiered, we mutually concluded, at Robbie Davidson’s up and coming Flat Earth International Conference.

But I’m getting ahead of myself.

5

MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, BIGFOOT *doesn’t* EXIST *after all*. It was a begrudging conclusion which Karen B was forced to contend with on her move to North Carolina. “I grew up in California,” she explained, “which is where the Bigfoot name came from—Willow Creek and all that. I lived there my whole life and I never had any sort of experiences with them, and I finally got to the point where I started to think, *maybe this isn’t real*, even though I was really obsessed with it growing up.”

But then one night Remington needed to sniff out the perfect potty spot, and afterwards, it just never really slowed down. More and more stuff just started happening. “I had them *tapping* on my windows. I heard them *talking* in the woods.” As the years slowly passed, she thought they may have even left her gifts.

In 2015 Karen B was outside watering the grass surrounding the fairy-tale house which she and her husband had broken ground on only one year earlier, having shaved off a clearing of trees on their 20-acre estate, with her three year-old daughter who’d been born into their family just across the street. It was six o’clock in the evening. “The sun’s still out, perfectly still summer day,” Karen recalled, “no wind.”

Her daughter grabbed her leg.

“Mommy, there’s the Bigfoot over there. Don’t let it get me.”

But when Karen looked up, she didn’t see anything.

“Don’t worry. Mommy’s right here,” Karen grazed the thought away as any parent might when the monster is reported under the bed or in the closet. “I won’t let anything happen to you.”

The watering continued while her daughter remained glued to her leg. Then Karen *saw* something. A tree inside the wood line, perhaps 40 feet tall, was shaking violently. “It was shaking so bad that I could hear the wood *crack—crack—crack—crack—crack*; and it was the *only* tree shaking. And it was a *big* tree.”

Oh, that’s right. My daughter said she just saw a Bigfoot.

“And if you study anything about Bigfoots, when they shake trees—that’s a common thing to see. It’s almost as if they’re telling you: *We’re here.*”

6

PATRICIA STEERE MAY HAVE DISCOVERED Mark Sargent while intellectually orbiting the moon which cannot possibly be landed upon, but it was Mark Sargent who kept a curious eye upon those who entered the flat earth. Sargent *discovered* Patricia. In fact, one of the very first comments on her YouTube channel was written by Sargent.

“And it said: *Great job, keep it flat*, or something like that.”

Sargent however hadn’t remembered that the inevitable host of *Hot Potatoes* had already contacted him several months earlier. Inspiration had enticed Patricia to write him one day to express her newfound wonder and gratitude.

Thank you for opening my eyes to flat earth. I’m going to start my channel someday soon.

Sargent immediately wrote her back.

Hey, call me sometime.

She didn’t call.

Sargent recalls their first contact like this: “I was doing *Strange World* on Truth Frequency Radio and one of my early episodes, my co-host and I did a two part series on our fifty top apocalypse movies—movies about the end of the world.” Episode #7: *End of the World in Film Part 2* aired on June 6. “Almost immediately after that second episode I get this e-mail from Patricia Steere. I didn’t know who Patricia Steere was. In fact, I immediately forgot about her after she wrote it because she only wrote me once, and she said: ‘Hey, I listened to your show. I really enjoyed it. I just wanted to let you know that I actually own 48 of those movies on your list.’ I thought that was unusual.”

Sargent mentioned to his co-host, Johnathan from Jersey, off air: “That’s really unusual. She *owns* 48 of those movies. I don’t even own all those movies. I *watch* them.”

But Patricia Steere didn’t say she *watched* them

“And she wasn’t kidding,” Sargent recalled. “She’s got this bizarre DVD collection of all these different genres, and many of them, she hasn’t even taken them out of the wrapper. And I’m still scratching my head to this day as to why.”

Another several months would pass again before either Sargent or Steere inevitably made contact with the other again. In the meantime, Sargent continued answering the steady stream, the ever quickening current of e-mails, coming in. “Towards the end of 2015 she was doing a show with a guy, Michael Lewis, his alias was *called Stars Are Souls*. There weren’t a lot of black people back then in flat earth, but he was one of them. He wore sunglasses sometimes. He wore a lot of white.” Patricia’s short hair reminded him of actress Claire Danes. “There were not a lot of women in flat earth, and I made a quick comment.”

Despite Sargent apparently not recollecting their brief online handshake, Patricia was determined to follow through with it. Patricia wrote back. “*Just so you know, I’m the girl who commented on the movie stuff months ago.*”

Their second introduction quickly snowballed into an ongoing and endless conversation. “We ended up e-mailing a little before calling. We talked on the phone for about two hours nonstop. We talked about flat earth and our lives. I sat in my car and we hit it off immediately. We were about the same age. We weren’t interested in gossip. We weren’t interested in scandal. We wanted to keep it moving forward, keep it positive.” Her

initial two hour phone conversation, while seated behind the wheel of her car, soon thereafter became a series of phone conversations. They called them *secret shows*.

“We talked a *lot* on Skype,” Sargent said. “We were talking non-stop. The community was growing so fast that it was kind of our internal gossip column, where we were just chatting and chatting for hours on end.” And then suddenly it occurred to the two of them, they were wasting precious production time. “She came up with the idea for *The Secret Show*. And that’s the thing. We actually had a show behind the scenes where it was just the two of us talking about all things flat earth.”

Patricia concurs, “So we started a show together based on those private conversations, based on our *secret shows*.”

And then one day it occurred to her.

Maybe Mark Sargent is the man for me.

Patricia had stopped dating most men because they simply couldn’t make the jump into the flat, disc-shaped reality which suddenly encompassed the entirety of her world. She wanted a flat earthist for a man—somebody who was awake. And Sargent was a flat earthist. Sargent was awake.

“So I went out to where he was and stayed a couple of days and then came back. And there just wasn’t chemistry there.” There was really nothing to it, she insists.

Sargent admitted, “It felt awkward. And what I mean by that is, we were more of a *Regis and Kathy Lee* sort of thing. We were a better team than we were a couple—a standard couple. I don’t know if that standard couple thing was ever going to happen. For one, I am *not* a looker. It would be like Bill Murray going out with a supermodel.”

From that moment forward, Patricia and Mark may have been synonymous with flat earth, but only as associates and business partners. “People always said we were flirting,” Patricia said. “We weren’t flirting. We just had that sort of relationship, you know, that easily ping-ponging off each other relationship, and he was always very complimentary about me being attractive on his videos, but he was never doing it in a sexual way. It was more of a respectful kindness that he offered me.”

Anyone who's ever driven off towards the setting sun, metaphorically speaking, turning their eyes from the unforeseeable future to gaze once more into the rearview mirror of their life, may have noticed the sticker which is sometimes placed there by the automobile's manufacturer to remind them, *Objects in mirror are closer than they appear.*

In other words, "Mark Sargent and I," Patricia assured me with a generous breath of warmth and hospitality over the phone, "*were* friends."

7

IT FINALLY OCCURRED TO MARK SARGENT, while he laid in bed with Patricia in his Whidbey Island home, that she didn't have any freckles—not a single one. *Wait, huh..?* He thought. So he grabbed a flashlight and a magnifying glass and committed himself to a more thorough search, half-mumbling: "Where the hell are your freckles?"

"There's one," Patricia said, "right above my naval."

"You only have one freckle on your entire body?"

Patricia nodded.

"That's not even physically possible," he said.

CHICAGO IS *not* A MIRAGE

1

PAGAN HOLIDAYS HAD ALREADY ESTRANGED Rick Hummer from his family years before he stood in his garage speaking to Rob Skiba over the phone. Hummer had dared to call them *pagan*. His family disagreed. They were sitting around watching football one Christmas and had advised him to stop making a point of it.

Just shut up and eat some pie, Rick.

Hummer took their advice. He stood up, helped himself to a slice of pie, told his mother *goodbye*, and cordially left, crumbs spilling from his mouth.

Long story short, he had already wrestled with that and the Federal Reserve, 9/11, and a list too archaic to recollect here, long before Rob Skiba called him up on the phone to work a mind-bending question into their conversation. Unbeknownst to either of them, a photographer by the name of Joshua Nowicki had already stood alongside the Indiana shoreline, pointing his camera westward across Lake Michigan towards Chicago, and snapped a photo.

Skiba asked, “Have you seen any of this *flat earth* stuff?”

Hummer laughed.

“That’s probably out there to discredit the truth community,” he said.

Eh, Skiba said.

“What do you mean, *eh*..? Are you saying there’s something to this?”

Well, uh, Skiba.

Hummer said, “Dude, I can see Chicago across Lake Michigan.”

And then Rob said, “What...? How far is that?”

“I don’t know. But I can tell you this. I got kicked out of class one time for saying I could see Chicago from across Lake Michigan.” *And guess what...? My principal was in the coast guard, and he saw it too.*

“There’s got to be a way to do a test,” Skiba said.

“And by test,” Hummer explained over the phone, “Rob wanted to *prove* we lived on a sphere.”

Oddly enough, that very night, WBND 57, a local affiliate of ABC in South Bend, Indiana, which was Hummer’s market, the weatherman showed Nowicki’s photo of the Chicago skyline from across Lake Michigan.

“What you’re looking at here is a *mirage*,” the weatherman said. “We would typically not be able to see this from the Lake Michigan shore. We talked about this last night. Conditions are right on the lake that we’re actually seeing a mirage of the Chicago skyline. Very interesting—now here’s what’s happening. Here’s a good example of a *superior* mirage. Joshua was on the Lake Michigan shore. He was looking towards the west, and Chicago’s *beyond the horizon*. He should not be able to see it. However, with the right conditions we have an inversion. We have cold air near the cold lake water and some relatively warmer air above it. This will bend the image of that skyline back towards the viewer. So typically we would not be able to see this—it would be viewable from much, much higher in the sky—up in space. But instead we’re able to see it on the Lake Michigan shore.”

Memories of Mr. Cooper and the sixth grade flooded Hummer’s memories as he stood there gazing at his television set.

That’s not a mirage, he said.

2

THE WAY *flat earth* SIMPLY ROLLED OFF Skiba’s tongue—*flat earth*—*flat earth*. The mere fact that he could say it, *flat earth*, and have the candor to look into those two adjoined words without lampooning them into a sailing off the world’s edge caricature, proved an immediate embarrassment to respected leaders of **Torah observance**.

“All of the sudden,” Skiba said, “I’m a bad reflection on them. They didn’t want to be guilty by association, so they did everything they could to get rid of me.”

This was 2015—April, specifically. Ask almost anyone who happened to stumble upon *flat earth* in 2015 and they'll likely adjoin another two synonymous words. Mark Sargent. Skiba can even remember the date. It was Monday, April the 13th when he discovered Sargent's *Flat Earth Clues*. In essence, Rob Skiba discovered Mark Sargent. Within two days Skiba invited him onto his own show and worse, he publicly confessed his willingness to look into it. Skiba found himself a subject of blushing ridicule at the United Torah Conference in San Diego, where he had been invited as a key note speaker. "So here I was at a panel discussion—with all fairly prominent well known people within the community," Skiba recalled. "And the *very first* question as the panel gets started, the moderator asks, 'So Rob, are you still sold on the fact that the earth is flat?'"

The room immediately erupted with the melody of misanthropists. Everybody, *including* those on the panel, laughed.

Skiba responded, "Well, I'll tell you this, I am not sold on this. I'm just beginning to look into it. But one thing that I am becoming sold on is everybody in the Bible believed in it, so we're going to have to deal with *that*."

"That very moment I felt like I might as well get off the stage right now, because it's clear nobody is going to listen to anything I say after this." The **Torah observant** crowd has been the worst to deal with, where the subject of *flat earth* is concerned. "*Way worse*, because going **Torah** makes you deal with friends and family as it is. People don't want to introduce or recommend their friends to a guy who believes the earth is flat."

If only they knew Skiba had seen *Star Wars* at the age of seven. No, not *Episode IV: A New Hope*. The year was 1977, and Skiba had seen *Star Wars*. He would see it another twelve times before the ball dropped in Time Square, ringing in 1978. If only they had let that sink in. He was born one month before the Apollo 11 moon landing, and still kept in his possession his father's photo album of the event, whereby he stood in front of their television snapping prints. Skiba inhabited *both* worlds. While in the Army, he not only reenacted the Death Star trench run, Skiba was a Trekkie.

And once, Apollo 15 astronaut Jim Irwin visited his church.

This was 2015. J.J. Abrams, the man who had only recently rebooted the *Star Trek* films had been given the keys to the kingdom and was currently shooting another *Star Wars* film. Skiba *loved* space. That very moment the poster that Irwin had signed, and which depicted him saluting Skiba from the moon, still remained hung in his apartment.

It read:

Robert Skiba,

Reach for your dreams.

Aim high.

Jim Irwin.

If only they *knew* Irwin would obstinately remain on his wall, that he would defiantly salute him daily from the moon, for another entire year. If only they *knew* how painful this truly was.

Then again, laughter is often a tool for relieving subconscious stress, and they had reason to fear. Skiba did too. If the writers of Scripture believed the earth to be flat, then perhaps God did too. Though we are dutifully reminded to let God be true and every man a liar, siding with a God who disagrees with *everyone* is a dangerous thing.

3

FEW OTHERS IN THE TORAH COMMUNITY STUMBLED upon the flat earth before Rob Skiba had. Chris Bailey was an exception. But unlike Skiba, the Cleveland Geocentrists paid it little mind—that is, until Skiba began producing evidence. Chris and Liz were immediately on board. While Skiba agonized, the Bailey’s simply pondered. “It wasn’t even a question in our mind,” Chris said. “Right away it made sense.”

Liz added, “All the pieces of the puzzle came together beautifully for us.” Mr. Nelson, she said, had already laid the groundwork.

INITIALLY, SHELLEY LEWIS FOLLOWED SKIBA because of his phenomenal research into giants and hybrids and Nimrod; basically, all things Nephilim—and because, as a Seventh Day Adventist, she too saw the importance of Sabbath observance. But now, from her pocket of the world, Shelley found herself laughing at him too. “He came up with this idea that the earth was flat. And I was like, *Are you serious right now?* Why would you ruin a cool thing that you are doing by taking all credibility away from yourself? I was appalled. I was laughing at it.” In short, “I was *not* a believer.”

Of course we went to the moon.

I went to space camp.

I met Alan B. Shepherd.

“My cognitive dissonance was *so strong* at that time,” Shelley confessed. Somebody needed to stop Skiba. “I went *hard* after him. I was like—I have to go after him. I was calling him out.” Skiba was ruining a perfectly good thing. And yet, the *more* Shelley Lewis attacked Rob Skiba’s *flat earth*, the more the very topic only seemed to reciprocate as a suggestion for YouTube viewing. *This is madness.*

And then, Shelley recalled, Skiba *got weird*.

“He posted this picture of the earth rising from the moon. And I thought: *I’m a photographer.* So his pulling that image in, taking the luminous values to show that was a completely altered image—*that* took my critical thinking to a whole new level.”

Did Alan B. Shepherd lie to me?

RICK HUMMER’S DAUGHTER WAS LONG OVERDUE for a bath, and if she didn’t take one soon, “Mommy would return home,” he recalled, “and Daddy would be in trouble.” The shoebox had been sitting out front on his porch for a week, neglected and nearly forgotten. When

entering his own house, “we always came in and out through the side door,” he said. Hummer had been asked to collect whatever remained of his personal possessions from his grandmother’s estate before the upcoming auction. He remembered leaving his box at her house, filled with cherished items from his childhood. While standing in her garage to retrieve that very box, he remembered being a young man in the 1990’s, preparing to move out to Los Angeles to strike his fortune, and sliding the shoebox exactly where it remained on the shelf. Still sealed shut with tape—exactly as he had left it some two decades prior. So he threw it into the back of his truck, whereupon he halfheartedly stored it on the front porch, rather than bring it inside.

Something also needed to be done with *that*. And Tabatha was returning home soon with explicit instructions that his daughter receive a bath. But Rob Skiba was an emotional wreck over the phone. So he paced back and forth in his house delaying the inevitable, listening to the groans of his friend.

“I’m getting attacked left and right,” Skiba said. “I’m pulling everything down. I’m done. I don’t care anymore. I’m done.”

Hummer’s pleas went something like this: “Rob, you can’t quit. You *cannot*. Listen, you know you’ll be hated for His name sake, and if you’re taking on what is quite possibly the strong delusion that God may have sent, a delusion *so real* that even the very elect can be deceived—if this is the frame work of what’s coming, then you’ve got to be able to stay in the game.” Hummer had hoped to act as his locker room coach. “You know this is coming! You know it could all go down in our lifetime.”

Just stop it. I’m done.

“Do you know how many people are looking at the Bible for the first time because of things you’ve said about this?”

I gotta go.

Skiba hung up.

It was right at that moment, Hummer explained, that he looked out the window at the shoe box sitting on his front porch. He remembered everything that was in there, exactly as he had packed it some two decades earlier. His daughter desperately needed a bath before *Mommy* returned home, and the thought occurred to him, she could play with the GI Joe scuba diver in the box.

So he went outside to unseal it.

6

IN A YOUTUBE VIDEO TITLED “1984, *Flat Earth, God Answers*,” Rick Hummer can be seen on his front porch only moments after opening up the time capsule from his grandmother’s garage. Clearly, a GI Joe scuba diver is no longer his item of interest here. A standard paper folder is. It is of a pinkish hue, and reads, “The Ricker Hummer, S.S. 1990,” with a doodle of a Nike shoe, apparently farting. S.S. is undoubtedly an acronym for Social Studies, with 1990 being the anticipated year of his high school graduation. Though it is certainly possible 1990 was written subsequently considering the fact that Nike Air wasn’t introduced until 1987. *The Ricker Hummer* is the sole contribution of a girl named Tricia, who has neatly scribbled the words, Hummer assures me, during group study. A child of the Reagan administration will likely understand the reference to Ricky Schroder’s character in *Silver Spoons*. Perhaps Tricia had a thing for Rick Hummer, or maybe she had a crush on Ricky Schroder and wanted to let *the Ricker* know about it, or worse, maybe it was indeed 1987, the very year *Silver Spoons* was canceled, and she was mourning that terrible fact—who knows? But either way, it was the 1980’s, and Hummer had far more to worry about than the *shape* of the earth.

“When I opened up the box there was a folder sitting in there on top,” he recalled over the phone. “I didn’t pack this thing in the box. I put action figures in the box. I put some *Hot Wheels* in the box. And some melted army guys—and here I am looking at the folder, and I had told Rob and Mark Sargent, both of those guys and my wife, I just wanted to see what *they used against me* again.” Rick Hummer wanted to see the ball propaganda—the indoctrination from his youth. Just like the Huey Lewis and the News song—Hummer desperately wanted to go *back in time*. Don’t we all? “I just wanted to hold it,” a *horse blinder* from his past. “And so here I was on my front porch holding it for the first time after one of my best buds hangs up on me, because he’s that frustrated with people accusing him of being a fool.”

He immediately thought to record it—but not necessarily for the world. Hummer only had his friend in mind.

And for this reason, it is the paperwork inside his social studies folder which gingerbreads the videos interest, a school assignment which looked and even felt, Hummer recalled, as if it had just come out of his locker.

The very first sheet of paper, once opening its flap, is dated Wednesday, February 1, 1984. It is titled: “Maps and Globes are Tools of Geography,” and there is one specific question towards the bottom of that page which asks, “What were the early ideas about the shape of the earth?”

Hummer enthusiastically reads his sixth-grade answer for the camera.

“The earth was...” he begins to say.

It is precisely while pronouncing *flat*, and not a second to the left or right of it, when lightning strikes. Lightning which struck *so close*, Hummer recalled over the phone, “I could literally smell it.”

His daughter can be heard pronouncing *lightning* as if it were a cautionary warning but no great thing (after all, this is the Midwest), while Hummer turns the camera back on his own self, visually stunned, perhaps even spooked. It is evident, by the pronunciation of his eyes alone, that the script has taken an unexpected turn. His voice seems shaken, but he bolsters it, as if to hide that fact, while reinforcing the *theme* of his video: “Like I said, you can’t write this stuff. You follow me?”

7

HUMMER’S VIDEO DID LITTLE to revise Skiba’s mind. By August of that year, nearly all of Rob Skiba’s financial support had dried up. His father-in-law was on hospice and dying in his living room. Entire ministries had banned him from even attending their conferences, much less speaking at them. If only lightning could strike *twice*. The derisive hilarity born that day at the United Torah Conference had mushroomed into such malignant proportions—even people whom he once called *friend* had joined in with the public flogging—that Skiba closed his investigative website, *Testing the Globe*, for good.

Globe earth, flat earth—Screw this, he said.

Anyone who happened to type testingtheglobe.com into their search engine on Sunday, August 16, 2015, will be able to testify to the fact that they were treated to a Phil Collins song on each and every page. *Globe earth, flat earth*, Collins apparently felt the same way.

I Don't Care Anymore.

8

IT TOOK AN ATHEIST, OR RATHER, a *former* atheist, for Skiba to take a sledgehammer to the musical wall that was an eighties Phil Collins song. Skiba's research, he said, had radically changed his life. More specifically, he KNEW there was a Creator.

In other words, *how dare you, Rob Skiba.*

So on Thursday, August 20, only four days later, it was time for Rob Skiba to care again.

FLAT EARTH IS THE EASY PART

1

LEAVE IT TO AN ATHEIST to introduce Robbie Davidson to the *Biblical* flat earth. The video in question was dated to sometime in 2007. *And this atheist*, Davidson recalls, “put together this mockery of Genesis, showing the firmament dividing the waters from the water, recreating what the literal interpretation of Genesis is.”

“Well, this is rich,” Davidson spoke mostly to himself in a dark room. “Some atheist thinks the Bible says the earth is flat. What kind of *literal* interpretation is that?” But then it just as suddenly occurred to him. *Wait a minute, that’s what the Bible says.*

Davidson got to thinking about it.

He then typed *flat earth* into his search engine and stumbled upon Mark Sargent. “And when I watched *Flat Earth Clues*—that was it. And when I got into they were hiding God, I was blown away.” From there he stumbled upon Dave Murphy, next Eric Dubay’s *200 Proofs*. He devoted himself to *flat earth* engine searches for two entire weeks before succumbing to the greatest obstacle of all. The woman who alleged on their very first date that we’d never landed on the moon would *never* go for this. Robbie Davidson had dug too deep, and now he was done for.

How do you tell your wife that the Bible says the earth is flat?

“My wife, when I brought it up to her, she says to me, *literally* in like two seconds:

‘If the Bible says it, *then* it’s true.’”

“And I’m like: ‘No, no sweetie, you don’t understand. I just said I *think* the Bible teaches that the earth is flat.’”

Big difference—

Mrs. Davidson once more retorted, “If the Bible says it, *then* it’s true.”

2

“EXCUSE MY IGNORANCE,” I interrupted David Weiss on the phone. “But Paige is your wife, correct?”

Weiss paused.

“Paige is my girlfriend-partner...”

Weiss hesitated again, carefully considering his words.

“We’re not married in the eyes of the unlawful government. But we’ve been together a very long time, twelve years...” *Pause.* “So essentially she’s my wife.”

“So, is she your girlfriend or your wife?”

“She’s my wife,” Weiss spoke with confidence.

“How has she dealt with your pursuit of digging up conspiracies?”

“With the *RabbitHole* podcast, she was fascinated with it, and we’d talk about all the conspiracy theories. And she gets it. But she’s not a deep diver, or wasn’t at the time. With each topic we’d have short discussions about them, and she would trust my research.”

And then the flat earth *rolled* around.

“She had questions,” Weiss assured me. They’re lonely questions to ask. “She’s been asking questions every day since.” But she hung in there. And Weiss was patient while she asked them. “And now she’s showing me stuff that I’ve never seen.”

Weiss attributes his and Paige’s ability to survive the ridicule on a very simple premise. “You have to balance your life out with work,” adding: “In our spare time, when we’re not doing work related stuff, when we’re relaxing, we have conversations about what’s going on in the world. We go out to the local pub or something, and the people around us, the conversations that are going on there are *weather, sports, politics, fear* of being nuked by the other countries, and *space nonsense*. That’s the conversation that people have! They’re zombies! So it’s actually become difficult to be around people that are sleeping, because the conversation is inane.”

“We do have friends that are half-awake. They get it. They see the chemtrails in the sky. They know about 9/11. And they know about the problems with the globe and the moon missions. And that’s good enough for us—people that are waking up to that.”

I think Weiss might agree with me when I say, convincing someone that the earth is flat is the *easy* part. Convincing them that they've been indoctrinated—those are fighting words. As the mockery ensues, all we can do is watch as they attempt to rid themselves of something embarrassing *within*. The manner of their rejection isn't about us. It's about them. Point is—most would rather live the lie. Perhaps William Shakespeare said it best in *The Merchant of Venice* when he wrote: "He will fence with his own shadow."

"I was born Jewish. I don't follow any religion. I kind of rejected religion early on in life." Unlike 9/11 or the moon missions, the flat earth caused Weiss to question his own conclusions. "Before flat earth I was science, astronomy, evolution—no God. We're a random speck in the universe." Weiss was however what you might say *spiritual*. "There was energy between humans, that whole thing, but that's who I was—no God. The whole heliocentric lie had me. I loved *Star Wars*—loved all the space movies, big fan of science fiction. I believed that they're hiding things on the moon, that there could be people on the back of the moon. I believed all of the nonsense, but there was no God."

"I'd be listening to a podcast or a radio show or somebody talking about 9/11, the Boston bombing, or one of the other events, and I'd think, this is great information! And then they'd *thank* Jesus or God or something and then I'd tune them out and everything they'd just said, because they're *too stupid* to know. They believe there's a God. Therefore I can't really trust their judgement on anything else."

Weiss shrugged, "That was me."

And yet we've all heard it said more numerous times than we care to count. Those who are presented with a decision, spinning, wobbling globe hurdling through a vacuum of space or a stationary enclosed plane, often justify their own complacency in the pollution by asking:

"Yeah but—but what does it really matter—round or flat?"

THE EARTH IS FLAT!

IT'S FLAT! IT'S FLAT! IT'S FLAT!

Flat, "which means it's intelligently designed. There was no big bang, which means evolution is a lie, which means we're in an intelligently designed place."

During those two critical weeks in which Weiss attempted to *disprove* the flat earth by seeking a single planetary proof, “I came out the other end thinking, ‘*O my God, the earth is flat!*’

The key word here is *God*.

“And I was like, ‘*Wow*, there is a Creator,’ for lack of a better word. We put the word *God* on it and religion starts coming in. But I say there’s a Creator who created this place for us. We are the *center* of creation. And that changed my entire life. I remember who I was *before* realizing there was a Creator, and so I hold myself publicly in a space where I say: ‘Proof shows, the evidence shows, *the earth is flat*. It’s *intelligently designed*. There is a creator,’ and I let everyone else take it from there.”

Then again, convincing someone that the earth is flat is the *easy* part. “I have a teacher, my fifth and sixth grade teacher whom I’m still in contact with. She sees my Facebook posts and always comments with the pre-programmed responses.” Weiss then met her for lunch one day. “We hadn’t seen each other in years. And I kept telling her about the flat earth and other things, and she was asking intelligent questions, and I would give her an answer that would completely negate her question. And then she would go to the next one and the next one and the next one.”

Until finally she said: “You know, at my age I choose to believe what I believe, and *this* is too much for me.”

Weiss paused again.

“And she went right back into the Matrix.”

It’s flat, Mr. Cooper. It’s flat!

“She was such a big influence in my life,” he continued, “but she doesn’t want to rock the apple cart. She’s comfortable. She’s retired. She’s traveling. She’s enjoying her life. And when you wake up to this stuff, it’s like having to deal with the whole death process. You get depressed. You get angry. You want revenge. And then you accept it and become empowered. But people are afraid to go through that process. The famous quote is, *it’s easier to fool someone than convince them they’ve been fooled*, and when you realize that you’re entire life is a lie, and you’re living it from a point of view that is completely de-powering you; that it’s stripping away your sense of meaning and empowerment; that’s a tough pill to swallow. If I told you, *hey you were wrong about this one little thing*, you change it, and it doesn’t really affect your life. But if you find out the entire foundation of

your life, from *what* you're standing on and *where* you are and *who* you are and *why* you're here is a complete and total lie, it's more than most people can handle."

3

WHILE ROB SKIBA WAS PER CHANCE PLAYING Phil Collins on repeat with his headphones on, Bob Knodel and Jeran Campanella collectively held other ambitions to *test the globe*. In the spring Knodel had set out to build "what I've always called a *preponderance of evidence*. I started looking at some of the different content producers," and by April of that year, only two months after first hearing about the flat earth, "I found Jeran from *Jeranism*. I really liked the way he did his videos and I also really liked him because he has the same name as my own son, Jaren, even though they're spelled different."

When Knodel discovered him, Campanella was looking for curvature. *That* and donations, so that he could perform a laser test on Monterey Bay. Knodel not only offered to contribute, he wanted to *buy* Campanella a laser—except he didn't stop there. "I always get a little carried away, and rather than buying a laser pointer I bought him a big 3 dot laser canon."

They started conversing on the phone, and "we found that every time we talked on the phone, we couldn't hang up for any time less than three hours." Much like Patricia Steere and Mark Sargent's *secret hangouts*, or Weiss and Liedtke on Skype, their conversations were an untapped vein—an inaudible tapestry of lush colors, almost a time capsule, like some ancient knowledge hidden from the world, that seemed to begin and end only with them.

It was on one such group chat in which Jeran said, "Hey Bob, there are a lot of people that have questions about flat earth, and since you're a pilot and an engineer, and obviously a flat earther and know all this stuff, would you mind coming on and answering some questions?"

Knodel and Campanella teamed up for their first show on July 25, 2015. According to Knodel, a surprising number of people showed up to their first hangout, fueled with questions. "It went so well that we kept getting e-mails and requests to do it again and again and again." There was

however one brief, albeit minor, *hiccup*. “We first started doing the show on Jeran’s channel, and Jeran had gotten a strike for something. I don’t remember what it was. And he couldn’t broadcast for a while. So we said, *let’s just make another channel.*”

But that channel would need a name.

“I came up with the name *Ballbusters*,” Knodel said.

Jeran’s title won.

In October of 2015, *Globebusters* was born.

4

“THE BIG SLOGAN GOING AROUND was: *celebrate pride*,” Robbie Davidson said. “I was getting sick and tired of it, because on social media everything was rainbows and *celebrate pride*.” Quite contrarily, “there was always a part of me that was like, I’d like to go on and speak to people, and I was always looking at YouTubers, or just Truthers in general, looking up to certain individuals, and saying: ‘One day I’d like to do something like that.’”

“This was the thing that propelled me. I always had a feeling that—because I was always outspoken, I would be at dinner parties and I’d get animated talking about a lot of different stuff. I was very conspiratorial, and so I’d talk about a lot of different events, and people would find me fascinating, if anything, even if they weren’t on the same page. They’d be like, you know your stuff, *or* it sounds to me like there might be something more than meets the eye going on.”

Before the flat earth, “when all I *didn’t* believe in was the moon landing,” his dinner party explanations for why things happened as they did rarely wandered far beyond the physical arena. For example, beforehand, Robbie Davidson would have said the moon landing simply came down to Cold War espionage. Russia needed *convincing* that we were superior. Apollo 11 simply “stopped the Cold War, so it was a power struggle. I looked at the physical elements of it, and it didn’t make sense. I never could reconcile that in my mind. But it’s what I used whenever bringing up the moon landing.” In other words, the Apollo missions had never been about *hiding God*. “The spiritual component was

understanding, ‘Wait a minute, what if Satan has been trying to hide the true Creator from creation this entire time, and masquerading inside a belief, a religion, an agenda, a system set up to attack the very foundation of the Word of God—the Bible?’”

Davidson had already long settled in his mind that Darwinian evolution was a lie which had been raging on for well over a century. But what if the lie goes even *deeper* than that? “I took the Bible literally when it came to creation, but not all of it; not all of creation—only things that I could understand. So when I finally understood the firmament, everything came together. All the dots connected. Everything led back to an ethereal force keeping people away from the truth of [YHWH]. It was the most astounding moment of my life, even though I’ve had some pretty crazy things, like the Jesus tape experience; reading the entire New Testament in Keegan’s, where I could not stop reading it, because the words were jumping off the page; I’ve had a few things happen like this in my life, but I’ll tell you, when all of a sudden the realization that everything I believed to be true as far as the solar system and the universe, the sun, moon, and stars, even the earth I stand on, was a lie, *that* was profound.”

“My biggest thing when I came to flat earth; I was more blown away, not that the earth was flat, but the fact that space doesn’t exist, and we’re in a dome. That’s the part that really caught me off guard the most, looking up at the sky and going, ‘*Wow*, we’re in a dome.’”

And so in the summer of 2015, without ever making mention that the earth was flat, Davidson posted his first videos on YouTube. He spoke about *stars*. “It wasn’t really testing the waters. It was almost a way to introduce it”—the flat earth. “I was elaborating on the fact that mainstream science, saying that we come from apes and all that; they were also going back further than that. So evolution, even though I knew evolution was a lie for years and years, you go back further and they believe we all came from stars. We’re nothing more than star dust. So I was showing the dignity of humans, and there is *none* in the scientific narrative. So I didn’t get into flat earth in the first video, but by the second one I’m already into it. It was almost like a testing thing. I just sat there and hit record and spoke. So it’s just me speaking, and I put some visuals up, but I’m sitting in my garage of all things, and I didn’t even know what the heck I’m doing. I was just speaking. I think it’s in the hundreds of

thousands of views, it just resonated with a lot of people, but I was already on the trajectory going forward that I was going to get bolder.”

It wasn't the moon landing, vaccines, or 9/11, not even “getting into theology or doctrine or whatever,” that ultimately motivated Davidson to start a channel. “Flat earth was a *huge* opportunity for ministry. That's when I finally put my name out there to something that I would be ridiculed, laughed at, attacked, persecuted, and it didn't matter. I was going to stand on the literal interpretation of the Bible. I was going to take the entire Bible literal. For me and everyone, it contains the truth. I tell people I didn't choose this. I was chosen for it 110 percent,” So much so that a couple of years later Davidson resigned from his job to focus on building the flat earth community full time.

The flat earth, he said, “was just the moment where God was like:

‘Robbie, now it's time.’”

5

THE FIRST THING PEOPLE TYPICALLY ASK, once we're alone, and after learning to their uttermost horror that I advocate a flat, motionless, and enclosed cosmology, first and foremost *through* a literal interpretation of God's unbroken Testimony concerning Himself—is (with the gift of compassion filling their tone): “So how is your wife dealing with—you know, this *new direction* in life?”

It likely comes to their total disbelief, matched with wide un-batting eyes, seeing as how they're clearly dealing with a delusional state of mind, when I enlighten them to the seemingly impossible truth.

My better-half believed in the flat earth *before* I did.

One of Sarah's greatest spiritual attributes is the gift of faith. I find that so pleasant and appealing in her—particularly as she longs for the Messiah's return, talking eagerly and in regular intervals as one who will partake in that blessed hope, and looks daily to the skies, and seasonally to the holy days, as a reminder. We want nothing more of this world or any other unless our Savior is present. When I first introduced Hebrew Cosmology, a concept I'd only recently heard and read about, and more importantly *understood*, earlier in the day, her eyes immediately sparked to

life, because her unwavering faith in the Word of God registered and confirmed for me that every bit of this was true.

Still, I held both hands up, and was like, “*Whoa*, slow down, what about pictures of *outer space*? What about *satellites*?”

But it was no use. She’d already looked to the horizon and knew the Testimony of [YHWH] would back her up. There was no curve, nor motion in or above our atmosphere to be detected. It took me four sleepless nights of intense and continual round-the-clock research to come to what she already knew to be right in her heart over a spirited dinner conversation. If there is a pureness of heart, then I’ve found it.

She’s my confidant and the butterfly net which seems to capture my richest words whenever I sit down to write about the dark times we live in. I offer my greatest reflections to her each night to see if they pass the test. When I delve into my daily research on one particular matter or another; if I laugh loud enough, usually at whatever ridiculous propaganda is being carted out one week from the next, she rushes in to discover it with me. I hear almost weekly reports now about the many spouses out there who are married to *sleepers*, those who refuse to believe any narrative but that which is sadly spoon-fed to them on the tube. I read so many first-hand testimonies from the lonely souls they’re married to, who must gather the strength each morning to take this intellectual, no—*spiritual* journey alone. These aren’t the days we’ve asked to live in, but [YHWH], YAHUAH, THE MOST-HIGH ELOHIM, has assigned us to them, and there is no greater purpose than to accept His task with a willing heart, no matter what becomes of us. If this seems over-dramatic to you, then might I suggest a packet of smelling salts place directly under your nose.

That’s what sleepers simply don’t seem to comprehend—the days in which we live in, particularly the full extent of them. An often regurgitated fear, I suppose, is that many loved ones will not wake up, if they *ever* do, until FEMA pastors show up at our doorsteps with a truck-load of blue helmets, asking that we kindly wave and kiss and say our loving goodbyes, because we’re needed *elsewhere*—or worse, on that final day, when the Messiah returns in the clouds. Perhaps the harsh reality is that not even Yeshua’s return will wake them. To be woken up by the Spirit to the truth of His Word with midnight oil—in this darkest hour of apostasy, and to have a co-conspirator who wakes up *with* (or in my case, often moments *before*), I couldn’t find a better match from God.

We were lying in bed together one night, as husbands and wives do, and I asked her, had she known all those years ago that I'd later become a *deranged* flat earthist, as sleeping society would have it, and traveling the America's in a van, would she go through with it—marriage, that is.

Without taking a second breath she found my hand in the darkness and said, “In a heartbeat.”

I don't know how long we have before the spiritual curtain is torn. Perhaps I will die an old man in my bed and, as a natural order of events; my children will carry on in my stead. But either way, when it happens, I hope to say I've lived my life to its fullest.

6

THERE WAS A SAYING IN the flat earth Movement's earliest months: “Once a flat earther, *always* a flat earther.” Patricia Steere however remembers the episode in which British YouTuber *TigerDan925* appeared particularly well. “It was interview number thirteen,” she said. “And that's something I would remember because thirteen is an unlucky number. And he's one of the first persons that went *against* flat earth after being a flat earther.”

Some of TigerDan's aboriginal videos will testify to his deep affection for a defense of the Christian faith. From such locations as the obelisk at Oliver's Mount in Scarborough, or Scarborough Beach along the eastern coast of England, with Scarborough Castle in the background (all of which was likely within a close driving proximity of his own home), TigerDan's own tutorials hoped to employ apologetics as an argument against such beliefs as Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses. In the months leading up to his flat earth *conversion*, further arguments were put forward, not only debunking the blood red moon tetrad prophecies of 2014 and 2015, popularized by John Hagee and Mark Biltz, but the pre-tribulation rapture position as a whole. On August 9, 2015, TigerDan entered the Movement bright eyed and bushy-tailed with a five-part series, *25 flat earth claims that rocked my worldview. 75 Bible verses prove a flat earth* followed. TigerDan's list of subscribers exploded. Big name commenters like YouTuber *the Truth is stranger than fiction* give credence to his popularity.

Christian flat earthists, it seemed, had a champion for their cause. And TigerDan knew it.

“How could we miss it?” He asked Patricia Steere on *Hot Potatoes*. “How could we possibly have missed the fact that the earth is flat? But we did. We got blinded. The Bible talks a lot about blinding people. Maybe—maybe we are blinded to things that are so obvious to us. I don’t know. It’s impossible to know.”

For TigerDan, the flat earth awakening fit in *perfectly* with Bible prophecy. After saying so much on episode 13 of *Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes*, even wearing a black ball-cap which simply read BIBLE PROPHECY to assert that point, Patricia Steere then confessed that she’d only recently purchased a King James Bible after interviewing Dave Murphey on her show.

“You’re on the right path,” TigerDan said.

Still, for anyone paying attention, his earliest videos displayed glaring fractures in his own sense of identity. The flat earth revelation may have affirmed Scripture in unforeseen and astonishing ways, but his assessment of the community itself was not entirely Biblical. *This* was a problem. The role being thrust upon him, or perhaps more-so, the very expectations which he had pronounced upon himself tugged at his heartstrings and pawed at his consciousness. TigerDan was uncomfortable—very much so. Here was a man animated by the revelation laid before him and yet *clearly* agitated by the very personalities who introduced such Biblical concepts into the conspiracy crowd and propelled them forwards. TigerDan struggled finding compatibility, at the risk of blending his Christian convictions, with the like of Mark Sargent, Jeran Campanella, and Eric Dubay. “Most of the people pushing a flat earth are either atheistic or at best agnostic,” he said, adding: “What a delicious irony, given the public perception that all flat earthers are Bible thumpers from the 1700’s.”

Particular contempt was held towards Math Powerland. “Math Boylan from the NASA Channel on YouTube, possibly a whistleblower, the first to do a perception test on the ball earth, like Eric Dubay, he’s produced some great insights, but he also paints pictures of nude women and posts pornographic videos to his NASA channel on YouTube. Obviously not a believer in Jesus Christ, but the integrity and veracity of some of his flat earth observations does hold up to scrutiny. Having said

that, I just don't trust a guy who paints 666 on the ground and then sits in the middle of it and then posts creepy videos."

Regardless of his initial discomfort, TigerDan had undoubtedly taken the polar bear plunge because, by December 23, he began releasing another several part series in which he hoped to solve a centuries-old issue, making a flat earth map, the Azimuthal equidistant projection, perfectly to scale. "This map will be *exact* and precise," he seemed to promise, only so much as the complete contradictory may indeed happen by immediately adding, "Will the finished product prove a flat earth? Will it disprove a flat earth? Is it even possible? Will I encounter problems that make the flat earth impossible?"

Within days of studying the AE map, TigerDan *snapped*.

TigerDan's self-imposed skirmish with his soul, and ultimate exile from the community which he endorsed, was ill-timed. In Paris, the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference was well underway, the 21st yearly session of the COP to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC for short. While TigerDan entered his own version of hell by prodding and poking at the AE map, the conference negotiated the Paris Agreement, a *global* accord on the reduction of climate change, the text of which represented a consensus of the representatives of the 196 parties attending it. On the 22nd of April, 2016, Earth Day, 174 countries signed the agreement in New York in order that it may be adopted within each of their own legal frameworks.

What this essentially means is, climate chaos could now be dutifully enforced through the halls of Scientism, and most importantly of all, taxed to fill the pockets of glutens while punishing citizens of the world for crimes they did not commit in the process.

An important component of any enclosed cosmology, which TigerDan *did* for a time adhere to, if only briefly, is understanding that a terrarium is self-sufficient for the needs of its ecosystem. That is my contention, anyhow. Such conclusions defy everything about the Paris Agreement. I think about David Latimer of Cranleigh, England, somewhere just north of 80 years-old at the moment of this writing, and last he recalls watering his favorite house plant, Richard Nixon was the sitting US President. It's *still* thriving. Since that time—for the record, 1972—Latimer's hardy spiderworts plant has grown to comfortably fill the 10-gallon bottle he first seeded on Easter Sunday, 1960, by surviving

entirely on recycled air, nutrients, and water, with an added dosage of sunlight through the nearest window some 6-feet away—in short, *photosynthesis*. What we know of an enclosed garden system, as David Latimer’s experiment and countless others will most certainly attest to, is that such an eco-system is self-sustaining.

More importantly to this discussion, they and Mr. Latimer’s 10-gallon house-plant, as well as the self-enclosed terrarium the Bible describes us as living in, are in no need of government assistance or the taxpayer money demanded—all with the backing threat of a prison sentence, if we do not agree to the thievery—to line the pockets of its lawmakers with, all for their very existence and well-being. This will likely imply one thing for global warming, or *climate change*, or *climate chaos*, whatever the interchangeable title is today—it’s as I’ve already suggested and what so many of us know to be true. Much like the formation of NASA nearly sixty years earlier, the Paris Agreement is a complete hoax and a scam, and will likely go down as one of the biggest and fraudulent money making scams in the present age of man.

Climate chaos apologists will likely look at the collected data presented to them and call anyone who should oppose the lab coats, on the basis of finding conflicting data, a “Science denier.” The so-called denier of Scientism rejects it on the basis that he conducts his own research or analyzes all the data afforded to him, even the purposefully overlooked data, such as the healthy build-up of Arctic sea ice and the “cooked-book” data from Global Warnings own generals, where-as warming trends cannot be proven without it, and has the common sense to recognize a lie for what it is. An apologist however will eagerly accept an invite to the multi-million dollar beachfront property of climate spokesman Al Gore, should the handshake be extended, while the so-called denier will try to keep the amusement contained within him at the very prospect that Gore only recently purchased multi-million dollar beachfront property when, according to his flawless research, should have been buried underwater over a decade ago.

Undoubtedly, TigerDan is intimately familiar with the fact that the Bible refers to God’s creation as “in the Earth” at least 60 times, by my count, if not more.

Regardless, as 2016 dawned upon the flat earth Movement, politicians in Paris secured *globalism*, rather ironically, on false pretenses, while TigerDan, with little to no warning, switched back to a belief in the

very globe which the powers of darkness sought to rule over, and invited everyone to watch, rather brutally, by releasing a startling number of hit pieces aimed against the map.

“You can see the history on my channel,” he spoke now with a calm and collective assurance; “I posted a lot of videos and YouTube videos believing that it was true, and it turns out it’s *not* true. . . . The counter-arguments just *destroy* this idea of a flat, level horizon, and there’s a good number of people that are coming out now and just debunking all of these reasons for the flat earth. I’ve probably shown, I don’t know, less than ten debunks in these videos that I’m posting at the moment, but I’ve seen all 200 reasons that Eric Dubay posted, every single flat earth reason has now been satisfactorily debunked in my mind. So you gotta wake up. You gotta wake up fast. You’ve got to realize who the players are who are playing you for fools. They’re paid agents. They just want to twist information and stitch you up and laugh at you behind your back. That’s what’s going on.”

As part of a promised 10 part debunking series, TigerDan then promised to disprove his own 75 Bible verses, which he had made a video on earlier, claiming that Scripture was no longer a flat earth book.

He never did.

After only five episodes, TigerDan went dark.

A year later David Weiss put a video up about TigerDan, hoping to find any information on his whereabouts. Weiss said, “I took a clip from Patricia’s interview with him where he said, and this is a quote, ‘If you ever hear me saying that the earth is a ball, just know that I’m being tortured to say that. “That’s not an exact quote, but it’s pretty close.”

Weiss never received a response.

“Nobody knows—nobody’s ever seen him, nobody’s ever heard from him, and you know, the ballers will say that there’s somebody that woke up and went back to the ball. Other people say that he’s a sellout. He *wasn’t*. I didn’t get that impression from him. Something happened to TigerDan where he was either threatened to shut up, mind controlled, or who knows, but that’s all we know. We don’t know. We don’t know what happened to him.”

Patricia accredits his sudden retreat to emotional problems. “There’s so many people with emotional problems in flat earth.” And they have a

way of trying to hold the community hostage to their psychological *needs*. “I’m sure there’s so many people with emotional problems in the greater world, but we don’t get to see *what* our neighbor feels like, *how* they think. There’s a lot of normal people, but there’s a lot of people with emotional problems.” In TigerDan’s case, he came, he trolled, and then, after leaving a lasting imprint, he left.

Why TigerDan’s flat earth videos remain available, as of this writing, if he did indeed recant from the pitfalls and wayward fables available to every fallible mind, is anyone’s best guess.

WALL OF SHAME

1

HE WAS HALF SPANISH AND ENGLISH by way of his mother and father, and the fact that he lived in Stockport, England, while Patricia had adopted Houston, was perhaps only a *biccup*, a minor complication at best, because Antonio Subirats was a flat earthist. Nothing great stood out about their initial interview on *Hot Potatoes*, she recalled, “but I liked him. We had chemistry.” Despite the incoming flux of occupants settling into the flat earth, the natural science of attraction “hadn’t happened before.”

“Before and after an interview, people and I correspond.” But when it came to Antonio Subirats, he and Patricia kept right on corresponding. “We started talking on Skype—on camera. We had a little routine where we talked to each other, when I was done with the day, though he was in England. And we got to know more about each other, and our backgrounds, things like our favorite music and favorite food, to our deeper feelings about life and relationships and love. And we ended up having a relationship online, although it was never a *sexual* relationship.”

By *sexual* Patricia was referring to “that sexting stuff.” Clearly, her father’s advice was not forgotten. *Whatever* you do, *when* you do it, if it was on the front page of the newspaper, be certain that you’d be fine with it. “I’d never do anything sexual on camera—never, never. It’s not me. And besides, he never asked me to do anything like that.”

Regardless, their desire for each other grew. And as a small measure of relief, a solution soon presented itself—a temporary one, at least. A mutual friend of theirs, Nathan Oakley, another Englander and flat earthist, announced he was planning a meet-up in Oxford. “Now, when it comes to meet-ups,” Patricia was quick to remind me. “I had created the very *first* flat earth meet up *ever*.” It was Friday, April 22, 2016, she recalled—Earth Day. Twenty-five open invites went out. Twenty-five flat earthists showed. “It was a multi-course vegan meal, in a very nice restaurant in a nice part of town, and I paid for everything.” The idea fell directly in line with hers and Mark Sargent’s *Secret Show* thinking. No gossip. No scandal. Let’s get to know the face behind the research. Let’s make flat earth *personable*.

Then again, when Patricia implied she wanted to make the flat earth community more *personable*, Sargent spun that in a completely new direction entirely. Soon after Patricia's first flat earth meet-up in Houston, Sargent followed suite by hosting a meet-up of his own in Seattle. In his book, *Flat Earth Clues: End of the World*, Sargent wrote, "During the first part of 2016 and long before the conferences, we were just starting to think about meetups. The first meetup of course was organized by Patricia Steere in Houston, Texas. The second one was in Seattle, Washington, by yours truly."

To this he adds, "*Well*, I had help."

"The inner circle groups were smaller then, and one of my favorites was a Canadian woman who goes by the YouTube channel Orphan Red, a slight take off of the BBC show *Orphan Black*. Orphan and I spoke often." Sargent was allured by their stimulating conversations, particularly the *suggestions* and the whimsical strokes of color they provoked. "She is attractive, highly intelligent, and a natural flirt. She liked scheming as much as I did, and somewhere in the middle of one of these '*what if*' conversations, we decided that it might be fun to add some dirt to my clean image, so we concocted a fake sex tape idea."

Though clearly not an elaborate plan, the mere suggestion that they concoct a fictitious sex tape together seems almost to initiate the very blueprint, from the ground floor up, of Sargent's very first meet-up. As part of their scheme, he further explained, "We would organize a restaurant meetup in Seattle. I did not want to drink and drive, so I got a hotel room across the street. Orphan and I would shoot some innuendo scenes at the hotel, implying naughty behavior, then leak it anonymously to a known YouTube globalist troll, and from there it would spread," quickly adding, "Simple, right?"

They did not plan on a Canadian woman named Melody from Victoria to show. From there, their sex tape took a sudden and unexpected detour. "Melody had taken a last minute seaplane down from Victoria to Seattle, and was waiting for us when we arrived." Mel made an immediate impression. "A full six feet tall, blond, pretty, and very focused. As the FE members arrived, she made her intentions known. She wanted to know me better, and was willing to do anything to accomplish this, including using Orphan."

Apparently, Melody quickly realized; if she wanted Mark Sargent for herself, then she'd have to utilize Orphan for those advantages, even if it meant committing herself to actions well *beyond* film. "As the evening progressed, Melody proceeded to flirt with both Orphan and me, to the point where Orphan whispered after dinner that she wanted to take Mel back to the room. Somewhere during the dessert, Mel and Orphan disappeared from the event." In doing so, ultimately, the girl from Victoria successfully championed the man whom she'd come for. She wrestled Mark Sargent away from Orphan's arms.

In the following days to come, Sargent slipped Patricia a copy of the tape. Patricia was not pleased. "Mark wore flip flops and had his shirt off and was being massaged by Melody who was wearing Orphan Red's *princess dress* while she wore the other girls clothes and filmed the event, *giggling*. He did it because it stoked his ego—two girls begging for his attention, I guess. I just saw it as gross. It wasn't dignified. It had nothing to do with flat earth. It was low brow entertainment."

You can't put this out there, she told Sargent. "It's inappropriate. What good can this possibly do for the community?"

According to Patricia, Sargent personally assured her that the tape would not be released. "Then he put it on YouTube. The sex tape wasn't *leaked*. He put it on his channel on purpose. We stopped being friends after that."

And as expected—in fact, as *planned*, the community went ape-crazy, complete with banana peels, over the fabricated contents of their hotel room escapade. With only two meet-ups to be accounted for, the flat earth community was already rusting on its hinges. Patricia immediately set out to buffer the damage of Sargent's first event, hosting a panel show on YouTube which she dubbed, *'The Question Mark Show.'* "People were angry. There were tons of hit pieces. I put him on the hot seat as to why he did it and why he said he'd not air it and then did. Orphan Red was asked to be on the panel. I *invited* her. Orphan declined. She was never mentioned in the show, by me or anyone. Nothing despairing was said. It was about Mark lying to me—*not* the fact that he was with girls. And the fact that he'd purposely do a tape like that, I think it's tacky. To this day, funny *maybe*, but needless and not befitting someone who I think should be a role model. I had expectations, albeit unreasonable ones, for other lead people to also hold high standards."

Patricia's attempt to polish off the door hinges failed—miserably. The sex tape, particularly Patricia's response to it, was further spun in such a way as to make her jealous of Sargent's love life. From there, a bitter rivalry between Patricia and Orphan was cemented in everyone's imagination. It's the very reason *why* "I didn't want him doing tawdry things like that." As a professional partner, she had a right to her opinion. "We did shows together. I knew that would spill over on me and make me look bad too. *And it did.* He said he wouldn't put it on YouTube. He did anyways. It was a gross video—maybe fun for him, but in poor taste. I didn't want a gross portrayal of him without a shirt wearing flip flops having some strange fan girl massaging his shoulders and it being filmed and out on YouTube. It cheapened the brand of the *Secret Show*. It wasn't wholesome. It was not going to go over well with Christians. It looked dirty and trashy. If he'd simply told me he had a threesome with them but didn't film it, I'd have said: 'Don't tell me anymore, *gross*. That's your business. Now let's make sure that's never *talked about* in YouTube.'"

Despite their first encounter culminating in a fabricated sex tape, conversations between Sargent and Melody began trickling on Skype. "She and I actually had quite a bit in common outside of flat earth." They were both born and raised in the northwest, for starters. "I can actually see Vancouver Island from here—small world." But what made it even *smaller*, aside from their shared belief in its shape; they also worked for video game companies, including a mutual employment at one time for the company that had created *Farmville*.

After Melody invited Sargent to live with her in Victoria, just up the road, or perhaps phrased slightly different, a rock's skip from Whidbey, he accepted. Sargent decided to give the Canadian life a try. "She was too young though—twenty-nine when we met," he said. Their relationship ended almost a year to the day.

In a way, Patricia's vision for an international community was far more ambitious. She set her sights on the United Kingdom. And much like Sargent's Seattle meet-up, so too was Patricia's scrutinized by the community. "I did two of those a year apart. Both got critically panned by flat earthers." The complaints quickly poured in. *Who does Patricia Steere think she is, putting on dinner parties? Patricia Steere thinks she's so fancy. Patricia Steere thinks she's better than everyone else.* "In reality, I wanted to move flat earth to the next level, where it wouldn't simply be on YouTube; where people could connect in person, because I saw a great need for that. I saw

a need for people to form relationships. There was so much loneliness. I saw singles needing another like-minded individual in their life. Even couples needed to meet other like-minded friends, and in their own neighborhood.” And besides, “those who came loved them and enjoyed them, and they were very successful. Some of the same people from the first year came back to the second year.”

That is not to say that everyone enjoyed the second mixer. In as little as one year, Patricia Steere’s international audience, more specifically, the way in which they perceived her, had changed dramatically.

And it all started in Oxford.

Patricia *loved* travel. She *loved* flat earth. And she thought, indeed it seemed quite possible, that she *loved* Antonio Subirats too. And he loved her, apparently. Then again, if the chemistry didn’t work out between them, the flat earth meet-up would make a perfect distraction. They could walk away from the whole thing, including their late night chats, like two mature adults who could playfully claim, *we always had Oxford*.

But just in case their first in-person meeting was a hit, Subirats invited Patricia to stay with him. “We already knew we were going to be a couple. Antonio even began talking marriage, believe it or not, even if we’d never met.” *Just consider this a test run*. “And I felt like I was falling in love, which is what he was expressing to me as well. So I went to Oxford.”

More specifically, she flew to Manchester.

Antonio was there to greet her at the airport. He was waiting, she recalled, with a passionate kiss and a bouquet of flowers—apparently in that order. Then they drove back to his place.

“He made us tea,” she said, “and we didn’t drink it.”

“ALL MY VIDEOS ARE DELETED,” Patricia maintained over the phone as a word of warning, “so the dates are fuzzy to me now.” In fact, her entire flat earth experience seems rather compounded and convoluted into one toxically blended milkshake of familiar faces entangled with conceptual paraphrases. The first Flat Earth International Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, which its founder Robbie Davidson regularly refers to as *historic*, and which undoubtedly parallels some of Patricia’s own vision, simply bleeds now with the second International Conference in Denver, Colorado, only one year later, when the cracks and the fissures of her newfound reality, along with the enclosed cosmology which promised to contain them, simply washed away in floodwaters of hatred. Her initial online introduction to Antonio was 2016, Patricia seemed half assured, *maybe*. She couldn’t be certain of that either. And the meet-up in Oxford simply occurred in *warm weather*, she recalled. But one thing *is* for certain. Her two week stay in England, particularly the one-day event in Oxford which made a monument of their crossroads, *personified* a vision.

Oakley’s recipients gathered together in front of the circular, neo-classical library known as Radcliffe Camera—easily one of the most recognizable landmarks in all of Oxford; and then set out as a group from there, moseying through the inspiring streets of what John Keats once called “the first city in the world.” For visitor and resident alike, Oxford truly is breathtaking to behold. Matthew Arnold, elected as Oxford’s own Professor of Poetry in 1857, described the University as “that sweet city with her dreaming spires,” and the Irish poet W.B. Yeats wondered how anybody could do “anything at Oxford but dream and remember, the place is so beautiful.” The atheist Christopher Hitchens painted its dreamscape in slightly more *slippery* strokes. “At Oxford,” he said, “one was positively encouraged to take wine during tutorials. The tongue must be untied.”

Tony Blair. David Cameron. Boris Johnson. And Theresa May. Oxford has produced presidents and prime ministers. The Norwegian Princess Martha Louise and Emperor Naruhito of Japan attended. It’s halls have delivered physicist Stephen Hawking, astronomer Edwin Hubble and Edmund Halley, philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Lock, Christian curators John Wesley, William Tyndale, John Wycliffe,

21st Century Fox's own Rupert Murdoch, and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins. In fact, it was at the University Museum, on June 20, 1860, that Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, and Thomas Huxley, a London biologist (nicknamed Darwin's bulldog), went head to head in front of a noisy crowd of almost 500 people. Evolution not only won the debate, but the century to come.

It is at Merton College where poet TS Eliot learned the avenues of philosophy, and a little later, where J.R.R. Tolkien became an English Literature Professor in 1945. The Austrian black pine, which inspired his fictional *Ent* Treebeard in *The Lord of the Rings*, resided until only two years before Patricia's arrival, when it was cut down in 2014. C.S. Lewis was elected a Tutorial Fellow in English of Magdalen in 1925, and remained there for decades, writing his greatest classics at the Kilns. To this very day, *images* of Narnia surround any visitor. A thoughtful investigation will perhaps unveil a faun on a door frame, and within sight of that faun, a lamppost; Bacchus on a bridge; antiquated prints of a menacing sea serpent; the imposing badger at dusk; or in a distant field—a white stag. Theodor Seuss Geisel met his wife Helen Palmer at Oxford. They married in 1927, and his first of many children's books, ten years later, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, might very well be a scene as imagined by a child while wandering her avenues. Even Alice, the fictional character who was based upon the girl Alice Liddell, daughter of Henry Liddell (he served as Dean of Christ Church from 1855 to 1891), spent a great deal of time attempting to find her way into "the loveliest garden you ever saw." And while Wonderland has long since been reproduced here in the minds of many—even the Queen of Heart's fateful game of croquette seems to have once unfolded among Oxford's lawns—the debate seemed finally settled that very year, in 2016, when the Cheshire cat discretely appeared in a tree of the Botanical Garden, grinning from ear-to-ear.

The city may be best captured in Jan Morris' 1965 travel guide, which ironically is not much use to tourists trying to decide *where* to go when in fact the Welsh historian devoted an entire book to capturing the sensual beauty of a singular place simultaneously co-existing in many planes of time. If not for its history of intellectual inquiry—and dreaming *delusion*; in those early summer hours when they gathered, there may have already been row upon row of colorful flowers to entice them.

Video footage of Oakley's Oxford meet-up seems to sway dreamily, as if we are panning through a moment in time never fully appreciated

nor grasped, though perhaps not by those who inhabit its shots—a passing fling however which has slipped forever from the rest of our fingertips. Patricia is dressed in a flowery dress and a yellow sweater with a wide-brimmed sun hat, essentially blending the aesthetic of her New Orleans brick and mortar with the etiquette of a Houston mixer and the community vision which she and Sargent had mutually hoped to inspire. Aside from Nathan Oakley, there are other familiar faces. Martin Liedtke is moved by the romance of it all. But most notably, Patricia and Subirats are clearly in love—the wobble of the camera testifies to that fact. That’s when she and Antonio Subirats, Patricia said, “began a relationship.”

Cold tea remained on the table, and then *afterwards* they did a lot of talking.

Antonio lived in England, Patricia in America. A pond on the Azimuthal equidistant projection map separated them, and now that they’ve consummated their love, Skype simply *couldn’t* suffice—that sort of talk. How would they possibly make this relationship work? Antonio had two daughters from a previous relationship. They were quite young, so he couldn’t move to America. But Patricia had *nothing* holding her back. She had the money and the resources to move to England.

“And that was what was arranged,” she said.

“So the plan was, I was to go back home and in approximately 45 days—that’s what I thought it would take to wrap up my apartment that I lived in—I’d get all my stuff packed, shipped overseas, and get the arrangement for my three cats to have the necessary paperwork to get them transported as well. Houston is an oil and gas city, an international city, the *right* city to ship people across seas. All it takes is money. There are people who handle the paperwork for you. And that is what I did.”

Patricia’s cats arrived several days before she did.

The sort of organizational muscle that would be needed to see something like the Flat Earth International Conference, fully realized only one year later, not to mention the dozens of alternative flat earth conferences which have since materialized across the world, still maintained the promises of a pipe dream in 2016. In hindsight, the UK experience seems to have symbolized her vision for the flat earth Movement, if only on a Lilliputian scale. Patricia wanted a community bonded by their love of one common identity. She and Antonio seemed to embody that—John and Yoko all over again.

And to prove that point they started making videos *together*. They called them *Secret Hangouts*. The idea was that several people, herself included, would be sporadically scattered in pockets across the world, she in America, Antonio in England, perhaps somebody else in Spain. “And at that time I was making videos with Mark Sargent. I called them *the Secret Show*, all tongue-in-cheek. It was a weekly magazine show which hoped to make a community,” one which attempted to make the sort of statement that would likely be expected of a movement, a “we’re all in this together” approach, “where it would be discussed, flat earth, and all the things that had happened in flat earth over the last week. We’d talk about new experiments and what was coming up. Listeners could interact in the comments.” Essentially, “It was a *community* aspect, lighthearted, but *community* based.”

Personalities like Math Powerland and Eric Dubay, who had only recently introduced the world to a dangerous *idea*, and which seemed to explode online, as if *it*, the very movement that is, were rooted from a matrix-based landline telephone and multitudes of imprisoned, disenfranchised gamers flocked to each booth quicker than they could dial the numbers to free them, recognized the fruit of community as new leadership opportunities—and competition.

“Math Powerland did that comedy routine where he was making fun of NASA,” Weiss said, “and comedy is funny because it’s true, and so he was really onto something there. I contacted Math a couple of times, where we had some phone conversations.” Weiss wanted to ask if he’d come onto his show. “But when I was talking to Math, I didn’t get to talk to Math. He talked to me. In an hour conversation, I’d be lucky to get in three sentences. Maybe he’s a manic depressant. I don’t see him depressed. I see him *manic*, and he’s all over the place. I wasn’t able to interact with him in a useful way, and that was the only contact I had with him, those two conversations, and I realized he was a bit off the wall for me.”

While Mark Sargent was still making *Flat Earth Clues* in February of 2015, he didn’t know a single other flat earthist. “Nobody had any influence on me,” he said. “Eric was into flat earth before I was by a couple of months. The only person I *knew* was Matt; Matt Boylan—otherwise known as Math Powerland.” Sargent was particularly fond of the video “where his girlfriend sat him down in Montreal and he gave that wonderful couch speech. It was a wonderful video. It was the only comprehensible

video that he ever did. And I love it. I love good writing and I love good science fiction stories. He was literally the first person to call me. I wasn't even done with the *Clues*."

It was after airing *Clue 8*, having released one clue per day; that Powerland called. "I remember when he called me he tried to pretend he was *somebody else*, because Matt didn't trust me. Matt doesn't trust anyone. He's a little paranoid."

"Why aren't you answering my texts?" Powerland spoke into Sargent's receiver. "I've been texting you since *Clue 2*."

"Because I don't have a cell phone...?"

During our interview in 2019, I spoke to Sargent on a landline. He said, "People don't know that if you text a landline, most often you won't get a bounce back message saying we can't deliver your text. They don't care. It just gets vaporized at some point."

Sargent and Powerland talked—cell phone to landline. "Well, *he* did most of the talking," Sargent corrected himself. "Within a couple of weeks after that, after I'd begun doing interviews, he started calling me. He e-mailed me, and I still have the copy of the e-mail where he was trying to tell me what to do in interviews." Powerland doesn't *do* interviews. "He's a very interesting person on camera, but he wouldn't do it. He just played that whole aloof artist sort of thing."

First thing you gotta do, Powerland insisted: attack the Catholic Church—*especially* the Jesuits.

Sargent read that and declined. "It's just not me. It's not what I do. I don't attack anybody."

That was it. Sargent declined Powerland's offer of friendship on the basis of attacking the Roman Catholic Church. Their falling out was immediate. "We never recovered. And we never spoke after that." Clearly, Powerland saw the potential in Sargent, but his greatest downfall, like so many others in the budding movement, was that he backed *the wrong horse*—himself. Sargent said, "He never got over that," meaning, Sargent's refusal to play by his house rules, "because that window for him just sort of closed" after that.

For Patricia Steere, the movement belonged to nobody and everyone. And yet flat earth, which by some appearances was kick started by Powerland as a comedy routine and furthermore bolstered by Dubai's *200 Proofs*, now seemed to be slipping from their fingertips into

the hands of lesser knowns, all of whom took their ideas and ran with them. Dubai had already started making hit pieces against Patricia. He aptly titled them, *Flat Earth and Other Shill Potatoes*. As one of Powerland and Dubai's early and lesser known arrivals, Patricia Steere was personable and emotionally charged; a pretty face behind a microphone in a short-lived epoch of disorderly online activity, when most conspiracy YouTubers kept their identities hidden and their voices contained to slideshows and screen shots. And worst of all, Patricia Steere was a woman—an easy target.

3

EVEN KAREN B WAS INTRODUCED TO flat earth, and therefore Patricia Steere, *through* its self-assigned gatekeeper, Eric Dubai. “It was just when he had started to dress up like a woman and making fun of her. I didn’t even know who Patricia Steere was except for seeing Eric Dubai making fun of her in his videos. I thought it was really strange. And then I saw people in the comments talking about Patricia.”

There must be something wrong with this woman, she thought.

It was the latter half of 2015. “Patricia’s channel was still pretty new. I decided right there that I wasn’t going to watch her.”

That decision nagged at her for weeks.

She had already woken up to 9/11 by 2006. “But then I still didn’t get too heavy into other things.”

“What stopped you?” I asked.

Karen thought about it.

“I guess I didn’t really realize how deep things went at that point. To me, I thought it was a money thing, like a warmonger money thing. I thought they wanted to keep the war machine going and keep themselves richer by funding both sides of the war, and making weapons and selling weapons, and I thought that was basically it. I guess I didn’t understand that there was stuff further behind that, because it is a very, very deep rabbit hole. And it took me a while.” She stopped to correct herself. “I still don’t completely fully understand,” she paused again, “*why*,” pause,

“it’s still happening. That’s something I’m still trying to figure out. I guess I just didn’t realize how deep and how important it was.”

Then again, “I was a new mom. I had a young child, and I was working full time, and I just didn’t take the time to do it.”

JFK, *eb.*

Gulf of Tonkin, *eb.*

Iran-Contra, *eb.*

Oklahoma City bombing, *eb.*

Iraq 1 and 2, *eb.*

Chemtrails, *eb.*

Perhaps like me and so many others, the double-think was strong between recognizing a conspiratorial incident and how we rationalize it in our own perception of reality. As most have come to find, including Karen, the flat earth is a Pandora’s Box. Once opened, it has a habit of unleashing *everything*. For Karen B, that day arrived when a social media friend shared a flat earth video on Facebook. “I had started friending people who were truthers. They were looking into the alternative—the truth about things. They were researchers. People call them conspiracy theorists, but they were looking into all the same things I was. And one of them shared a flat earth video. I don’t even know who made that flat earth video. I could never tell you who it was. I’ve tried to find it since then. I don’t know who made it. I just know it was some guy talking, and he would show evidence that the earth wasn’t a ball.”

She had been suspicious of the moon landing before flat earth, “but I didn’t really pay that much attention to it because I was of the opinion already: *Who cares about space?* The world is screwed up. Everything down here is screwed up. And you guys just care about space. Who cares about space? Fix it down here. That was my attitude already.”

In 1963, poet Robert Frost shared the same opinion.

What really struck her about that video wasn’t so much the proposition that the earth is flat, but the phrase which has been spoken by countless flat earthists since the modern Movements conception.

But don’t take my word for it. Go test this for yourself.

And that's exactly what she did. "It probably only took me two or three weeks to realize the earth is *most likely* not a ball. But I don't think I was a hundred percent in for a few months. I kind of went back and forth a little bit, because it's a really big paradigm shift. I started looking at other channels, and that's when I came across Eric Dubay. He did do some really good interviews. But then I started watching his—he started putting out other videos, like the one where he was dressing up as Patricia."

A couple of weeks of watching Dubay dress up as a woman, of then reading the mockery and the accusations in the comments section, and Karen thought it best to switch tactics. She caught an episode of *Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes* in order that she might make her own informed decision. "I really didn't understand why everyone was making fun of her. She's like the only woman out there talking about flat earth. She's *talking* to people. She's *talking* to other flat earthers. She's *humanizing* them. This is good. When I first got into flat earth I thought it was kind of crazy. I was questioning my own sanity. Why was I even entertaining this idea? Is there something wrong with me?—because this is some really out there stuff. And so I started watching Patricia's channel and seeing her talk to guys like Bob and Jeran and different people in the community, and seeing that they're just normal people like me. Even Jeran, he's from California—the Bay area. That's where I was born and raised. So, seeing him; that he's just a normal person from the same area as me, from around the same age as me, and that these are just normal average people having these same thoughts, and entertaining these same ideas, researching all the same stuff—it made it *okay* for me."

4

AMONG SARGENT'S ACCUSATIONS is the easily observable fact that he manages to navigate through a plethora of interviews, including Russel Brand. Whether attending film premiers or staring in a commercial, playing his-self, Mark Sargent is a busy-body—*so*, definitely C.I.A. *Why do the main stream media focus so often on Sargent*, they might ask, rather than *say*, Math Powerland or Eric Dubay? It's a fair question.

That's easy, Sargent told me.

“I put *my* name; my *real* name; my *full* name; my *phone* number; my *e-mail* address; and even my *home* address. Now I wouldn’t recommend that to most people, especially not women. But it helps, because as a rule the media is lazy, like anybody else. If they want to interview somebody from flat earth, they literally type in the words *flat earth interview*. That’s the first thing they type in. If someone sounds slightly coherent in the first 10 minutes then that’s it, they’ll contact you. I hate to say this. I hate to compare. But it’s the same reason how Bill Nye gets so many things. Bill Nye gets shoulder tapped for just about every science forum you can think of, even though he is *not* a scientist. He got his bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, and that was it. He became an actor. But because he looks like a nerd—he could have played a role in *Revenge of the Nerds*, no question about that—he’s tall, he’s thin, he’s got angular features, and a lab coat fits him just as you’d expect on a nerd. And that’s what the media wants. Scientists with PhD’s or their Masters degrees are normally—they’re really dry on camera or in interviews. One and two syllable answers are just not going to cut it for any producer. And so Bill Nye, who started out as a comedy troupe up here in Seattle, that’s how he got into it.”

So when the media wants to contact a flat earthist, who’s the easiest guy to get a hold of...?

Mark Sargent.

Or, as his accusers often call him online, *mark sAɹGENT*.

Sigh.

“And I get accused of all these things. When anybody accuses me of those things, I immediately go to their channel and say, ‘See, your phone number isn’t out there, and your name.’ If you use an alias nowadays trying to get a message across, I have no respect for you whatsoever.”

“Early on in the movement Eric Dubay was probably one of the first people out there,” David Weiss said. “He put out *200 proofs*. People criticized, but it was a video that woke up a ton of people. It got people researching flat earth back in the time when, if you typed *flat earth* into YouTube and sorted by date you’d get all the latest flat earth videos, which no longer works. So he was super important about that, and he was very knowledgeable.”

After committing to a show on *Caravan To Midnight*, whereas Weiss discussed the Boston bombing, “their producers had some common ties with Art Bell’s show, which was broadcast on stations all across America.” By 2015, Bell had semi-retired from *Coast to Coast AM*, and his follow-up, *Midnight in the Desert*, was so short-lived, after repeated late night gun fire on his Nevada property *convinced* him to retire, that Bell would leave radio for good by the end of the year. But it was still 2015, and the man who had filled our heads with tales of the paranormal since the 1980’s had lived long enough to experience the most breathtaking conspiracy of all. *Space is fake.*

Art Bell wanted to interview a flat earthist.

They asked David Weiss.

Weiss told them *no*.

“Eric Dubay is *the man*,” he said. “If Bell wants to interview a flat earther, speak to him.”

Bell’s producers agreed. And when Weiss contacted Dubay, so did he. “I set the whole thing up. They’re contacting me because Eric’s in a different time zone.” They wanted to do a sound check on the morning of, but Eric refused. “It was very strange. He bailed about 12 hours before the airing of the show. He’s like, *I’m not doing it*, and he just went dark. And I’m like, that’s the strangest thing ever.” In the intervening hours, Weiss scrambled to find somebody else—*anybody else* willing to do it. John Lagormile raised a hand.

“John was a little overwhelmed by the interview, and they just handled him, and not in a good way. He felt he did a good job but in reality he got walked on and wasn’t able to get out any points and much of anything useful. That was the first thing that *poisoned* me to Eric.”

“Eric seems to have an attitude that he’s the only one that can put out flat earth information and everyone else must get their information approved by him before they put it out. Now, I understand Eric’s concern. There are a lot of people coming into this overwhelmed, and they put out information, and some of the stuff people are doing is wrong. Even I’ve gotten things wrong. Everyone kind of gets things wrong.” According to Dubay, they were polluting the horizon. “He may have had a little point there, but he wanted it so that when you search *flat earth*, the

first five pages would be all Eric Dubay. Now other people's stuff is getting in there. And there's no stopping that."

"Eric's biggest concern was other flat earthers poisoning the well. So he started making hit videos about us. He did this one where he dressed up as a woman pretending he's Patricia Steere. And now when you research flat earth *that* comes up; so in essence he was afraid of having us poison the well and yet he's the one that poisoned the well. You look up an Eric Dubay video, a good Eric Dubay video, you watch it, and the next one served up is a *crap* Eric Dubay video that would make any normal person that is researching flat earth go: *What is this?*"

5

THE VERY INDIVIDUAL WHO INTRODUCED Karen B to the flat earth slapped her up on his Flat Earth Shill Wall of Shame long before the first conference ever happened.

Karen only seems to sigh at the memory. "I don't understand why Eric Dubay does what he does. It just makes no sense to me. And the funny thing is, he had subbed to my channel. The very *first* video that I had made, *My Path to Flat Earth*, he commented on that video, and had left me a really good comment. But I was already *out* on Eric Dubay when he had commented on my video, because I was watching him make videos about Patricia and dress up like a woman in his ridiculous rap songs. By that point I had decided that I liked Patricia. I liked what she was doing. But I still responded saying, *thank you*. I was nice. I never went out of my way to talk bad about someone, even if I didn't like them. Talking trash about people doesn't help anything. It's about the truth. It's about what's happening to *us*. That's what this is about. Exposing other people is not any sort of interest of mine."

Bob Knodel summed up Dubay as *another classic narcissist*. "Eric Dubay has very strongly come out and said he's the man that brought flat earth back to life—*not* everyone else who's been in it hundreds of years before. Eric Dubay wants to take credit for being the guy who's revived flat earth. He's written a couple of books which, basically, are plagiarized from Samuel Rowbotham. It's just reprints and requotes of stuff that's already been written. But I'm not going to take that away from him. If you

are not on board with *his* way of thinking in *his* little club, then you are automatically a shill, and he will attack you as such. He has attacked Mark. He has attacked Patricia. He has attacked Jeran. He has attacked me. All the *Globebusters*, we're all shills. He has attacked my wife for simply trying to figure out and show some of her ideas about the sky. Now she's a shill because she's not pushing the Eric Dubay agenda."

"Yeah, he's put out some decent flat earth work," Knodel added, "but all of that is kind of invalidated by what he does and the way he acts in this community."

"He poisoned the well more that *everyone combined*," Weiss concluded, "in my opinion."

Again, "that was maybe 2015, or it could be 2016," Patricia said. "Dubay's channel has been taken down and put back up several times, so it's difficult recalling a date. But it was weird because I didn't have a big channel in 2015." Why is this flat earther, whom she clearly admired, a fixture to the Movement in her mind, suddenly making videos on her? Why was he insinuating that the last three letters of her first name, PatriCIA, once capitalized, somehow proved that she was a CIA agent?

Though it is perhaps plausible that she contemplated the matter while boarding the plane, it is quite unlikely that anything other than her anticipated reunion with Antonio Subirats hugged center stage. Subirats and the legion of videos they would make while seated together on his couch—joking, laughing, *obviously* a couple in love. Never in her wildest dreams did Patricia Steere think, nor could she imagine, that Eric Dubay's videos were a harbinger of things to come.

Her move to England would not even last three months.

MR. COOPER WAS WRONG

1

“SO WHEN I STARTED LOOKING AT all this stuff, and how easy it is for a news guy to come on, a weather man—this meteorologist, to come on and just wisp it away as, *what you’re seeing here is a mirage*, and that’s supposed to be accepted science....” Hummer shook his head at the memory. “They ended up doing a big special on the news, and they went to the university of Notre Dame, and they had a professor of physics explain away how the mirage works, but they *didn’t* say that it could also occur in magnification of humidity across a flat plane. They left that element out. They left that entire piece of evidence, which is also *proof*—they left it out.”

Hummer called Skiba on the phone, “You’re not going to believe what my local weather guy said.”

And then he told him.

Skiba thought about it. “What do you think it would take to charter a boat?”

Hummer grinned, “I’ll get right on it.”

“Neither one of us knew about lensing and all that,” Hummer explained. “Rob ended up doing that experiment at his house with a—I think it was a 99 cent visor—it’s one of his best videos showing exactly what can happen, because he did the exact same experiment which they did at the university of Notre Dame, and Rob showed a completely different variable which they—they were trying to trick people, or they were tricking themselves. You know, they were leaving something very pertinent out. And after doing tests and everything else you find that water humidity, or water particulates, can actually create a lensing effect, which in turn can create magnification, which would then chop the bottoms of the buildings off due to magnification and light bending, or rather, pushing the images downward.”

Hummer quickly concluded they were gonna need a boat—a *big* boat.

If it was a mirage, if Hummer had been spending his entire life staring at a mirage from a city leaning up and over and down a curve, then the mirage would magically disappear and, as they rolled over the ball, the *true* city would appear. But if it wasn't a mirage, as Hummer was quite certain of, then the city would just get bigger and bigger and bigger. Their idea was to put a camera on it from across the lake. If it was a mirage, it would *naturally* disappear. But if it wasn't, Chicago would *naturally* only get bigger in the frame of their camera. They'd need a boat—a *big* boat and a gyroscope. And a gimbal with a camera and a level—they'd need one of those. They needed to show that they never once went over a curve, or down a curve, or up a curve, or whatever direction you want to call it.

And so they plotted.

Timing problems however, *and* budget problems, *and* personal scheduling problems, would plague them. “It took us over a year to get it done,” Hummer said.

Meanwhile, while they plotted their experiment on Lake Michigan, Hummer saw his friend “going into a very specific scientific mind. *Let me prove these things to be true.*” But by this, Hummer stressed, Skiba was ultimately implying, “let me prove the *sphere*. He was really trying to hold onto that for a time. And finally one day I said to him, Rob, you believe the Bible right?”

Duh, Skiba.

“Then you're a Biblical earther, dude. Even if it *is* flat—then so what? If the Bible *says* it, can you accept that? Of course the world isn't going to accept it. But can you, Rob Skiba, accept it?”

Didn't Hummer understand? This was 2015. Skiba had seen *Star Wars* in 1977 before it became a Roman numeral in a second trilogy. Skiba was a Trekkie. The man who agreed to charter a boat across Lake Michigan with him had a signed poster of Apollo 15 astronaut Jim Irwin hung upon his wall.

He even came to his church once.

Reach for your dreams, Robert. Aim high.

There were of course the howls of laughter, bellows of subconscious fear, to deal with—and Phil Collins. Growing numbers of flat earthists, in part to Skiba's own skeptical investigation, all of whom were scattered and

secluded across the earth, repeatedly asked: Was Rob Skiba a flat earthist—or wasn't he? Was he—or wasn't he? Was he...?

Or then again, wasn't he?

In June of 2016 they would once more *hold* their breath because, after one year of talking about Chicago and plotting, Skiba had discovered a small window of opportunity, when both his and Hummer's schedule opened up, and Skiba had the money saved up, and a ten day weather forecast that looked promising. Skiba booked an impromptu flight on Wednesday June 22, 2016, with the hopes of setting out on Friday the 24th, an early birthday present.

Hummer said, "I called around. I chartered a boat. I found a guy who runs a fishing charter boat. But I told him, we're not dropping any lines into the water. We just want to go across the water. We want to go across the lake as far as we can go, to where we can actually see the water go up to the shoreline, and then we can turn around and go back."

The captain, his name was Captain Tony; his company was Salmon Hunter Fishing Charters; he dealt primarily with fishermen, and was curious, "What are you guys doing?"

"We just want to get video of Chicago on a lapsed time experiment going from one point to the other," Hummer explained, "and see what happens to the actual visuals of the city."

Captain Tony said, "Depending on humidity, you can see the city anytime, so long as it's not humid." June in Indiana and Illinois is *quite* humid. "It's a curtain. Rain acts like a curtain. The curtain comes down, you can't see what's backstage."

Hummer paused on the phone, and he told me, "That's a great analogy."

By June of 2016, Skiba's *purpose* had changed. Despite holding onto the globe, he found himself rooting once again for the literal intent of Hebrew Scripture. "The one goal I had," Skiba told me, that is, while jumping onto that flight for Chicago, "was to prove the image people were seeing from across Lake Michigan was *not* a mirage—that they are actually seeing the city."

Growing numbers of flat earthists everywhere, scattered across the plain, *held* their breath—and prayed.

“So the guys telling me on the phone what to expect, and he said it’s gonna be June, man,” Hummer said. “It’s gonna be hot, and it’s gonna be muggy. Don’t expect to see Chicago until we’re almost there.” Hummer relayed that message to Skiba. “Don’t keep your hopes up.”

They arrived at the harbor before their scheduled appointment with Salmon Hunter Fishing Charters. In fact, they were still brushing their teeth when Captain Tony had departed with his first charter of the day. When he returned his ship with his party of fishermen, he looked right at Hummer and Skiba, waiting upon the dock, and said, “I don’t know what you guys did.”

Prayer.

“I don’t know *what* you guys did or *how* you did this,” Tony reiterated that point while they gassed up, “but you wouldn’t believe what sort of view you’re gonna have today. I’ve *never* in my entire life seen Chicago so clear in the month of June—*never*.”

Prayer, Hummer collapsed with relief. *Prayer works.*

When they came around the corner out of the boat slips and the lake opened up before them, the captain announced, “There’s Chicago.”

“What, where!?” Rob.

They were still 37 nautical miles from the Willis Tower.

“Right there,” Hummer grinned. “You’re looking at it.”

They didn’t even have their cameras ready.

2

“HE WAS ON THE FENCE for *so long*,” Shelley Lewis said of Skiba. And even though she had attempted to pull him back to the green of the lawn in which she obstinately remained on, it had started to become frustrating for her, and in fact many of us, that “he could *never* commit.” Like *TigerDan925* only several months earlier, would Rob Skiba become flat earth’s next dissenter?

She was out walking one night in 2016, staring up at what stars the skies above Sacramento had to offer, and it suddenly occurred to her. Their formations had not changed.

From the time of her childhood Shelley Lewis had been taught that the surface of the globe she held in her hands turned at nearly 1,000 miles per hour from its equator; that the spinning globe itself covered a route of some 67,000 miles each hour, and that in addition to this, the solar system—earth, moon, planets, and all—whirled around the center of our galaxy at another whopping 490,000 miles per hour.

And yet the constellations had remained the same.

Why is that?

“I decided I wanted to be a chef, because it was like the garden that made me—that pulled me out of a really deep hole when I was sick. I realized I wanted to teach other people how to eat better. I found healing through cooking and helping other people eat well. I poured through cookbooks, and I wrote my own cookbook. And I became a raw vegan chef.” The love of her life was dead and *this* was a time for healing, she said, not only for her, but her son and daughter also. Eating healthy food and instructing others to do the same had become a time of healing for many. People with cancer, heart disease, and diabetes had shown proven results. They were getting better because she was showing them how to cook for themselves.

Thoughts washed over her like floodwater. She considered all the doctors that had fed her medication. “If they’ve lied to us about what we’re ingesting in our bodies and how the immune system works, then they could lie to us about *everything*, and it just became an avalanche of questioning and testing on so many levels; a matter of finding—*what is truth?* Much of what we’ve believed is mostly lies. Pharmaceutical companies are not there to help you. They’re really there to keep you as paying customers. Chemtrails and poisons in our water—everything around us is basically *against us*.” And then there was the matter of her late husband who, only weeks before his death, had defied her by becoming a moon landing denier. “I filed it away,” Shelley said. “I *never* forgot him telling me that.”

There had been so many lies that she’d attempted to navigate through—far too many, “and things started tipping upside down for me.” She had set out to prove flat earthists wrong—*dead wrong*, and as she did

so, flat earthists kept piling new information on. The intellectual levy had been broken. Nothing was safe anymore. “I went through a lot of anger—why would they lie to us? To the point where—wow, they lied to us. I finally reached a critical mass of information,” she said, “and I realized,” finally *realized*, and *accepted the fact*, “that we’d been lied to.”

For the first time in her life, the woman who’d once met astronaut Alan B. Shepherd at space camp and graduated from West Point in order that she might become the very first woman to walk on the moon stared up at the unexpected cosmology. The moon gives forth its own light. Joy bathed her in it.

3

THEY WERE ABOUT HALFWAY TO THE CITY which is *not permitted* to be seen by the naked eye, and Captain Tony, having heard Hummer mumbling something about how he couldn’t see a curve anywhere out there on the water, said, “Of course water’s *flat*.”

“Then the earth cannot possibly be a ball,” Hummer said.

“Well that’s *not* true,” their captain retorted.

Hummer chanced the principal’s office again. “Then how can you have *flatwater*, going on level forever, and still curve around a ball?”

“I don’t know,” he shrugged, perhaps with indifference. “That will make your head hurt thinking about it, though.”

But Hummer’s head might have exploded with exaltation. Their Chicago experiment was deemed an instant success, and likely unparalleled since Samuel Rowbotham’s Bedford Level experiment in the United Kingdom, some two centuries earlier.

“It’s flat,” Rick Hummer kept looking into the camera. *Mr. Cooper was wrong*. “It’s flat. It’s flat.”

It’s flat, Mr. Cooper. It’s flat.

“SHEILA CAME ON BOARD BEFORE I DID,” Skiba confessed.

Though it is true that Rob was convinced the writers of Scripture *believed* the earth was flat, it is Sheila who ultimately connected the dots between the words they *wrote* and the *testimony* of the Spirit.

She said, “If they believed it, then I do too.”

Skiba laughed over the phone. His wife, he said, had quickly added: “What’s wrong with you?”

FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE RADIUS of 35 nautical miles (or 40 statute miles), video footage depicts Skiba struggling to hold a shaking camera while the city of Chicago darts in and out of its frame. Only his grin is steady. Hummer asks him what he thinks. And barely able to contain his excitement, he says, “It’s not a mirage, I can tell you that.”

“It’s not a mirage,” Hummer repeats.

And then, in his best Schwarzenegger accent, Skiba says: “It’s not a mirage.”

Get to the choppa. It’s not a mirage!

Captain Tony will add, “That’s a heck of a mirage right there.”

With the wind pressed upon him, Skiba passes his experimental thoughts into the camera: “I’ve become more and more convinced that what we think is the water obscuring the bottom of ships is the same illusion that we see when we see cars driving out in front of you on a long straight road. It looks like the car disappears wheels first into the road. And it looks like it’s almost going into water. But it’s not. It’s just a mirage. And then when you drive to the same spot of the car that disappeared in front of you, now all of the sudden you disappeared to the guy behind you. So I believe what we may be looking at is an optical illusion. If we want to talk about a mirage,” he then points to Chicago, “that’s *not* a mirage. That’s not a mirage. But when we see things disappear, I think

we're seeing...a mirage like effect of the water. We can see the haze right now at the bottom of the city right there—the haze right now is obscuring the bottom of the city, you can see that right there. But I also think we see the same effect with water—that water can create the same sort of illusion that we're seeing with the haze right there—obscuring the lower part of the city.”

“It’s definitely a haze over the water,” Hummer adds, “It’s *definitely* a haze.”

Within minutes Hummer holds the camera up to his face while Skiba bends over into his own video equipment behind him. He points his thumb over a shoulder and explains, “Here’s a guy right there, that I do believe is gonna *finally* come out and say,” he pauses to blink several times, never losing his grin, “It’s *flat*.”

Hummer clearly likes the way that sounds, and so tries it on for size again.

“It’s *flat*.”

He then laughs.

He looks back at Skiba, still glued to his video camera. “He’s a kid in a candy store right now.”

And then once more, “It’s *flat*.”

From 8 nautical miles off the coast of Chicago they no longer feel a need to continue any further. At precisely the halfway mark—that is, halfway between New Buffalo, Indiana and Chicago, Illinois, they have observed Gary, Indiana, 18.9 miles to their south. Meanwhile, the City of Chicago has remained in their sight all the way across Lake Michigan. No need to visit Cloud Gate, that silvery Chicago bean, as contrasting *proof* as to why the surface of water makes a practical flat reflection, rather than an arched one, stretched out and chaotic, like something you’d see in a fun house mirror, nor to run down Michigan Avenue, flapping their arms like crazy mad men, telling everyone the earth is flat. They can do that *later* on the internet. Their day is an unrestrained success. “We saw everything we needed to see,” Skiba says. And besides, they’re late getting back, and fuel is running low. So Skiba sets up his equipment from the rear of their boat so that the city might shrink away, always in frame though, on their return trip across Lake Michigan.

But one more thing, Hummer decides to give his drone a try.

Hummer says, “We were eight miles out when we flew the drone—eight miles from the city of Chicago when we started flying...and one thing we do know for a fact is that there was a blueish haze above the water that was at least somewhere between eight miles out and the city itself, and that haze actually cut off the bottom of the buildings at the same exact line that you can’t see from the beach in New Buffalo.”

On the trip back, while Captain Tony is hauling it towards Indiana, Skiba can be heard saying, “That’s the proof right here.”

“Absolutely,” Hummer agrees. He’s put on his victory t-shirt, which illustrates Gleason’s AE map and reads, rather appropriately for the occasion, *Leveled Out*. “So one year ago Rob and I talked about doing this same test, and we said there’s no way you can get a shot during the summer, because it gets too hot, and,” he takes the time to look at the city again, “We were *wrong*. You can see Chicago during the summer all the way across the lake.” He looks back again, barely able to contain his grin. “And it’s not a mirage.”

“This is awesome,” Skiba.

“So what does this mean?” Hummer.

“Well, we found the only piece of water in the whole ball that’s totally flat—because we didn’t go over no hump... It’s not a mirage.”

Nope, “It’s not a mirage.”

6

ONLY DAYS BEFORE HIS FORTY-SIXTH BIRTHDAY, Skiba had referred to himself as a Zetetic Agnostic. But that self-assigned title would be abandoned within 8 nautical miles of the Chicago shoreline, dropped without a line and a fishing pole to reel it in. In exchange he returned to Indiana an unapologetic flat earthist—or more precisely, a Biblical earth apologist.

The grin on his face says it all.

His was a thesaurus of words which we all *felt*—relief, remedy, alleviation, reprieve. Quite suddenly, for thousands of individuals scattered in isolated pockets across creation, the Chicago horizon unleashed an incalculable circumference of emotion.

In Charleston, South Carolina, I sat alone in a dark room—and cried.

FAREWELL, FLAT EARTH

1

UNBEKNOWNST TO PATRICIA, ANOTHER CONTROVERSY was waiting to welcome her UK undertaking, and on the very day of her arrival, no less. In time, it would ferment into the sort of hemlock laced poison in which *anyone* with a laptop and Wi-Fi could pass around and invite others to drink.

Subirats put out a video implying that he was gay.

“I don’t know why he did that,” Patricia sighed. “It caused lots of ripples and waves within the flat earth community.” Initially, Subirats insisted to his girlfriend that others had edited a video simply to try and hurt his reputation, and perchance endanger their *community*. Patricia believed him. Naturally, “I defended him, like, *I knew he wasn’t gay*. Only later did I learn in the video that there was some things you couldn’t just slice and dice to make people do, like unzipping your own pants, and grabbing your own butt. That can’t be done with editing. You can put words into people’s mouths, you know, but he did those things. Why did he do those things on video—make up some quote-unquote gay video, when he’s *not* gay? Was he doing it to create some sort of controversy? Why did the video come out on the first day I arrived in the UK?”

As one might expect of such ill-advised decisions, their “relationship slowly began to show some serious cracks. Now everyone who’s dated has had that happen to them before. You meet somebody and you think they’re great and then you get to know them and find out they’re nuts. I men, we’ve all had that happen. Even if it’s not dating—you had people you thought were good people to hang out with that turned out not to be. That’s normal. But in this internet world, and then moving to another country, these surprises proved to have a bigger impact.”

“Antonio lived in a very, very small,” she started to say, and then paused to consider her words, “nothing like I’m used to living in. He lived off government assistance one-hundred percent. Now I didn’t know that when I moved there. He told me he lived off of his paintings. And there was paint in his apartment, and canvas, and brushes that were used, but

he didn't paint anything. So I was a bit shocked to find out when I got there that he was on—I guess it's the dole, they call it, and I didn't understand because he told me he painted for a living, but then he never once painted while I was there, which was weird."

Subirats would spend most of his time on YouTube, hangouts which would ache through the night until 4 or 5am. Sometimes she'd wake alone in bed and find him asleep on the sofa with cigarettes scattered around him. "I didn't understand—didn't get it. I was in the midst of falling in love, understanding that I'm with a very broke man, understanding that I'm with a man with no motivation at all, understanding that I'm with a man who stays up to 5am every night doing videos, and who had also heavily begun attacking other YouTubers on his videos, including the Christian community, right when I'm there. He *hated* Christians. Jesus was fake and there's no such thing as God. He *never* did those things before I moved there. But when I was there it all started." Subirats targeted flat earth YouTuber Orphan Red for being fat and stupid, among several other women in the community. "He wouldn't stop. He was on a rampage. It made every moment uncomfortable. I never understood what provoked him."

As they continued making public videos together on the couch, painting themselves as two lovers who perhaps embodied and harmonized the *dangerous ideas* which they stroked on canvas, the anger began in private. "Every meal, every interaction, involved his anger towards his family about not understanding flat earth and chemtrails—the same anger he expressed towards me when we were alone. They called me and pulled me aside one day, and said, 'We love him, just ignore that—it's just his Spanish blood.' I wasn't used to a family that had angry outbursts."

In order to make the move, Patricia had given most of her things away, including her car, a 2016 Mercedes E-class. "I had a beautiful place, but I did it for love," she said. "I didn't do it for money, because he didn't have any. I realized that if I moved there then I would have to be the one to get us out of the apartment that he was living in on government assistance and into a place that I felt comfortable in, but without offending his pride and ego, because you can't do that to somebody. But I was going to take on that burden, because he was a *flat earther*. We were on the same page. We were physically attracted. I saw him as a deep, kind, spiritual person—very deep; very philosophical; very intelligent. I saw him

as the kind of man I could have in my life. But then I got there and I saw a very different person.”

“I told him right away that sex for me as a post-menopausal woman needed gentleness when getting started, and lubrication. He was fine with that,” she said, and up until then, understanding. It was the night of their first argument when decorum fell by the wayside. “He was attacking Christians. He’d spent the entire evening before that railing against God, Jesus and the Bible on YouTube, on his channel, and I asked if he would ease up a bit and try and understand that flat earth belongs to everyone. He said he wasn’t going to *water down his message* to please me. I said I wasn’t asking him to do that but instead to be compassionate to others. I said he didn’t seem like the man I first met who said he cared about the people in flat earth.”

It was after her confrontation that very night “when he approached me for, as he put it, *sexy time*. He was aggressive and forceful in a very bad way,” she said. In no uncertain terms, Subirats “was hurting me.”

Patricia repeatedly told Subirats to stop.

Please stop. It hurts.

Subirats growled, “You can’t tell me what to do!”

His eyes seemed to penetrate into her soul with every thrust, and his growls, Patricia recalled, it was as though she was bound by man who was possessed. “He *fully* understood what he was doing, but it was like he was dead inside. I felt—*cold*. We never had intercourse again.”

The next day Antonio commented how sex with her was “the most satisfying he’d ever had.”

Most satisfying...? Patricia thought. *Is that a normal turn of phrase?* “Sex had seemed unfeeling, robotic and more importantly he never addressed the elephant in the room. He *willingly* hurt me.” But it was something *more* than that. It wasn’t simply undesired *pain*. She just couldn’t bring herself to *say* it, much less *think* it—the cruel cold of loneliness and self-doubt. Patricia ended up having to get cranberry pills from Holland and Barrett, a natural health food chain store in the UK. She didn’t have a car and so Subirats drove her. “The urinary tract infection came from the forced sex,” she said.

“The relationship became abusive. The level of mental cruelty—it became *physical*, where he hurt me. I didn’t really have people I could talk to because I was there alone in another country, without citizenship—because we were planning on getting married. That was the plan. That was how I planned to stay there. I couldn’t just go to the police after what happened, because I didn’t have a car. I didn’t have access to Antonio’s car keys, and it was a stick shift. I thought, *what am I going to do? Who is going to believe me?* I didn’t have a black eye. I was his girlfriend living in his apartment.” Other factors crossed her mind. “I didn’t have a cell phone.” Patricia had given her Apple to Subirats’ daughter when she first moved in. “Mental cruelty, physical abuse,” even her own self-doubt as to the reality of what had transpired, “I’d never experienced anything like this.”

Neglecting the police is a decision which would later haunt her online. If it *was* rape, her instigators would repeatedly state, though she herself could never bring herself to say it, then why didn’t she go to the police? “I was scared for my life if I went to the police,” she confessed. After she reported him, where would she go? There was *nowhere* to go. “I was scared for the life of my cats.” Subirats, she said, had shown himself to be *pure evil*.

“I needed to get out,” she said.

Getting out would mean a lot of *undoing*, financially speaking. She would need a plane ticket, for starters. But then there was the matter of her cats. Patricia contacted a vet who could pick them up and provide carriers, take them for exams, and then send them to the airport, after an appointed waiting period, before they could fly back to America. But even more-so, getting out meant untangling herself from “the emotional implications, because I had fallen in love.”

And so, as they continued expressing their newfound Utopia by way of YouTube videos, Patricia plotted secretly to leave. “I didn’t want to tell him outright because I was afraid of him by that point. Days would go by with just silence, except of course for YouTube videos. But I knew I had to leave. I did this all without telling him,” her exit plan, that is, “as he slept throughout the day.”

One of Subirats’ own sisters helped carry Patricia’s suitcases to the airport.

“I was probably the last person to figure out the two of them were flirting online,” David Weiss recalled. “And then when I heard she was

moving over to England, I really wasn't any part of it. And so she moved over there and she realized things weren't right. I was probably the most unaware of her discomfort over there, even though we were friends, and I would look at her sitting in the background sometimes and think, *Man, she looks trapped*. But I didn't think that was for real. I thought I was just being funny."

"And then we had a couple of discussions. It wasn't easy for her to communicate. And she told me what was going on. And then she was back. And without breaking pace she was doing her *Hot Potatoes* show. That must have been a trying ride for her."

Patricia's next YouTube appearance would come one month later. Another *Secret Show*, with Mark Sargent as her guest. In the intervening days between she had already found a temporary place to live and had bought a new car. "I never explained what had happened between me and Antonio on *any* YouTube video. Nobody knew there had been a problem between us. I simply said, *I'm back, that didn't work out too well, but on with the show*, and then continued on with the video."

Subirats however found his way to the live chat.

Though separated once again by two continents and an ocean between, neither his nor her presence, awkwardly silent now and constrained in the same internet chat room, went unnoticed. Patricia carefully watched his comments without deleting him. But Subirats had many friends, it seems; including the moderator. Tony Russo. Unbeknownst to Patricia at the time, Russo was starting to take sides. In a *community* of prying eyes and ears and loose lips, all of which had the instantaneous habit of spreading to thousands at the simple indiscriminate clap of a keyboard, Patricia seemingly had *no one* to talk to or confide in.

"I had personal friends contacting me, saying: *'You're back, what happened? Let's chat.'* So I did a private group Skype chat with my closest flat earth friends. We all talked about what happened, and I leveled with them about what happened with the mental and physical abuse," most notably the *incident*, "why I didn't go to the police, and why I left. One person who was in that conversation," that would be Russo, "who was a moderator on her channel, reported back to Antonio everything that was said. He listened in as I confided about certain things, and then he left. Everyone had vowed to not make any videos about it—not talk about it. This was a completely private conversation."

Soon after she confided in her friends, one of them messaged her.

Go to YouTube right now. Go to Antonio's channel.

“And the video was called, *Patricia Steere, Flat Earth's Biggest Psychopath*, with a picture of Paris Hilton, of all people, on the front thumbnail picture, with a description that read, *A Shot across the Bow*.” That's *pirate talk*. “It would air in three hours or something.” She and her friends watched it on Skype together, and as one would imagine by the title, Patricia Steere was painted with psychopathic strokes.

Subirats had a reputation to keep. A rapist...? No—no—no, *this* was damage control. He needed Patricia discredited, *immediately*. He needed to “paint me as crazy, so if anyone talked openly about it, I'd be the deranged one. I *never* had any intention of making a tell-all video.” More specifically, Subirats desperately needed to start a campaign of hatred against Patricia “in order to *get me to leave flat earth*—his exact words.”

“Everything he said had a slight glimmer of truth to it. It was a masterfully done video. Friends were going online and telling him to stop.” Though they had sworn secrecy, one individual who had personally been in on the Skype conversation and had heard Patricia's intimate confessions typed a message into the chat box.

YOU'RE A *FORKING* RAPIST.

Only he didn't spell *fork*.

“His name was Stephen Chess, by the way,” Patricia said. “Everyone had promised to keep quiet, but Stephen told Antonio, *you're a fucking rapist*. That's how the so-called *false rape accusations* began.”

In turn, Chess would have as many as ten consecutive attack videos made upon him. Anyone and everyone who stood up for Patricia in the face of empty words were immediately humiliated. *Patricia got caught making false rape accusations* literally became an anthem of countless keyboard warriors.

“David Weiss was my friend,” she said. “David stuck up for me.”

In turn, Antonio would turn on David Weiss.

“WAIT, HOLD ON,” I STOPPED PATRICIA. “So you never actually *used* the ‘R’ word.”

“No,” she said. “Nobody in on the Skype conversation went out and publicly called him a rapist. Only Stephen Chess did. Stephen Chess said that.”

I said, “So I guess what I’m trying to understand is, did he or didn’t he?”

“Rape me...? I wasn’t even able to process it when it happened. I didn’t tell him he was raping me when it happened. But I let him know it was hurting and he needed to stop. I was hurt. I was bleeding. I got a urinary tract infection afterwards. He was showing me this other side of him. I was shocked. I was scared. All of it took a lot of time to process. It was all so scary, and it wasn’t until the plane ride back that it had occurred to me what had *truly* happened.”

“And you’ve never gone public with this before.”

“No,” she said. “I’ve never spoken about it.”

“Patricia, so what exactly are you saying? *Did* he or *didn’t* he...?”

“Antonio Subirats raped me,” she said, “and I’m willing to stand by it.”

3

“DID PATRICIA EVER TELL YOU about that time Antonio tried to throw her cat out the window?” Laurel Austin asked over the phone.

“Refresh my memory,” I said.

Laurel said, “Patricia walked into the room just as he was throwing her cat out the second story window. Antonio *threw* her cat out the window and then tried to tell her it was jumping and he was simply trying to catch it. But there was a fence down below which the cat could have been impaled on. And she was scared half to death the entire time as she ran down the stairs in pursuit of it.”

Though Patricia had in fact told me about the cats harrowing tumble over the window cell, she has asked, or rather suggested, that I not include this account in the narrative. “I was thinking about Greer and the window,” she said *after* Laurel had managed to remind me of it. “Don't include that. What *if* he *was* trying to stop her from jumping out of the window? I saw what I saw *but* I could be wrong. From my angle of vision maybe I saw it differently than it was? I don't want to accidentally falsely accuse him, even if that's all he's done to me”—*falsely accuse*, that is. While her concerns are understood, this is the insanity which derives from Antonio's masterful manipulation of her. She is *still* forced to reckon with what she saw and dutifully question her own experiences.

There is no reason why Patricia should wrestle with Antonio's strict policy of self-doubt. Laurel Austin once had to plot an escape from her own ex. “I went through *that*. I had to plot an escape. I know what that's like.”

4

THOUGH IT IS PERHAPS DIFFICULT to imagine there was such an hour, David Weiss and Antonio Subirats *were* friends.

Weiss even commissioned him to paint a picture. “He had done a sketch of what he thought flat earth looked like, and I was like, *Antonio, that's really—that's excellent*. So I commissioned him to do a painting. And he was like, *I don't have the paints right now, and money's tight*, and I sent him—I don't remember how much I sent him, but it was hundreds of dollars. And he never painted it.”

If Patricia remembers the painting, it's because she was there to *never* see it happen. Weiss “sent him \$300.00 to make the painting,” she said. She remembers the canvas. It “was approximately the size of a door turned sideways.” She remembers the painter's easel. It was “clamped at the bottom, leaning back in the living room *slash* dining room.” Such an artifact would be impossible to miss. After all, his apartment was tiny, and though it had two bedrooms, “one was completely filled, ceiling to floor, with boxes of junk. You couldn't walk in.” She found it odd that his two daughters, who visited regularly, were not a good enough reason to fix it up, so that they might have a room of their own. “He kept promising to

clean out the room and buy them a bed but did nothing but endless late night hangouts.”

She remembers the canvas and the dark blue background in which Subirats painted upon it. “This took weeks to happen. He added more blue daily. It was *just* blue. It had no form.” *Blue*. “He kept painting coats on it,” *blue—blue—blue*, but when it wouldn’t dry, Patricia recalls the frustration. “He tried various circles on the canvas but painted over them again and again.”

And then *something* happened—a conspiracy of such epic proportions that it would be talked about, quarreled over, and debated endlessly on YouTube for the months and years to come, courtesy of Subirats. Apparently, Patricia’s cats saw to it that he never finished his painting.

Subirats was giving her the silent treatment on the morning she awoke to discover the big painting in the living room looking very much “like a sideways door, situated now with one corner on the carpeted floor and one corner leaning against the wall, with a tiny smudge of paint like a thumb sized-print on the carpet and wall where a corner of canvas had touched it. Otherwise,” Patricia insisted, there was “no damage to the apartment.”

Though it is true that her first reaction relied on the possibility that her cats may have been responsible, she then related to the fact that there had been absolutely no noise in the apartment, indicating nothing that would highlight such a tale, and Subirats had been sleeping in the living room moments before. “Although I hadn’t thought it through,” she admitted, “I righted the painting at great effort, and washed the blue paint with my hands.”

Subirats not only blamed Flynn, he insisted on YouTube that the feline spread blue paint all over the house.

Chris Van Matre explains it like this: “He told her that he was a painter, that he made his living at painting. When she got over there she found out that he really wasn’t a painter.” At any rate, “he started a painting—he had started painting blue—and when she got up in the morning the painting was lying on the floor. She explained to me it was like sitting on an easel and there was no way that a cat could jump up on it, because an easel, the canvas leans back upon it. There is no way a cat could jump up there and knock it over without knocking over the easel and everything.”

“Antonio had never gotten up at that time, but that morning he came out and acted all surprised, and tried to blame the painting being knocked on the floor on the cats. Well, if her cats had done it, there would have been paint on the floor from the paws of the cat walking around. Plus the painting would have had paw prints on it, but there wasn’t anything on it. She decided that she would go ahead and purchase a new canvas for him. He gave her the item number to purchase the canvas, and she ended up finding out that the canvas she bought for him was far more expensive than the one he’d had at first. But in the end he never did end up finishing the painting that he was supposed to do for David Weiss.”

“She never could figure out why he tried to come up with that story other than, most narcissistic people, they try and convince people that they’re crazy.” Essentially, if she were to come out and try to explain to him her thoughts; the cat could *never* knock that over, Antonio would play a spinning top with her own mind. “He would accuse her that she was gas lighting him by doing his laundry. From what I understand of gas lighting, you’re trying to convince someone that they’re crazy and they’ve lost their mind. An example would be, someone sets cheese on a table, and you go in and move that cheese, and as they’re looking all over for it you convince them that they never set their cheese there in the first place.” After Patricia told Chris Van Matre about Subirats’ gas lighting claim, he responded: “*What?* That’s just somebody that cares for someone and is helping their laundry. How in the world could anybody consider that to be gas lighting?”

When I asked Weiss about the outcome of his painting, he had no memory of whether or not Subirats bothered to refund him. *That’s because*, Patricia insisted, “he never offered David Weiss his money back. It took a third party to broker a partial settlement after about six months, *long* after I was gone.”

It is not however the painting *or* Patricia’s cats which seemed to steer their relationship towards the inevitable iceberg. Weiss sent Subirats Dr. Judy Wood’s book, *Where Did the Towers Go?*

Subirats *refused* to read it.

Dr. Judy Wood, he insisted, was a *skill*.

And now that Subirats thought about it, David Weiss came to the *same* conclusions as the doctor. Maybe *he* was a *skill*.

“In my highly researched opinion,” Weiss said regarding the seven buildings which disappeared on September 11, “there was some kind of directed energy weapon used that day from land based positions and perhaps along with some elevated aircraft positions. The proof is now undeniable.” After sending Subirats her book, Subirats “refused to read the factual data. He thinks I am a government agent sent in to destroy the flat earth movement and push nonsense about other events.”

For Subirats, Weiss and Steere were Jews—*conspiring* Jews.

“I live in Connecticut, forty-five minutes from Wall Street and half of my town works there. I knew far more than *two* people. Antonio believes nobody died on 9/11. It is true the number is far less than the 3,000 they claim and there is lots of proof of that.” Though he did at one time soundly cling to the fact that his two friends who worked there died on that September morning, “I now say they are gone and their families appear to believe they are dead. They might be but I do not know.”

Subirats didn’t like any of his conclusions. No-no—his former girlfriend and the podcaster weren’t only despicable Jews. Subirats committed himself to endless Hangouts insisting that David Weiss was her *handler*.

Weiss apparently ruined everything.

“I’ll give you my opinion on Antonio,” Weiss said. “He started saying all this nonsense about Patricia, making all these hit videos, poisoning the well horribly. You know, the guy lives like a sloth, and I stopped listening to him. I unsubscribed. I don’t listen to his videos anymore. When he’s talking about me, people send me links. I won’t watch them because I’m not interested. Antonio is irrelevant and anything he says is inconsequential. I prefer to not focus any energy his way and to have him not exist in my world. It’s a better world that way.”

Unfortunately, Patricia couldn’t stop watching Subirats’ hit pieces. In her world, the man whom she’d loved could not possibly cease to exist—not as long as he spoke about her. Patricia knew it and Subirats knew it. And everyone else was invited to play along.

FEW FLAT EARTHISTS WERE PRESENT to witness Antonio Subirats pillage and plunder Patricia Steere's reputation. His *shot across the bow* is in no way legendary, but his arsonry, and the amount of oxygen it would take to spread the flames, has likely surpassed even his own expectations. While *Patricia Steere, Flat Earth's Biggest Psychopath* raged on in live time, Martin Liedtke attempted to cool his flames.

ANTONIO, STOP!

NONE OF THIS IS TRUE!

SHE'S NOT A PSYCHOPATH!

I MET HER IN OXFORD!

But it was too late. For Subirats, *Patricia Steere, Flat Earth's Biggest Psychopath* was only the beginning. "I completely ignored him. But he made video after video after video after video. He talked about things in that video that I had told my friends in the private Skype conversation. He wasn't a painter. He never showered, which he didn't—it was weird. And he smelled horrible. Physical and mental abuse was discussed in that video. He explained that he hadn't showered in two months—*why*, because he wanted to encourage the psychopath to leave. He was living on government assistance—*why*, because he was just a poor artist, quote-unquote. He encouraged others to berate me. He said I had met Mark Sargent before flat earth, which wasn't true. He told people I was a CIA agent. He got people to turn against me. He manned people to go lash out against me."

It's ironic, Patricia sighed. "A psychopath would be the one making a lot of hit videos. *That's* a psychopath. A psychopath doesn't just mind their own business and make flat earth videos." But the hit pieces continued on others channel and his own, "hundreds probably." Meanwhile, as Patricia continued *Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes* from Houston, her channel grew, and "my life had completely changed. I now owned a house, no apartment. I had another new Mercedes. I was dating. I never flinched. I never lashed out against Antonio. I never answered to any of his charges—because they were all stupid and false. And I never answered to charges from the other people who had picked up on that gossip and made their own videos."

Subirats *desperately* needed new material.

His most extreme, and dare I say *monumental*, contribution to the flat earth movement would come seven months after Patricia had fled the UK.

PATRICIA STEERE IS A MAN.

In Patricia's words, Antonio Subirats' script went something like this: *Hey guys, I've been wanting to tell you this, but ever since she left, I knew she was transgender from the moment she stepped off the airplane to visit me at the Oxford meetup, but her sexuality was her sexuality, and I just didn't want to make a big deal about it. And when she came to live with me, I just didn't want to tell anyone about it.*

"He also told people I was broke, and that's the reason I came to live with him. It wasn't because he was in love with me or that he wanted to marry me, though there are plenty of videos where he said it. It's because he was allowing me to sleep on the couch until I got my life together and found a job. Like any broke person is going to move to England with all of their cats and furniture. That's not what broke people do. They stay in their own town. They *don't* move across the Atlantic."

Patricia paused over the phone, sighing heavily.

"So then he started talking about my penis."

"He *is* an artist, so he drew a line drawing of a person that wasn't even me, of a woman lying on her side, with her butt to the camera, lying on what looked like a bed, and he drew on the leg—the leg that was up—like a lump on it. He said, *'I knew she was a transgender when I saw the shape of her leg. It wasn't the shape of a normal woman.'*"

"Now, I have totally normal legs. And I'm not transgender. I was born a female. There's plenty of documentation to prove that, from my birth certificate to photos, which at all times were available on my public profile page, available since 2009. There are *hundreds* of photos of myself from a baby forward. He told people that my parents were some sort of an elite where they transgendered me at puberty and they dressed me as a girl, and that I was really a boy. He talked about the fact that my vagina was the same color as my arm—white, because it's not a real vagina. It's fake. At the time, I didn't know anything about transgenders. But after that I looked into it because I know the color of my vagina. Most men who have sex with Caucasian women know the color of their vaginas—let's just leave it at that."

Patricia had to look it up online, “Is the penis that is cut open in that operation, to make a man into a transgender, white skin? *It’s not!* To be more graphic than you probably want to know, they take a male penis and basically slice it open and mold it into a vagina. And if you’re a Caucasian man, which the accusation is that *I am*, the penis would be a pinkish color because that’s what a Caucasian man’s penis color would be, or like a brownish, pinkish, tannish—*whatever*. We know what it looks like! When it’s sliced open and made into a vagina it’s not the color of somebody’s arm. It’s the color of genital skin. So he didn’t even do his research when he made up his lies. He even got into a conversation with a woman who came onto his channel debating that I’m a man because she hugged me and said Patricia Steere is definitely a woman. She’s small. She’s petite. She’s very thin. She has some curves. She doesn’t have some outrageous big butt like Kim Kardashian or anything or big boobs. They don’t *look* fake. *She just looks like a normal woman, Antonio.*”

“Antonio *had* to make me into a man. Because of the rape allegation made by Stephen Chess, which was indeed *true*—he’d already said I was a psychopath as a sort of revenge for me leaving him, which he then turned around to say that he kicked me out. Of course part of that was I am a paid agent. The *she’s a man* campaign was a way to defend his pride. In his mind it wasn’t me that didn’t want him. It was him who didn’t want me. But mostly it was a preemptive measure to protect his *self*.” Nobody wants to be an acknowledged rapist. Like the moon landing hoax of their devotion, “He lied about me being a man.” Pull a leg out from under the table, and *everything* falls. “Therefore everything else he said about me must be scrutinized. I’d like people to consider that.”

Subirats told her defender to get onto Skype with Patricia and ask that she spread her legs. Oh, and make sure that Patricia show you her white vagina, and make her use a Kleenex to wipe if off because she’ll probably put lipstick on it to make it look pink. “Yes, I know that’s graphic, but I’m telling you, this is the bullying. And the fact that the live chat on that video was going *wild* with people going, *Patrick the Tranny!*”

Patricia’s a Tranny!

Pat, let’s call her Pat!

Pat has a ramshackle vagina!

Patricia said, “This became the clarion call. This became a thing. When I am a perfectly normally formed female from birth, who

had *normal sex* with a man I loved, whom *I thought* I loved, with a boyfriend-future bride relationship in England, with the lights on. And I met his entire family. He was making videos saying his entire family knew I was a man from the first day. And he never had any of those family members on camera saying it, but that's what he said. Antonio pulled this out of his hat. *Remember*, it was seven months after I left him. *Not* while I lived there."

"In my life as a woman, as a young woman, I've never had a single person say, '*Excuse me sir!*' I've never had anyone call me a man, think I'm a man, tell me that I shouldn't be in a woman's restroom, think I'm a dude, call me transgender. I don't know any transgender people. I don't live around any transgender people. I don't have much to say about how in our society there seems to be an uptick in gay and transgender people other than there seems to be an uptick. I don't know if that's because more people seem comfortable in coming out, or the internet gives people confidence to do that sort of thing or make those sort of decisions, or maybe it's not a decision, maybe that's just how they were born—I don't know. I simply don't know because I'm not *them*. And I can't speak to it, just like I can't speak right now to what it's like to be a black woman. How would I know? I can theorize, but I only really know what *I am*."

Other psychopath videos would follow suit. "It practically became a genre. I mean, *didn't you hear what Antonio said?* It was like the National Enquirer of Gossip in YouTube flat earth land." The bullying was dulled out in such extraordinary dosages as to make her accusers, even the unknowable thousands who eagerly chimed in, administrators of malpractice. "Other channels picked up on it. My name and picture were *everywhere*. Antonio was making video after video about all the things I said and did—all made up, about how I was trying to kill him, how I was trying to poison his coffee, literally painting the picture of a monster. But the reality was, none of that has ever been exhibited on YouTube on any of my videos, so people were saying I was fake on my channel, but he was revealing my true personality, who I truly am. And he made maybe 100 videos on me, or more. It was almost daily for a time."

"I watched a few at the start," Patricia seemed to shake her head at the insanity, "and then stopped."

Subirats' campaign of slander and deception was nothing short of *shock and awe*. He openly enlisted thousands of keyboard clappers to join in on the crusade, each doing their part to repeat the mantra, and

regurgitated so often that the mockery *itself* metamorphosed into the only possible truth. In the deductive depravity of their minds, anyone who refused part in the slander, who held a hand up to their sinful voices, became the agents of arrogance. Obviously, Steere was an agent, trained from the moment of her birth, when they lopped her penis off—how could she not be? Subirats slept with her. Subirats knew. And besides, shills were everywhere.

That's *exactly* the sort of thing a shill would do—come to her defense.

The paranoia parade would continue, and in an ever strengthening tide of numbers, until Subirats demands were met. Meanwhile, torches were passed around. Screens crackled. Eyes watered and glistened. There was not enough room in flat earth for the two of them. Patricia Steere *must leave* flat earth behind for good.

6

Please FEED THE TROLLS. Hmmm, BOB KNODEL found that to be a rather odd philosophy, particularly as it pertained to Patricia. And it's precisely what soured him to the man who'd once hosted the very flat earth meet-up in Oxford where she and Subirats had met.

“Nathan Oakley has always been the sort of person that has provided a safe haven for trolls. He thinks that trolls matter—that they should have their say, and it doesn't matter how vile or destructive they're being. He's always provided safe haven. It doesn't matter what any of them say in his chat. They can dox people. They can lie about them in the chat. They can be vile and call names. And it's always okay with Nathan.”

And so one day, after her bad deal with Subirats, Oakley and Knodel volunteered as moderators during one of her shows. “There were some trolls that came in and they were calling Patricia a tranny, and being vile, and just being really, really horrible,” Knodel recounted of his experience. *Naturally* as a moderator, Knodel began giving them the boot. “After that Nathan started unbanning them and then went off on me in the chat.”

What do you even think you're doing? Don't be banning these people, Knodel.

They're calling Patricia a tranny, Oakley.

If you do they're going to give Patricia a thumbs down, Knodel.

You've got to be kidding me, Oakley.

Knodel seemed to wince at the memory. "You'd rather let them bash Patricia on her own show than, heaven forbid, they give her a thumb's down?" Oakley "has an obsession with trolls. He would give trolls wrenches in the chat, like John Le Bon, who absolutely hates flat earthers, and is just an ugly person in general."

"He gives him a wrench," Knodel said, "*because* anybody else would ban him."

7

"I EVEN CONTACTED A LAWYER," Patricia confessed. "I was *desperate* to make him stop. But I not only wanted him to stop, I wanted him to make a video admitting to the fact that he had lied, because anybody can stop *saying* something. That doesn't negate what they said."

Patricia's lawyer explained to her, it doesn't work that way. Firstly, he's in *another* country—so, different laws. The odds of him doing agreeing to a cease and desist letter are slim to none. And besides, she had already confessed that he was poverty stricken. *What are you possibly going to get out of this, Patricia?*

"I really tried to pursue this with a lawyer, but he said it's not possible."

She then reported Subirats and his friends with YouTube.

"YouTube *protected* them," Patricia said. "These videos are allowed. And I know the world doesn't just revolve around me, and that there are many other people on YouTube having videos made about them, having all sorts of things said, and they're allowed to be left up. YouTube secretly *loves* videos like this, because it creates more viewers on YouTube. It's a toxic circle." More viewers *equal* more subscribers—it's a win-win for both YouTube *and* the provider.

And anyways, what was the use of a lawyer when the Subirats story became the very oxygen that so many flat earthists breathed? If it is true that women everywhere are really secretly men as a sort of subconscious

subversion of our sexual urges, then they needed a *human sacrifice* as proof, someone within their own circle who might lend muscle, and credibility, to their own worldview.

Patricia Steere would do.

“There’s this whole corner of YouTube where these varying content providers, they call themselves Transvestigators, look at beautiful Hollywood women and call them men.” Jennifer Aniston, Angelina Jolie, Jennifer Lawrence, J-Lo, Jada Pinkett Smith, Beyoncé—they’re all men, according to Transvestigators. Not forgetting Brad Pitt, who married both Aniston and Jolie. Brad Pitt is a woman.

Likewise, Arnold Schwarzenegger is a woman and Maria Shriver a man. “All *Victoria’s Secret* Angels are men.”

“Every Hollywood actress is a man—*every*,” Patricia said. “All the President’s wives are men, even going back into ancient history where it’s just drawings. They’re men. This is what Transvestigators claim. And they do it by looking at features. They claim wide-set eyes *prove* you’re a man. Now I kind of have wide set eyes. I *also* know that being a young girl and doing make-up, and reading *Fashion Magazine* when I was a young girl, when I was 16, it tells you how to achieve the look of close-spaced eyes, which is highly desirable for a woman. That’s the desired quote-unquote standard of beauty, not close set eyes. But Transvestigators say women with close set eyes are men. They say that women with a stronger jaw line are men. I don’t really have a super strong jaw line, like I don’t look like Maria Shriver, one of the Kennedy women. I don’t have a strong jawline like that. I have slightly high cheek bones. These are all signs of a man, supposedly. Long legs and long fingers, that’s the sign of a man. That’s *me*. That’s *many* natural born women.”

“I know plenty of men with closed-set eyes, and they’re *not* women. And I know plenty of men who are short with stubby fingers, and they’re *not* women. I know plenty of males and females who have the opposite characteristics than what these Transvestigators claim. Humans come in all shapes and sizes.”

“Nowadays you can do a lot with plastic surgery,” Mark Sargent said. “But there’s one thing they absolutely cannot fake with any degree of success, and that is the voice. And Patricia has a lovely, an absolutely wonderful, articulate, feminine voice—always has. She’s Disney queen all the way. She reminds me of every Disney Queen; Not the princess—the

queen.” I can only imagine Sargent then tightened his shoulders and padded all ten fingers together as he quipped, *Bring me the girl!* “So when she dressed up as Maleficent for me for that Halloween episode it just tickled me to no end, because she plays a better Maleficent than even Angelina Jolie. The voice—you can’t change that. Doing surgical stuff on vocals is impossible, because it’s like tuning a piano. When you tune a piano you have to test it. Well you can’t do surgery on somebody’s vocal chords and have them be conscious. It can’t be done. Whenever you see anyone who’s ever gone under trans surgery, the voice always gives them always; *always—always—always—always—always*. People don’t understand that. It staggers me as to why.”

To this Sargent added: “Believe me, I’ve seen Patricia in all her glory.” He then laughed like the sort of schoolboy who had been gained admittance into the girl’s locker room. “She’s a genetic lottery winner.”

Women are the *worst*, Patricia said. They’ll happily point out another woman’s “masculine features” if it makes them feel more *feminine*. In other words, let’s all sit around and call these beautiful women *men* so that we can feel more beautiful and confident about ourselves, and while we’re at it, hope they don’t make note of our looks.

It’s not exactly like finding *real* transgender people on YouTube is difficult to do. In fact, Patricia insisted, “they are out, proud, into the LGBT—*whatever the rest of those letters are*—agenda. They are out talking about their surgeries. They do videos comparing pictures of themselves as a natural boy and being all glammed up as a woman now with long pink nails and long eyelashes and eyeliner. These are a staple of the transgender crowd—the *Reacting to My Boy* videos. It’s the transgender *coming out* genre.” It’s essentially where men, after having surgery, show photos of themselves, pre-surgery. “They feel the need to discuss it, not hide the fact! I’m supposed to be a transgender, but never *coming out* about being a transgender, or *talking about* being a transgender, or *promoting* the cause and transgender acceptance, that’s supposed to make me a transgender *hidden in plain sight*.”

There are literally hundreds of videos on YouTube, per chance thousands, where Patricia Steere is either outed as a man or having her penis discussed. “Videos are being made about how ugly I am and how I wear a wig. Antonio told people I couldn’t walk. I was crippled. He told people I was stupid, that I couldn’t read books. There were videos on my

channel of me reading George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. I read portions of the Bible on my channel."

"Do I know why people are doing this?" Sargent asked over the phone. He then set out to answer his own question. "Yeah, I do. It's because of Antonio. He took it way too far and he did it for sensationalism. If a guy gets dumped by a woman," and Antonio *was* dumped by Patricia, "they'll say she was cold, she was *this* or *that*, and if they're really mean, they'll say she was a lesbian." But if you're a chronic liar and a psychopath, the girl's a *dude*. "The first time Patricia heard that, I don't know what sort of shockwaves went through her, but it had to have been horrifying. The problem is with the internet. Once that generates some traction, people want more. He was getting hits. He was getting likes. He was getting subs. What do you think is going to happen? He's not going to pull back. He's going to keep making them, and he kept getting better reception for it." Antonio's viewers were readily capable of ignoring glaring errors if it meant they might fill their deranged appetites with his ongoing supply of malnourishment. For one, there's the fact that they lived together, and slept together, and that Antonio had planned to marry her. They took a leap of logic. "There is no worse accusation. She is ultimately feminine. She is *exponentially* feminine."

"The funny thing is," Patricia said, "when I was in a relationship with Antonio, he had me read to him before bed. He loved me reading to him. But what he did, he turned around all the things I take pride in, my love of reading, my kindness, and also my pride in my femininity, because I am a feminine woman—I like perfume, I like make-up, and I love fashion. My mother was always the same. I love style. I love elegance and grace. He took it all away from me with his videos. By making me a cripple who can't walk, someone who wears a wig and is ugly in real life, and is unable to read, and is cruel to his family and cruel to other people—he *masterfully* did it."

Antonio *is* an artist. But perhaps canvass is not his greatest talent.

Others would admire his brush strokes—others like YouTube channels *Stargods* and *Flat Earth Reset*, by trying to convince the world of their goodness, and at times godliness, and obsessing over her inhumanness, rather ironically, through the aboriginal testimony of Antonio's ungodliness. Patricia Steere's secreting penis needed put out in the same way firefighters band together to extinguish a fire. Then again, there was plenty of plagiarism to go around. Even before arriving in the

UK, Eric Dubay liked to dress up as Patricia Steere. Eric would make fun of Mark Sargent, played by him. He would make fun of Math Powerland, played by him. He would make fun of Jeran, played by him. But dressing up as Patricia added other elements entirely to the underlining statement. Antonio saw Dubay dressed like the woman he had hoped to marry one day and then concluded that he too should paint her as a man.

In turn—and only *after* Subirats grabbed onto Dubay’s bedroom fantasy—would Dubay seize onto the very lie that he had given life to in order to call her Patrick the Tranny. Eric Dubay, the very individual who helped to launch an entire Movement by claiming the globe lie is an elaborate attempt to hide our astral projection guides, and worse, who has referred to himself as the *I Am*, breached a far larger audience. His influences can be found *everywhere* on flat earth. “That’s just Eric looking around to find weapons on the floor, and he found one and used it.”

Quite suddenly, it seemed like everyone started looking at Patricia Steere and seeing only a man. “I had to block and ban a lot of people. Even those who had attended my flat earth mixers in Houston, two of them came out and said I was a man. The first was a 250 pound woman who *looked* like a man. She was over 6 foot 2, someone whom I was very nice to, because she was nice and a flat earther, a former Jehovah’s Witness named Theresa, who has a lot of mental problems. She’s been raped, has had a lot of sexual abuse in her life, a lot of pain and agony, and has done videos about all of it, including her work with porn. She has lived a life of horror and sadness.” Patricia held multiple talks with Theresa over the phone, heart-to-heart conversations, “because I was trying to help her. She believes in a lot of things that people would consider *quite odd*, and is often susceptible.”

And then one day she turned.

“Something clicked in Theresa’s mind and she jumped on the tranny train.” Theresa took her claims to the YouTube community. The fact that she had attended Patricia’s critically panned vegan dinner delivered an extra dosage of lubrication to their own pleasure. Very likely, Theresa was looking to be acknowledged, more-so *loved*, by the internet. In turn, as these things often go, they acknowledged her words. It is truly an epidemic, how often humans confuse the two.

Theresa who...?

“One other guy named Jason Laufenberg from Austin, Texas, came to *both* mixers in Houston. He professed to be a Christian. The first one, in 2016, he was invited as part of the 25.” A year later, “he’d already been making videos about me being an agent and being an antichrist and a demon, and a devil worshiper.” Let’s just say Jason Laufenberg was *not* invited. “He RSVP’d under the name Deceiver Destroyer, and I allowed that person to attend. But see, I just thought it was a flat earther who probably had Christian leanings, but I didn’t know it was him.”

“How crazy is that?” Patricia thought about it. “He drove like five or six hours there and back just to torment me”

Deceiver Destroyer arrived at her vegan meet-up, and then proceeded with a live broadcast. Deceiver Destroyer had the *inside scoop*. He had infiltrated Patricia Steere’s flat earth meet-up, and now it was quite certain in his mind. *Brace yourselves*. Patricia Steere is a man! “Jason’s about six-four. He did a video of me standing next to him, five-seven in heels, saying I’m a man. It’s still on his channel.”

His YouTube channel, by the way, is *Awake Souls*.

Moments before Laufenberg’s story of the decade, Patricia’s ex-boyfriend—his name is Mike, by the way “born and raised in Scotland”—happened to be in the area. He texted her and asked what she was up to. When she told him about the flat earth mixer, he said he was just now passing that very restaurant. Naturally, Patricia invited him in. “‘There was plenty of food,’ I said. So he came in and sat down, ate foot, met my flat earth friends. And when he saw Jason saying I was a transgender, he *told him* that we had had a relationship for a multitude of years—and *she’s not a man. Just look at her?*”

Laufenberg would have none of it. Because, after all, Deceiver Destroyer was an awakened soul, and the *woken part* needed told. “Jason left his wife over flat earth,” Patricia said. “His life is filled with tragedy and sadness.” With Subirats and Laufenberg and countless others, including those still to come, a consistent profile begins to emerge. Claims such as these have more to say about the *person saying them* than the person they’re pointing fingers at. “They’re all messed up inside. They all have broken hearts and broken minds and broken lives. So they hurt others.”

“I never had a transgender agenda. I don’t discuss LGBT. I don’t talk about gay pride. I don’t talk about transgender things. I basically don’t mention that. It doesn’t interest me.”

The ‘*everyone is transgender*’ banner, she said, is the modern day Satanic Panic. And they can’t seem to get enough of it.

During the War apologist CS Lewis gave a series of radio broadcasts which hoped to speak on the issues of moral depravity currently unraveling in the world, and in doing so, raise Christian moral. His view on the sort of *depravity* which lends to a sexual appetite seems very appropriate here. In *Mere Christianity* he wrote:

“You can get a large audience together for a strip-tease act—that is, to watch a girl undress on the stage. Now suppose you came to a country where you could fill a theatre by simply bringing a covered plate on to the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let everyone see, just before the lights went out, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think that in that country something had gone wrong with the appetite for food?”

The irony, I have come to learn, is that most of these perpetrators, while deeming themselves chivalrous towards the cause of God’s *image bearers*, are either so seared of conscious or morally depraved that they might very well look [YHWH] YAHUAH, THE MOST-HIGH ELOHIM into His face, if that is indeed humanly possible, and demand that He lift His garment as proof.

DOCTRINE of ACCOMMODATION

1

FLAT EARTH FAULT-FINDERS WILL LIKELY BREATHE a sigh of relief to note the PhD thesis submitted by a young Tunisian Muslim woman, and which caused a worldwide uproarious scandal in 2017 for exhibiting such chutzpah as to dismiss the physics of Newton, the math of Einstein, the astronomy of Copernicus and Kepler, and big bang cosmology, as well as Darwinian biology, has been soundly *rejected*.

I'll wait for the applause to end.

By doing so, declaring the earth to be immovable, young of age, and at the center, or perhaps more precisely *floor* of the universe, as both the Quran and Bible out rightly proclaim, she is unforgivably chastened for taking the meanings of religious texts *literally* and *blindly*, at the “irresponsible cost of rejecting sanctioned knowledge.” Her worldwide critics, suddenly taking an interest in the thoughts of a professional and independent-minded woman of North Africa, are morally outraged *merely* on the sleepless understanding that somewhere in the world a doctorate student has defected from the religion of Scientism. Examples *must* be made of sinners.

For the Muslim world, there was simply too much at stake.

Though Sultan bin Salman Al Saud had already become the first Arab *and* Muslim in space in 1985, complications arose twenty years later, in 2007, when Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor of Malaysia was scheduled for a nine-day visit on board the International Space Station during the holy month of Ramadan. Apparently, despite several Muslims who had preceded him, Shukor was the first to propose the quandary as to which way he should face while orbiting 220 miles above the surface of the Earth. During a single prayer, the ISS might turn nearly 180 degrees. Shukor's dilemma resulted in a convened conference of 150 Islamic scientists and scholars, hosted by Malaysia's space agency, Angkasa, in order to wrestle with pressing questions left by the *qibla*, the direction in which one must pray, in light of the glaring fact that Muhammad was a flat earthist. The Quran states:

“Turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque: wherever ye are, turn your faces towards it”.

Al-Baqarah 2:149

The resulting document, “A Guideline of Performing Ibadah [worship] at the International Space Station (ISS),” has become the new international standard and legal framework for excursions anywhere within the vast Copernican Universe.

The young Tunisian Muslim threatened *that*.

After immediately reassuring his readers that the young woman’s arguments are riddled with moon-sized potholes, Nidhal Guessom, writer for *Gulf News* in Dubai, conclusively hints at the treasure-trove of comfort and wealth to be found in the compromised religious-morals of Western Civilization by stating: “The Arab world will continue to suffer educational and cultural crises until it properly digests the different methodologies of science and religion.”

What I think Nidhal Guessom is *trying* to say here, is a deal must struck with the devil! *Er*, I mean—the west! Not *devil*. West! And by *deal*, I mean antichrist spirit! *Strike that*. Not antichrist spirit. I meant *comprise*. A compromise must be made! Western civilization has committed itself to such a task centuries ago, recognizing the different methodologies of science and religion, choosing *Science* where religion fails, and just look at our wealth!

Islam may have introduced algebra to western civilization through the 9th-century mathematician and astronomer, Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, but it was the Reformers, for the most part, who found a rather brilliant loophole in their own *Sola Scriptura*, or Scripture Alone doctrine, by introducing the world to the Doctrine of Accommodation—the roots of which can easily be found in the Alexandrian church fathers, all of whom were Platonists. Like Origen, the Reformers used Accommodation to mask their love for the Sciences, and John Calvin takes the helm.

The mere mention of his name can break the moral sweat of the most law-abiding churchgoer. One might say he can even yank their knickers in a twist—*especially* during a Sunday school discussion. Quite contrarily, Calvin’s admitted trust in Science is well applauded to this very day, which is odd for an individual on the outs with Rome. Or perhaps not so odd,

since Calvin and Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Society of Jesus, were classmates at the University of Paris. Calvin even referred to astronomy as “an art” which unfolded “the admirable wisdom of God.”

John Calvin of Geneva placed sincere trust in natural revelation. In his own commentary on Genesis, Calvin contemplates the following oddities on astronomy: “...this study is not to be reprobated, nor this science to be condemned, because some frantic persons are wont boldly to reject whatever is unknown to them.” He is speaking of those, in his own day, who would hold up the words of Moses as protest to the world, should the supposed *honesty* advertised from the halls of Science lead them to different—dare I say, *opposing*—realizations. Concerning the penmanship of Moses, Calvin is quick to enlighten us: “...because he was ordained a teacher as well of the unlearned and rude as of the learned, he could not otherwise fulfill his office than by descending to this grosser method of instruction. Had he spoken of things generally unknown, the uneducated might have pleaded in excuse that such subjects were beyond their capacity. Lastly since the Spirit of God here opens a common school for all, it is not surprising that he should chiefly choose those subjects which would be intelligible to all.”

That Science was always intended to one day *interpret* our understanding of Holy Writ, once we had properly acquainted and educated ourselves through the education which Moses—being himself wise in Egypt’s eyes—properly received, Calvin claims: “Moses wrote in a popular style things which without instruction, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labor whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend.” This is the Doctrine of Accommodation. Where in Scripture this prophecy is foretold, I cannot say. A reference has yet to be found.

At any rate, this is where Calvin gets *practical* in his high-regard for Science as a superior magistrate to the Bible. He writes: “Moses makes two great luminaries; but astronomers prove, by conclusive reasons that the star of Saturn, which on account of its great distance, appears the least of all, is *greater* than the moon.” In other words, Moses’ declaration is *incorrect*, but is acceptable in its error, because his message was intended for “common usage.” He further writes: “If the astronomer inquires respecting the actual dimensions of the stars, he will find the moon to be less than Saturn; but this is something abstruse, for to the sight it appears

differently. Moses, therefore, rather adapts his discourse to *common usage*,” and, “There is therefore no reason why janglers should deride the unskilfulness of Moses in making the moon the second luminary; for he does not call us up into heaven, he only proposes things which lie open before our eyes.”

If Moses did not bother to “call us up to heaven,” it’s because [YHWH] had reserved a time when men of a “more exalted knowledge,” as Calvin put it, would pull the curtains back for us. The problem is, according to this logic, once astronomers committed themselves to the task—revealing the heavenly stage behind the curtain, so to speak, the firmament (that solid glassy dome of Biblical mythology) did not exist as advertised; nor the waters above it. Writes Calvin: “Moses describes the special use of this expanse, to divide the waters from the waters from which word arises a great difficulty. For it appears opposed to common sense, and *quite incredible*, that there should be waters above the heaven.”

It has already been established by this point that the Prophet, *according* to his post-enlightenment spokesperson, wrote for the common uninitiated layman, knowing the more exalted knowledge was still to come. Unfortunately, a problem arises—*mainly*, the faith-sharers. As such, “The assertion of some, that they embrace by faith what they have read concerning the waters above the heavens, notwithstanding their ignorance respecting them, is not in accordance with the design of Moses.” *Tell us of Science again, Mr. Calvin*. He continues, “And truly a longer inquiry into a matter open and manifest is superfluous.”

If Calvin’s Doctrine of Accommodation is to be believed, then [YHWH] YAHUAH, THE MOST-HIGH ELOHIM, simply allowed Hebrew cosmology to be upheld in a document which acts as a Testimony to Himself and His own Creation because the lowly Hebrews were not initiated into the Mysteries of Isis, as Moses was. Indeed, [YHWH] was a Copernican all along.

In an article titled, “*When Science and Scripture Conflict—A Reformed Approach to Science and Scripture*,” Keith Mathison reported on a then-recent Q&A session at Ligonier’s 2012 National Conference, in which Dr. R.C. Sproul (some might consider him the greatest Christian theologian of our generation) addressed a series of questions concerning the age of the Universe. Essentially, Scripture interprets Scripture—*sort of*. He phrased it like this: “However, if something can be shown to be definitively taught in the Bible without questioning, and somebody gives me a theory

from *natural revelation*—that they think is based off of natural revelation—that contradicts the Word of God, I’m going to stand with the Word of God a hundred times out of a hundred.” Sproul then adds, “But again I have to repeat, I could have been a *mistaken* interpreter of the Word of God.”

Apparently that “*hundred times out of a hundred rule*” didn’t work out so well. And let me just state here that I have immense respect for Dr. Sproul. I have no desire to quarrel with his immense accomplishments as a minister of the Gospel, nor paw senselessly at his reputation. But please, sir, let us not take a surgical knife to the Holy Spirit. By dismissing the “*Scripture interprets Scripture*” principle almost as suddenly as he *seemingly* acknowledges it, he has once more opened the floodgates of humanist interpretation, rather than plugging a cork into the hole. This is most apparent when he takes to the popular opinion by addressing the glaring disagreement between the Copernican theory and the entire Biblical canon in the following way. Sproul says, “Here the advances of science helped the church to correct an earlier misinterpretation of Scripture. To say that science cannot overturn the teaching of Scripture is not to say that science cannot aid the church in understanding Scripture, or even correct false inferences drawn from Scripture or actual misinterpretations of Scripture.”

Dr. Sproul is of the opinion that Martin Luther and the Reformers, mostly the Anabaptist’s, were incorrect in lining up their understanding of Scripture as a *literal* interpretation. There *must* be some other explainable meaning, and which the religion of Scientism will surely enlighten us to. John Calvin was not overlooked either by Dr. Sproul, who is historically documented as having spoken in a sermon that those who believe “the sun does not move and that it is the earth that moves” are “stark raving mad” and “possessed by the devil!” John Calvin, it seems, according to Dr. Sproul, was too irrationally tempered and hastily set upon lining his own views with clear Biblical doctrine when not allowing our Scientism overlords to bend the rules of “*Sola Scriptura!*” and pronounce themselves as our self-assigned theological superiors.

Again, just so that he’s not mistaken, Dr. Sproul rephrases his point: “But historically, the church’s understanding of special revelation of the Bible has been corrected by students of natural revelation with the Copernican revolution.”

Such illogical nonsense tires me to no end. I am regularly directed to the dark catacombs of the humanist mind and asked to surrender any understanding of literal intent to the physicist, mathematician, and the astronomer. But what of the geologist, the biologist, and professor of metaphysics—must I also surrender to them? Everybody wants a turn at reshaping the Bible, from the paleontologist and the historian to the geographer, script writer, and onscreen actor. There will never be an end to it. Science and the scientific method is a human invention. Laugh if you must, but Scripture comes from God. How can the two be compatible, if and when such obvious human invention as the scientific method disagrees with God? Indeed, they are two opposing faiths intermingled.

Though Dr. Sproul has since passed, should any of his inside-circle admirers presently read this, my opinion shall likely pronounce the feathered weight of a passing burp. And I'm fine with that. I am certainly not seeking attention or special audience with the doctor. My Christian reader however needs to understand, and I can't stress this enough—our church has been taken hostage by false doctrine. We've compromised our faith. Essentially, we made a deal with the devil. We have tasked ourselves with preforming the devils work in his stead. And western comfort, which we gladly exchange for the centuries-old compromise, shows for it.

Spiritually we are a naked people (Revelation 3:17).

By abandoning a far superior theological professorship, which teaches the only principle ensuring the light of God, that is: "*Scripture interprets Scripture*," he and every other theologian who bends to the will of the humanist in the higher chairs of academia by allowing outside affluence to interpret Scripture, even if ever so slightly (perhaps nobody will take notice—or care), has willingly opened up the floodgates. The Darwinists may commence with their invasion of the church.

To this point Dr. Sproul, who seems terribly trusting with the *goodness* of men for a man who teaches the need for repentance in a swamp of sin, readily concludes, "When people ask me how old the earth is I tell them, 'I don't know,' because I don't. And I'll tell you why I don't. In the first place, the Bible does not give us a date of creation. Now it gives us hints and inclinations that would indicate in many cases a young earth. And at the same time you get all this expanding universe and all this astronomical dating, and triangulation and all that stuff coming from outside the church that makes me wonder."

THE DISTANCE FROM CHICAGO to Edmonton is some 1,600 miles. While Rob Skiba was struggling with Zetetic agnosticism and potential sunburn, Robbie Davidson was given an ultimatum.

Either ditch your YouTube channel, *Celebrate Truth*, or leave the church. It was June of 2016.

Perhaps Davidson's enthusiasm had gotten the better of him. "I remember talking to my pastor about these things—the moon landing. He was kind of conspiratorial a little bit himself. He *knew*. He knew this was going on." In fact, Davidson had gone to his pastor multiple times. "The version that they use there is the NASB. Now, if you look up in the NASB Amos 9:6, it says *vaulted dome*. God put the *vaulted dome* over the earth. I went to him like five or six times, because I kept asking him, "Tell me, how *do you* take this verse?" He'd be walking around and he'd open his Bible right there in church, and I'd tell him: 'Look at Amos 9:6.'

It says vaulted dome.

Robbie Davidson asked the pastor of Grace Life of Edmonton almost half a dozen times for an answer, he said, "and I'm still waiting."

"To this day he still hasn't gotten back to me about Amos 9:6, because it's a *big* problem, especially in the NASB. It's a big problem *period*. But here it is. That's the main translation that they use in their church and it's so fun, because you open up their own Bible, and you point to it, and their eyes get wide, and they don't know what to say."

Rather than *answering*, Robbie and Rachel Davidson were warned as to what awaited them on the horizon, should they remain in their conviction. "So I looked at that as a lesson. I don't know if I was angry. It was almost like, *Okay*. I started looking at their church governance and their policies, and all that time you never really clue in, I guess, until you're doing ministry for *yourself*." The glaring issue, according to Davidson, wasn't the fact that he'd pressed his pastor against the wall, so to speak, thereby forcing him to reconcile with his own doctrinal errors. "They were very upset that I didn't ask permission. I didn't think I needed permission to start a YouTube channel. I found out later they have a very strict policy

when it comes to church governance. You can't even *start* a Bible study without their permission. If you're doing a Bible study with members of the church you can be in a lot of trouble. I didn't know this at first, but they have a very strict teaching policy."

Fact of the matter is, had Robbie Davidson started a YouTube channel that celebrated the truth of, *say*, reformed history, it is difficult to imagine that Grace Life of Edmonton would have removed the Davidson's influences. "Looking to me as a teacher, they were really worried. They wanted me to be under their leadership and all that." Had Davidson approached them in *advance*, he added, they wouldn't have agreed to it either.

Davidson was in a pickle.

The very thought of leaving Grace Life "was really emotional for my wife. We had a lot of good friends there. We were close to the pastor. And here we were told we had an ultimatum. And I was like: 'There's no way. There's no way that I'm choosing the church.' The very fact that the church would say that, that you need to choose the church or your YouTube channel, I thought was really despicable."

Robbie and Rachel Davidson left the church and the people within, many whom they loved, far behind them. At the risk of sacrificing their conviction on the altar of Scientism, it wouldn't be the last.

PSYCHODRAMA

1

THE MEDIA-MAKER IS a PERSISTENT VIOLATOR of the need to include a globe portrait within their passing narrative—*why?* They are incestuously bluffing their way through a make-believe vantage point—the video camera held so far back as to capture the whole of our *supposed* blue marble as it wanders *aimlessly* through the sackcloth of space. The documentary genre holds much blame. I have often observed that such glimpses of “the heathen’s globe” predictably beds with the shot I am about to describe. We quickly cut in to the habitual routine of people—all of whom issue from a hodgepodge of cultures—navigating the current of their commuter belt. Both shots are worthy of comparison, as they and the globe are on their way to a feckless job. With such incautious glances at creation from the ceiling of space the media-maker most certainly errs. And yet in light of the Copernican Revolution, particularly the augmented reality which entitles us to a belief in it, this is how our tutors wish that we perceive ourselves—from an ascendancy of which only God has granted Himself permission.

But *once* or *twice* in the Bible’s unfolding narrative is the breadth of the Earth revealed from above. Here as always it is presumably delivered, as we might deduce, from the perspective of God’s throne. Isaiah 40:22 informs us:

“It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.”

My serial reader will likely understand—and willingly *accept*—the wondrous picture which is framed here. Nowhere does the Bible recognize an infinite abyss of *blacker than black* space, as some astronauts have described their own “Isaiah 40:22” experience. The wishful reasoning for the *circle of the Earth* representing a “ball” rather than a circle has been so thoroughly reputed as to expose the self-deceived and despairing heart which obstinately refuses it. Regardless, they prefer the astronauts “Isaiah 40:22” account over the Lord’s own eye-witness

statement. That is their loss. They would rather expound on the human experience by indulging in the esoteric fantasies of deep space beyond our own line of vision, which the Bible outright rejects but augmented reality affords. My serial reader will concur, heaven stretched out “as a curtain” or the roof of a tent is a poor description of space, yet admittedly it accommodates everything we know of “Hebrew cosmology.”

Before the Copernican Revolution—we shall also not accommodate Occult wisdom as a consideration—were there ever such attempts to gaze perversely down upon the Earth when discussing the *nature of human being*, let alone imagined? I think not. If we are to navigate through the treacherous avenues of augmented reality, then we must do so with brave and veracious conviction. The media is a wet sponge dripping with subliminal messaging which hopes to knock upon the Gnostic heart within each of us and light the “divine spark.”

2

WALT DISNEY WORLD RECEIVES OVER 52-MILLION VISITORS per year. The Disney theme parks—which includes Disneyland in Anaheim, California—currently dominates any and all of the worlds most photographed places, beating out the Golden Gate Bridge, Yosemite National Park, New York and Paris landmarks. Then the massively impressive geodesic sphere which serves as a symbolic structure for EPCOT needs very little introduction. We know it as *Spaceship Earth*. Its story-line was conceived by eminent science-fiction author Ray Bradbury, one in which we are promised to “take a journey through time unlike any every experienced or imagined.” Spiraling gently upward into the geosphere through the strata of ages past, Time Machine vehicles carry its guests to the very beginning of communication—not *God spoke*, as the Bible records, but rather to a Cro-Magnon cave where early man first began documenting events on his wall. *Thousands of years* soon pass to the Kingdom of Egypt, where we witness papyrus invented, thereby making the Cro-Magnon’s “wall” portable. The Phoenicians will invent the alphabet.

According to *Walt Disney World* (1986), a time traveler within Spaceship Earth will observe the movable type press invented, in which

“the evolution of communication gathers speed. With the Age of Invention, new communication technologies develop at an incredibly swift pace.... To this point, the Time Machines have been ascending into the dome of Spaceship Earth. Before beginning their descent, the vehicles turn, and we see the blue and white oasis of Earth against the dark and mysterious star-sprinkled galaxies. For the first time, we see our planet as it really is—a traveling spaceship. This is the Spaceship Earth experience—a voyage that fills its travelers with an insight into man’s evolution, from the dawn of our yesterday to the sunrise of our tomorrow.”

Anyone who has ridden Spaceship Earth may recall the narrator’s parting words—spoken now by Judi Dench—which neatly sums up the challenge of a future set apart from God’s promises. Having gazed upon creation as only our God has a right to—ironically *here* a counterfeit creation—the rider begins his descent to Earth like the stardust of our evolutionary origin, and hears: “Tomorrow’s world approaches, so let us listen and learn, let us explore and question and understand. Let us go forth and discover the wisdom to guide great Spaceship Earth through the uncharted seas of the future. **Let us dare to fulfill our destiny.**”

With his journey through the evolution of communication finally complete, the guest is returned to the gateway of EPCOT, where the future of *Planet Earth* awaits and, just beyond the Lagoon, the *world itself* invokes exploration. With the Copernican Revolution employed as his filter, the guest may choose his experience—tomorrow’s dreams in Future World or the various ethnic countries which make up *Planet Earth*’s bludgeoning centralized governance in World Showcase. But whatever his outcome, EPCOT’s globular geosphere almost always looms upon his horizon. It is brilliant indoctrination.

I have a confession to make. *Spaceship Earth* is my favorite ride at Walt Disney World—perhaps because history is my strong suit. But there’s *more*. Throughout our marriage, nearing two decades now, Mrs. Hadley and I have managed to become closeted Disney theme park addicts—though *closeted* no longer. Living most of our lives in Southern California, we probably made a dozen pilgrimages to the Magic Kingdom. And that was *before* we succumbed to annual passes, starting in December of 2015. The amusements which could be found there—not only in Walt Disney World’s four theme parks, two water parks, and its dozens of creature-comfort resorts, but the choicest medley of fine dining experiences—

certified the fact that no two trips in any given year were exactly alike. In fact, Mrs. Hadley and I were annual pass holders when we succumbed to the flat earth reality over a spirited dinner conversation, rather early on in 2016. The Disney World experience would never be the same—and that is a *good thing*.

Mrs. Hadley and I were pushing our twin sons in their stroller—mouse ears pronounced upon both toddler heads—and the “world apart from the real” which Disney World bases its very cornerstone upon was suddenly stripped away with unsettling clarity. It was more of a revelation—a bittersweet aftertaste tugging at her heart and mind. With widened eyes she said: “Spaceship Earth is a globe. They want you to *think* the Earth is a globe. And yet the countries of World Showcase are as flat as Florida!”

The whole illusion came toppling down.

We let our subscription expire, and we have yet to renew them. The addiction however remains. I *confess* it hasn’t been easy. We’ve only recently talked about going. I even picked up the phone to make reservation. I can’t help it. **I want more of the Mouse.**

Anticipating the children which [YHWH YAHUAH] would one day bless us with was in itself a maze of disappointments. How we waited! How we waited! And we waited! And we fed our Disney addiction—in part because we dreamed of one day filling the imaginations of our children in its clean swept gutters—as we waited. And now that we have children of our own the Lord has asked us to surrender the Disney theme park experience—*all of it*. We almost went anyways. But this is not about my twitching fingertips, because the Disney theme park experience is an *affront* to the holiness of the Lord.

In *The Magic Kingdom* (1986), Disney paints its prized Florida destination as “a world apart from the *real*.” If we are to accept Disney’s premise, then we must also detach ourselves from the moral paraphernalia which clothes the otherwise naked Christian faith. For example, Disney has described the Haunted Mansion as “a poltergeist’s paradise.” By merely participating in Madame Leota’s conjuring of “familiar spirits,” we are willingly engaging in a complete subversion of Leviticus 19:31; 20:27; and Deuteronomy 18:10-13. Necromancy is a damnable offense—worthy of death. Disney makes a joke of it and expects us to laugh along, particularly when Hitchhiking ghosts follow us home.

“And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.”

Leviticus 20:6

Next we find ourselves at *Pirates of the Caribbean*, a boat guided tour which outlines “the capture, pillaging, and burning of a seacoast town by a crew of swashbucklers who would shiver the timbers of Blackbeard.” And yet, “while their victims may fret just a bit, they seem to be having as much fun as the buccaneers.”

Here the 11th Psalmist confronts us:

“The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.”

Psalm 11:5

Disney’s *Animal Kingdom* devotes an entire land to teaching children about dinosaurs and the hundred-plus million years their evolutionary narrative demands. Its E-Ticket attraction, aptly named *Dinosaur*—a fast-moving chiropractic-inducing dark ride which is described as “a turbulent journey through the Cretaceous period”—takes scissors to the opening chapters of Genesis. If one is to sit back and enjoy the ride, he *must* forsake the eye-witness Testimony of his Creator, and comply. *Dinosaur*’s Disneyland counterpart is *Indiana Jones Adventure: Temple of the Forbidden Eye*—same exact ride system and track, different story—in which the demon Mara offers his visitor one of three choices: earthly riches, eternal youth, or visions of the future.

With *Pandora – The Land of Avatar*, a massive themed area based on James Cameron’s series of films, we are challenged to another philosophical quandary. What makes us uniquely human? Some transhumanists, so-called “uploaders,” hold to the idea that technology will eventually allow us to separate mind from body and enjoy immaterial eternal life, either in the heavens or cyberspace. *Avatar* accepts this premise but tacks on animalism. In such a construct, souls or spirits exist not only in men and fauna but in flora, in rocks, even in natural phenomena such as mountains, rivers and streams. If consciousness can be transferred to another body at will—today male, tomorrow female, an entirely new sexual organ the day thereafter—then the very fact that we

are created in God's image has been arrested, tried, and disproved. *Avatar* would have us know that the Bible is an ill-conceived lie. The *true* Christian will have no part in this.

Eat... Sleep... Disney... Say, "Psychodrama..."

Walt Disney World is a nothing less than a psychodrama. Often employed within psychotherapy, the willing participant uses spontaneous dramatization and role playing, all under the guise of self-presentation, in order to investigate and gain insight into his life. As a therapy model, it is a means of altering one's values, and works particularly well in molding the morality of children contrary to their parents. Psychodrama is arguably the most common form of magic practiced, and likely the sole discipline of magic which all occultists seem to agree upon. It *is* magic—*real* magic. Not the pointy hat and broom stick magic which Disney parades for cheering audiences—though the large 25-story "magic wand" held by a representation of Mickey Mouse's hand which was constructed upon *Spaceship Earth's* sphere should still turn heads. Unfortunately, it *didn't* mine. Psychodrama was how Anton LaVey described magical ritual in *The Satanic Bible*. His position was that the ritual was cathartic; a purification and purgation of emotions—particularly pity and fear—through art or any extreme change in emotion that results in renewal and restoration, and proved psychological benefits regardless of whether or not the practice directly influenced the outside world. When aptly applied, Psychodrama includes elements of theater, often conducted on a stage, or a space that serves as a stage area, where props can be used. The fellow addict will likely concur—Disney refers to all guest accessible areas of the parks as "on-stage."

In *The Theatre and It's Double*, first published in 1938, French *surrealist* Antoni Artaud writes: "Aside from trifling witchcraft of country sorcerers, there are tricks of global hoodoo in which all alerted consciousnesses participate periodically... That is how strange forces are aroused and transported to the astral vault, to that dark dome which is composed above all of... the poisonous adhesiveness of the evil minds of most people...the formidable tentacular oppression of a kind of civic magic which will soon appear undisguised."

Psychodrama is performance witchcraft. *Global* voodoo, civic magic, public sorcery... Consider the demon "Tinker Bell" zipping alongside the simultaneous swing of a spotlight to announce an incoming display of fireworks... or Mickey Mouse commanding Satan—rather ironically—

with his mighty white glove and wand while over the loudspeaker we hear the coo of a child: “Believe!” By garnishing the audiences’ willful participation—like an entire nation glued to the television screen during Apollo 11’s moon landing and Apollo 13’s *malfunction*—the spell is cast. This is the Occult’s masterful hand at play—*performance witchcraft*. Knowing then that Disney is a cesspool of falsehoods, the Apostle John would implore of us not to love and practice falsehood. In Revelation 22:15 he writes concerning an eternity in heaven:

“Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

On a much larger stage, the media has become not only a persistent violator of “Isaiah 4:22,” but a cult of drama and violence. The 9/11 false flag event, as well as dozens of theater, nightclub, school, church, and concert shootings—none of which will be outright mentioned here, are *arguably* all psycho-dramatic exercises. They are orchestrated in advance and executed. Let him who has the eyes to see—*see*. We have been conditioned to psycho-dramatic exercises for decades. Mrs. Hadley and I were born into this norm. So were *you*, likely. In *Secret Societies and Psychological Warfare* (2001), Michael A. Hoffman II reminds us of the rituals gleaming ambition. “This theater of death began as a ritual of the cult members themselves and ended as a giant magical ceremony for the processing of the entire nation... This is the alchemical psychodrama for the transformation of humanity. We are processing just by reading or watching *the news*.” And yet there is a defining difference between the worldwide stage; this unholy union of *this present* reality—the media narrative wedded with “a world apart from the real”—and what I have been exclusively describing. My reader cannot control which tower the Occult wishes to collapse; which schools or nightclubs or entertainment venues they consecrate with the tears of crisis actors; nor can I. But with due discipline and diligence, we can manage our jurisdiction in the stage of another kind.

To say we are in love with YHWH and yet willingly lust for the flesh of a man or a woman is adultery and rebellion against our Creator. Thus sayeth Jesus. As the Apostle John would claim, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth... (1 John 1:6).” In the same vain—can we lust towards a mastery of abracadabra or play the game of peek-a-boo into necromancy, or simply

covet violence—even as entertainment would provide it—not forgetting a thirst for the possibilities which transhumanism offers our handicaps, insecurities, and sensuality, and still love our Elohim? With Walt Disney World, I could go on. The willing participant in the ongoing performance wears an RF chip so that his every footstep may be tracked. He is even photographed unaware. He delivers his very being over to an almost omnipotent power from the moment he arrives—power to manipulate his exocentric reality with the esoteric; to manipulate his subconscious with apostate desire; in short, to manipulate him and the values of his children.

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”

Hebrews 10:26

Magic is all around us. Determination results in magic. Imagination is a key for magic. And practice makes *better* magic. To this cause we *must not* apply.

Over the loudspeaker we hear the voice of a child softly cooing: “*Believe.*”

FORENSICS

1

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM and mainstream propaganda had taken its toll on forty-three year-old Paul Lindberg by the time he sat down with his wife for dinner—which, on both accounts, is often how these things go. Between *this* and *that*, attending public school and catching a screening of *The Empire Strikes Back* as a child (a moment which would manifest into a lifelong devotion to everything *Star Wars*) Lindberg recounted, “I started questioning the six day creation, questioning if there was any validity to evolution—millions and billions of years.”

Was it possible to take Scripture and the creation account *figuratively* and still believe in the integrity of God’s Testimony?

These were questions which Paul contended with for many years of his life. “I grew up in the Lutheran church, was raised in a Christian home and spent time in the Bible. My parents were staunch Lutherans. We went to church every Sunday. I was in Sunday school. I was in the youth group. I went through confirmation and communion. I was an acolyte and an usher in the church. When I got married—I’ve been married *twice*, my first wife, she and her family were all Pentecostals.” After the divorce, Paul stopped attending church altogether.

It was October of 2016, upper north-west state of Washington, and while Paul dined with Mrs. Lindberg, one of them said to the other: “Did you know there are people on the planet who think the earth is flat?”

The comment in question was proposed by Lindberg’s wife, who had only recently discovered the concept while reading a random comment in a *Truther* mom’s vaccine discussion group, probably on Facebook.

The earth is flat.

Lindberg retorted with a snort.

“People still believe that?”

The very first thing he thought about was satellite imagery.

“How can anybody in their right minds possibly think that....? We have pictures.... We have pictures—*from space.*”

Have they even visited the internet?

Lindberg and his wife had a good laugh about it. “But seeds were planted in my mind,” he said. More specifically, curiosity got the better of him. *I mean, how could anybody think like that?* The key word is *how*....?

Curiosity, as they say, killed the cat.

Paul Lindberg found his way onto YouTube. He even Googled it.

The earth is flat.

The information which was immediately available to him became an exhibition of three or four sleepless nights, consuming videos. *Eat. Sleep. Poop. Flat Earth.* “I came out of it totally bleary eyed going: *holy bleep-bleep!* These guys are onto something!”

Paul Lindberg’s hibernating faith was a large part of his awakening. “When I realized, scripturally speaking, that there’s so much alignment between science and what the Word of God says, the flat earth awakening, if anything, has reaffirmed and bolstered my faith. It drew me closer to God. All the science stuff made sense, but the final nail in the coffin was when I started looking into the earth and creation and how it all lined up with the Word of God.” And where the globe was finally concerned, “that was game, set, and match.”

The flat earth was backed up by science *and* the Word of God.

“When you go through this,” waking up to the flat earth, “it’s almost like you’re a child again when it comes to your faith. You see the world differently. You treat people better. You just have the proper perspective on things. When it comes to my attitude and behavior, I don’t get too high or low on things, because I know that God is in control. We aren’t just some accident spinning through space, where anything can happen. I believe we live under a firmament. We’re protected. And this is all part of God’s plan. There’s just a lot of peace that comes with that. I can enjoy that peace now.”

Finally, for Paul Lindberg, “God is in control.”

WHEN THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY'S purchase of Lucasfilm was first announced on October 30, 2012, four years earlier, its 4 billion dollar price tag was simply unprecedented. George Lucas was paid half of that in stocks. I remember the date well. My father texted on the phone, before I happened to read the news, with the message: *There's going to be another Star Wars trilogy*. For the following month a collective symphony of summersaults and groans could seemingly be heard *everywhere* on the internet:

There's going to be another Star Wars trilogy *without* George Lucas!

And—

Oh crap, Disney's making the next Star Wars trilogy.

Another two years would pass before worldwide audiences were treated to the first trailer for the J.J. Abrams directed and Kathleen Kennedy produced *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, the seventh in the Skywalker saga. It arrived on Friday, November 28, 2014, the day after Thanksgiving—two or three months *too late* for some.

The flat earth Movement had already begun.

Come December 17, 2015, an explosive number of flat earthists everywhere tried desperately to enjoy the prying nostalgia, which tugged at their emotional sensibilities and also their pockets, beckoning them back to the *globular* bedroom of their childhood, where Kenner's 3.75 inch plastic *Star Wars* action figures littered the rug, while not choking on their popcorn. Still, not everyone had heard about the flat earth by year's end. On December 17, my wife and I caught a viewing of *The Force Awakens* in Fort Lauderdale—a second viewing one week later from Key West. My entire reality wouldn't be decapitated until 2016. After catching a screening of its sequel, *The Last Jedi*, in Long Beach, California, precisely two years later, I returned to our lodging and vomited until sunrise.

Then again, it might have been food poisoning.

It wasn't until after Bob Iger successfully negotiated Star Wars from its creator that Paul Lindberg enlisted his involvement with the franchise. Disney's 2012 announcement was a fresh start to the rarest of opportunities—attaching oneself to the ground floor of something in which everybody *knew* would be much larger than themselves. There were

comic books to pour through; “I love you,” and “I know,” *his* and *her* t-shirts; Darth Potato Head’s needing personalized with duck bills and Goofy or mouse ears and glow in the dark *effects* accurate lightsabers to wow one’s lover in bed; and if this wasn’t enough *bread and circuses* for the masses, Walt Disney World in Florida and Disneyland in Anaheim had announced their very own *Westworld* inspired *Star Wars* themed land and hotel, where the guests can immerse themselves in the story and *become* citizens of the universe. It all needed blogged and podcasted and then theorized on Reddit and YouTube by the brouhaha of aspiring talent, frantically scrambling into the void left by the old administration.

Lindberg said, “I was the biggest fan that I knew. I had spent all of my time with it. I had created a website. I was blogging about it. I had a Twitter that was dedicated to just that. I was getting involved in the community. I was listening to podcasts—anything *Star Wars* related. From 2012 on, after Disney bought it, they *started* making all the movies. They *started* coming out with cartoons. They *started* writing all these new books to fill in these gaps in the timeline. There were these canon books that were not canon anymore. Whenever a new book came out, I was buying and reading those—24/7. Outside of work, *this* is what I was doing with my life.”

One of Lindberg’s first orders of business was to fly out to *Star Wars Celebration*, held in Anaheim, California on April 15-19, 2015. Surrounding himself with the like-minded was a way of legitimizing his own life obsessions, making the augmented reality which filled his day-to-day peripheral vision seem viable, even concrete; a defining moment of which was having his picture taken with Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher. In the spring of 2016 Lindberg had committed himself to building a movie accurate *Star Wars* storm trooper costume. “It’s a big deal within the community. You order a kit and it basically comes—its chunks of plastic, but you have to cut them all out. It’s quite the process. You have to shape everything and mold it to *your* body. These things are very unique. You can’t just order a small, medium, or large. You have to build these things to fit your body height, and all of your measurements—chest and hips and all that. And those things can take anywhere from a month to a year to build, depending on how much time you commit to it.” Lindberg was in the middle of doing that, and planning out *more* conventions, and having his picture taken with *Star Wars* royalty, when he discovered that the shape of the earth, and the Universe, but more importantly, *humanity*, was not how he’d once thought it to be.

Star Wars, Lindberg realized, “was a big part of the indoctrination.” Once he came to that realization, furthermore realizing his part in spreading the deception, “I was never able to look at that franchise, *my first love*, the same. I used to be watching one of the movies or one of the shows. When *Rebels* came out, or *The Clone Wars*, I watched that entire series, every season, three or four times. I used to *always* be watching that. And I literally stopped.”

Lindberg almost shuttered when saying it:

“I went cold turkey on *Star Wars*.”

Sure, new movies came out. And when they did, Lindberg mustered enough curiosity to revisit the distant galaxy. “But that’s pretty much it. I couldn’t even tell you what the latest gossip is on the movie coming up. But I used to be able to do that. I would tell you *everything*. I had all my theories. I was blogging about it.” Flat earth “ruined it for me—completely ruined it. Whenever I see all these spaceships flying around, I just scoff now. I’m disgusted by it. It’s really a conflict within me, because it’s my first love, and yet I’ve moved on.”

“And yet I think about it often, you know what I mean?”

“Yes, I do,” I said.

“It’s really hard to explain.”

I understand the struggle perfectly well—the zealousness demanded of someone, righteous indignation even, to sweep an idol off the altar and thrust it into the rubble bin only to lay sleeplessly in bed all night knowing that a defining element of their past identity *gone*, likely second-guessing their decision or even imagining the alternative, but mostly thinking about its new home, where *the worm dieth not*, abandoned to malnourishment and the present downpour of rain.

On the day in which Paul Lindberg typed *the earth is flat* into his search engine, the movie accurate storm trooper costume was nearly half assembled. It still sits in a box in his garage *unfinished*. If it hadn’t been for the flat earth, he said, “I would now be walking around at all the *Star Wars* conventions in a movie accurate storm trooper costume.”

“Flat earth totally ruined *Star Wars* for me—it obliterated it.”

PAUL LINDBERG EMERGED ON THE INTERNET in 2017 with a Nikon P-900 and his very own YouTube channel, aptly titled, *Paul On The Plane*. “I wanted to start making my own observations, measuring curvature and things like that. I wanted to start publishing my findings on a platform like YouTube and get involved in the community, because I’d seen a lot of videos and people doing the same thing, and I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to join the quote-unquote *fight*, if you will. I mean, those were some of the emotions I was going through.”

He found a colleague in Archer Sage, an individual whom he’d met in the online community and was committing himself to the same research, “and he’d done a couple of videos. He was in a position where he didn’t want to make videos anymore, but he had a lot of research to offer.” Lindberg had quickly realized that the pictures which he had built the foundation of his reality upon were not photographs at all. “They were computer graphics or composites. Essentially they were just—and I’m not even saying Photoshop—these things are generated by software programs.” Along with Sage’s own findings, the two decided to combine forces, with Lindberg producing each video. “We basically spent a lot of time online going through all the folders and looking at all the different images and putting them into forensic software programs that would analyze them.”

One such program was called ‘*Forensically*.’ “You could do a noise analysis. You could look at the way the light was bouncing off of the image. You would look for JPEG artifacts. You would look for JPEG compression. You know—kind of a forensic analysis. If you’re in a court room and somebody brings photographic evidence of the crime, this is the same sort of scrutiny which the photo would go under. Is it real? Has anything been changed in the photo? Has it been manipulated, or really, has somebody taken a picture and pulled it right off their camera and put it onto the computer? Is it really just a RAW or un-manipulated image?”

Lindberg took the same approach with the images he was getting from space, which meant calling in suspects for questioning. “So there are essentially three satellites which give us pictures of earth from space on a regular basis.” That would be the Discover satellite, or “NASA—NOAA for space weather,” the NOAA being an acronym for National Oceanic

and Atmospheric Administration. The second satellite would be Himawari 8, *Japanese* made, with the third being Elektro-L, *Russian*. “A majority of the videos we produced were analyzing those images.”

The fourth, “and I forgot to mention this,” Lindberg said, would be the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter. “Now, it doesn’t give us regular earth photographs, but it’s the satellite we are told that has launched and is orbiting the moon, and it occasionally catches a picture of the earth, depending on which direction it’s pointing.”

“If you look up pictures from space right now, it’s probably going to be one of those four satellites. The Main Stream Media takes all of those and says, ‘Hey, the latest photo!’ And they use the word *photo*. The Main Stream Media will use the word *photo*—a *photo* from NASA. You go to the space agencies though and they will say *image*,” big difference. “They never use the word *photo*, which I find very interesting.”

Sage and Lindberg’s initial ten-part series broke each of these images down. “When you take these images, depending on which one it is; the Himawari is giving us an image every ten minutes—*every* ten minutes, *every* day. You can go to the FTP folder and download these images. And we’re told that these are RAW un-manipulated pictures from space. The Discover Satellite, with its epic camera, is one million miles away from the earth, and is perfectly positioned between the earth and the sun, so that it’s always pointed at the earth and the earth is always fully lit by the sun, and it gives us this full disc image.” As of this writing, the Discover Satellite has been offline since June of 2019. “We haven’t received anything from it in a while now, so I don’t know if they’re just going to scrap the thing, or if they say it’s broke or whatever. But for about four years there we were getting images every day, sometimes very few, but sometimes every hour for the full day. They can claim *whatever*. That thing is a million miles away, so they can say, ‘We don’t receive all of them,’ or whatever.”

The Discover satellites two contemporaries, the Russian Elektro-L and the Japanese Himawari, “are both around 22,000 miles away—a lot closer. And they’re kind of landlocked, if you will, above that part of the world. So you’re supposed to see the sun—the terminator line coming across; and then there’s daylight and darkness, and daylight and darkness. The Discover is always facing the sunlit side, so you’re seeing the earth move that way.”

“So eventually when you’re dropping all these images in, you’re looking for things like the noise profile, you’re looking for ambient light. You should see the light bouncing off of these things, because the sun is hitting the earth and bouncing back. So you should have these profiles, just like if you were to take a picture of the moon, or take a picture of anything, you can look at the noise profile on your camera. You can look at the ambient light; how the light is bouncing off of it—to be able to tell if they are *real* photographs. And what we find in all of these images, which we get from space agencies, is. There’s *no* noise around the disk, and there’s no ambient light coming from the object itself.”

“The only logical conclusion is that the image that we see is *pasted* onto a black background. In fact, we dug far enough and found out that NASA even *admits* that. Not only do they admit that these are composite images, but they also say that they paste these images on a black background. So the question is then: what is the scientific value of these images that we get if they’re not real? If anything you can say they’re really taking a picture of the earth, but why do they have to cut out the earth and paste it onto a black background—why do they have to do that?”

Essentially, Lindberg and Sage’s initial series showed the viewer how they’re pulling the bunny out of the hat. *They’re not real*. “And then we’d show inconsistencies too.” For example, the Discover satellite documented the dark of the moon orbiting between the earth and its camera. Sage and Lindberg demonstrated the software glitches. “Sometimes a second moon would appear on the right side of the screen. We’d adjust the brightness and show that there was another object there.” *Hey, NASA just discovered a second moon!* “They didn’t tell us about it, but if you adjusted the color and the images and the brightness you’d see another object there. It’s the same size and it’s transitioning across the earth at the same rate, off to the side. It’s a software glitch. And then we would show that there are boxes around the earth. We would show that they were tilted boxes. Some had noise inside the box, some didn’t. Sometimes the *same event*, from two different parts of the website, like the gallery side, or where you can choose the image based on the date, they would be two totally different noise profiles and ambient light—from the same event. Sometimes we would pull up an image and you could see how they would try to remove the box, but they accidentally removed some of the mountains on the moon at the same time *while* they were trying to remove and manipulate things.”

“The whole idea is very simply we wanted to put cracks in the foundation of somebody that’s sitting there believing that the reason they *think* we’re living on a ball spinning through space is because of all of these images we’re getting from space agencies, and these videos thoroughly destroys any notion that these are photographs from space. There’s no way they could be. They don’t act anything like a photograph would or should. And then we show all these inconsistencies and anomalies to prove that these are computer programs which are generating these images.”

Archer Sage “was really instrumental for season one, because he had done a lot of the groundwork beforehand, and knew where to go. We would spend *days*, so many hours that would add up to days on Skype, just going through this stuff.” With each new episode Sage put forth much of the initial research. Together they collaborated over the content for each episode. Lindberg would then present Sage with an outline before writing up the narrative and recording it. “Then I would take all of the pictures, and sometimes I would do a screen capture so that I could show people I was actually downloading it, putting it into the program, adjusting the slider, and showing what came up.”

Rather early on during their collaboration, Lindberg responded to a scathing hit piece from the long running debunking show, *MythBusters*, which had been pointedly directed at the flat earth movement. The episode in question had already been released nearly two years earlier, on July 25, 2015, as part of its 18th season, likely in hopes of curbing the momentum of Eric Dubay’s *200 Proofs*, Mark Sargent’s *Clues* and others like them. In *Flights of Fantasy*, Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman were taken up in a U2 spy plane at 70,000 feet to *prove* that the earth had curvature, and Lindberg noticed something. “As they were moving around there was a fish-eye lens that was showing how it was flat when you looked behind them, but only when the plane dipped down—when the camera went down, that is showed curvature.” In turn, Lindberg released his own video calling them out, “and it got 300,000 views within a month or two.”

Paul On The Plane blew up, “and it went from 5,000 subscribers to like 50,000 subscribers in the matter of two or three months.”

Archer Sage saw the numbers.

“We can make a lot of money,” he said. “This channel’s going viral. We *need* to monetize.”

Sage had research—Lindberg the talent. A decision was therefore made to split the revenue equally down the middle between them. The videos they produced together however were only raking in two or three-thousand views. “And I think he was really disappointed with that.”

It doesn’t look like the flat earth is going to be making a lot of money after all.

“I think that’s why he lost interest,” Lindberg said. “But that’s just my opinion. At the end of season one, he decided he didn’t want to do any of it anymore. He totally just left. He didn’t even give me a good reason. He just said he had other pursuits. He didn’t sabotage anything. There was no ill-will or anything like that. We just decided not to work together anymore.”

4

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, MARK SARGENT and Patricia Steere had fallen into Paul Lindberg’s peripheral vision. “I was watching her every week on her shows that she did with Mark, interviewing other people in the community, and that became to me—when you got asked on Patricia’s show, you had kind of *arrived*, so to speak, in the community.”

Lindberg paused over the phone to think of a mainstream equivalent.

Johnny Carson, I thought.

“In the mainstream, if you were to go on to Jay Leno you had arrived,” he finally said. “With Leno, you were somebody. So I had seen all of these great content producers that had been on her show,” most of whom were introduced *through* Patricia. In other words, if it hadn’t been for Patricia, then others wouldn’t have quote-unquote “*made it*,” so to speak, and therefore, Lindberg couldn’t possibly have known about them.

That moment would come for *Paul On The Plane* in 2017.

Lindberg said: “I don’t remember exactly when it was. It may have been May or June or something like that. It may have been July. I was on one of her livestreams, commenting.”

Patricia Steere messaged back.

Hey Paul, we need to connect.

“I knew what that meant, and I was absolutely elated. It’s something I had been hoping for, *secretly*, for a long time.” For Lindberg, Patricia wasn’t simply a pillar of the flat earth community. “She was well spoken, beautiful, and passionate about flat earth.” And besides, “she was a speaker heading to the flat earth conference in Raleigh later that year. I had already bought a ticket. She had thousands of subscribers on her YouTube channel. It was great for your own channel to get the exposure. You’d get a lot more people who would see your work, and I really enjoyed the community.”

Flat Earth & Other Hot Potatoes, he said, was the very milestone he’d expected it to be. Lindberg had air time with Patricia Steere, and in turn, the community which he loved became aware of *Paul On The Plane*.

After their show Patricia and Paul got to talking about an upcoming meet-up at the Pyramid Brewing Co. in Seattle, Washington. Darryle Marble was going. Mark Sargent was going. Both would be speakers at the upcoming conference. Lindberg only lived 200 miles from Seattle. Patricia said she was thinking about going as well, and Lindberg insisted, *if* she was making the trip to Seattle from Houston, then he was going too.

He said it like this: “Well *gee*, Patricia, if you’re flying from Houston up to Seattle to this thing then I *have* to go too. I can’t let you *outdo* me.”

A few days later Patricia e-mailed Lindberg back.

Set the date.

Seattle “was the first time I met Patricia face to face. She was livestreaming, and I was livestreaming,” the perfect sort of flat earth meetup. “That’s how our friendship really kicked off.” The next time he met Patricia would be in Raleigh, and it wouldn’t be the last.

“Little did I know *the hell* she was going through,” he said.

But soon, *very soon*, Paul Lindberg found himself embroiled in the spectacle of paranoia that surrounded Patricia. Every pyre needs lighter fluid, and witches make for the best fuel.

SYNCHRONICITY

1

THE DAY CAME WHEN SHE FINALLY GOT AROUND to telling her husband that she didn't love him anymore. *Synchronicity* cried.

“He was so upset,” Karen said. “I told him why. He *knew* why. That's when he finally agreed to get counseling, when I told him I didn't love him anymore. And the shitty part about that is—it was already too late.”

They would only attend as many as four sessions together.

In the first session, while filling out a questionnaire, Karen made it clear to their counselor that they were attending because of domestic violence, “because he can't keep his hands off me.” Their counselor looked at him and said: “While you're seeing me for counseling, you don't do that. You do not touch her. And once you do touch her, it becomes a different issue and the police get involved.”

When he did *touch* her, Karen didn't tell the counselor.

Counseling made him even angrier, “because it put him in a position where he had to face himself. He had to start to own up to what he had been doing to me all these years. And instead of getting better, things got worse. The arguments got so bad, he would try to get close to me, because that's what would happen when it got bad, he would stand right over me and yell into my face to intimidate me.” Whenever he started yelling, Karen would attempt to flee. Her husband however had all the moves of a running back.

Their children watched as Karen attempted another ploy, desperately rounding the kitchen island. The children continued watching as he chased her. “I knew if he was able to get his hands on me then that would be it—it would be over.” Their children saw it all. They observed their father jump up and over the island in hopes of nabbing her. They watched as she opened up the kitchen door and made a beeline for the woods. When he vaulted upon her with his full body weight and tackled her to the ground—they saw that too.

A couple of weeks later, their counselor knew nothing of the fact that he'd pinned her up against the front door, choking her neck.

Then again, Karen didn't exactly love her husband anymore.

She therefore tried to knee him in the balls.

As soon as he realized she was trying to defend herself, her husband picked Karen up and threw her down to the ground.

Karen wanted to tell their counselor. She desperately wanted *anybody* to know, "but he'd get very upset." She just wanted the violence to stop. "I remember going out to the woods, asking for help. I was begging anyone who was listening—you can say God or the Creator or whatever. But I couldn't take it anymore. And I said, 'Please God, please help me,' because I couldn't do it anymore."

The years had finally caught up to her.

"And I just cried and begged to the universe for help."

2

"I CALL THEM *forest people* BECAUSE OTHER researchers—the general consensus is that people tend to agree they're a *people*. They're a people, and they live among us, just like everybody else, but they aren't controlled like we are. They aren't messed with as we are. They live unencumbered. They live freely. And they have abilities that we don't have. Or if we do have these abilities, then we don't know about them. But it seems like they can change their vibration and slip in and out of the visual spectrum for us. One researcher said he saw it walking and it disappeared right before his eyes and then reappear in another area. And I had heard people talk about that for years, and thought anybody who said that was crazy. And yet so many people have seen that now, and it's a repeated eyewitness account. It makes me think about how my daughter could see it and then I didn't."

Sometimes they even *talk*.

"My mom will fly in and stay at my house, and she'll hear them." After taking a walk in the woods, her aunt reported hearing a man talking.

“Because that’s what it sounds like,” Karen explained. “It just sounds like a man mumbling.”

Muma-muba-buba-wumu.

“You can’t understand it. It’s almost like they’re speaking an audible language—a native language.” Though Karen has never spoken with Bigfoot, “a lot of people report on, they call it *mind speak*. They hear the voice in their head and it’s the forest people communicating with them telepathically.”

“Have you ever seen Bigfoot?” I asked.

“I’ve never had a full on class A sighting, where I saw it as a Bigfoot,” Karen paused, “but I have seen glimpses of them.”

Remington was going nuts, barking mad from the back door. Karen walked outside and saw a *something* walking into the trees, and it looked like a person. “I couldn’t make out any details, but it was like a figure walking into the woods.” If this was a man, he was an intruder. “I live on 20 acres, so if I can walk out of my house and see someone in the woods, somebody’s trespassing—you’re on my property,” which is *exactly* what she told her visitor.

It never responded.

Karen stood there, narrowing her eyes on the place it entered the woods, listening and waiting.

Her visitor *howled* back at her.

That howl—

Had Karen been the protagonist of a Washington Irving novel, she might have rightly concluded that her visitor was the devil. “I’d never heard anything like it before.”

She then saw that *something* running out from the woods towards the power line. “I saw the very top of its head. It was dark, but it was bounding across the dirt and out of the woods.”

Three years earlier, her husband had shrugged the creature in the woods off as a deer. And now Karen stood there, perplexed at what she’d just seen and heard. Men don’t run like that. And they *definitely* don’t sound like that. The forest people, or maybe even the devil, *do*. But either way, one thing was certain.

That's no turkey, she said.

3

“I DON’T IDENTIFY AS A CHRISTIAN,” Karen said. “And I don’t get into religion much. When I was very young I was going to church, and I was baptized and all that, but something about the whole organized church religion never sat well with me.”

I asked Karen, “Which denomination?”

After a time she said, “It was the church of the Nazarene.”

“I’m not really well versed on all the different denominations. Even as a young child, it didn’t resonate with me. I would see people in church singing praises and being really into it, and I *never* was. For whatever reason, I don’t know why, I didn’t understand.”

Karen often thought, *is there something wrong with me?*

How come I’m not into it like everybody else?

Karen wasn’t exactly an atheist, “but there were times when I saw so many bad things happening that I was like, ‘what’s the point?’ There was just so much negativity, and I thought, ‘why does God allow this to happen?’ I didn’t understand it at the time, I guess.”

And then the flat earth came along.

“But now I understand it a bit more, and I get it. To me a creator is self-evident. To deny a creator is to deny yourself, your whole self-existence.”

On January 28, 2017, Karen B uploaded her very first *flat earth* YouTube video. Footage of her children running about the tree line of her North Carolina property, backed with a cool soothing voice that is unmistakably hers, introduces Karen to the community.

“Do you remember when you were young, when your thoughts were untainted, and you were curious? Life was about exploring, playing in the sun, laughing. You were asking questions about everything. Getting your answers and then having that feeling of accomplishment when you were the one answering the

questions? It's really a wonderful, magical time of our lives. We build memories and learn how to exist within the human condition. And if we're lucky we even form bonds with others that will last throughout our whole lives."

Karen said, "I wanted to start a channel because, at the time, there wasn't very much out there, and Patricia was the only woman. And so I felt like it needed more women, because it's still very male dominated, but at the time I felt like it needed more women. And for me, my biggest motivator was my children. I have three of them and, one of the things that I agonized over when I realized this was: *'What do I tell my children? How am I supposed to raise my children? What am I supposed to tell them about the world they live in?'*"

I can't lie to them.

It's the world that's lying to them.

"I have a more positive outlook on life now. I don't get stressed out as much. I don't have that doom and gloom. I don't worry about stuff as much. Every month is a different meteor that is coming to earth—*dangerously* close. You see all that horrible stuff in the news and finally you can disregard it because you know *it's a lie*. It's *never* going to happen. Now I know it's *never* going to happen. Earth is *never* going to be taken out by a giant meteor from space."

Kids, they're lying to you.

"So that was a big motivator for me, reaching out and trying to get more women talking, figure out what to do with my children, help the conversation move along, because there's a whole lot of things that come into play when you realize the world is not what you think it is. It affects everything."

Meanwhile, as Karen began to be noticed and appreciated for her contributions within the flat earth community, in reality she was very much alone. The only reality which threatened to destroy her was the world within.

FROM THE OUTSIDE, THEIR HOUSE looked like a fairy-tale. “But when the doors were closed,” she said, “it was a nightmare.”

One night in the end of June 2017 Karen found herself in yet another argument with her husband, “because he said I wasn’t paying him enough attention. He wanted to go into the bedroom to talk with me, but I didn’t want to, because whenever we went behind closed doors it got bad. But I did. I ended up going into the bedroom to talk with him.”

The children listened in while their father’s screams escalated. Even Remington was coerced to howl in Karen’s defense. He kicked the dog out of the room and then blocked the door. “And I said: ‘Okay, now that you’ve said your peace. Now you need to let me out of the room.’”

And he said, *no*.

“You need to let me out of the room.”

No, you’re going to listen to what I have to say.

While the dog howled furiously and the children listened in, he talked on. Karen *still* wasn’t paying enough attention to him.

“You said your peace. Now let me out of the room.”

I will not.

“Please, let me out of the room.”

I’m not letting you go.

Karen reached for the knob.

It was at that very moment, she said, that he took both of his arms and pushed her so hard that she flew across the room. Karen collided with the wall on the far side of the room. Her head may have only hit the plaster, but her wrist *shattered*. After falling back upon the floor, a sense of vertigo came over her. “My head hurt. It knocked me dizzy there for a minute. I couldn’t get up. I was laying on my right side, and I didn’t know why I couldn’t get up, and then I felt this pressure on my right arm. And I just said: ‘I think you broke my arm.’”

No I didn’t.

“You *broke* my arm. I can’t get up.”

Her husband grabbed her only free arm to pull her up and off the floor, and probably to prove her wrong. *You’re delusional*. He can *drop* wives on the concrete like it’s nothing. He can *choke* them in the shower while they’re pregnant with his child. He can even tackle them on their plight into the woods. But he’s been doing this for a very long time, nearly ten years, and one thing he was absolutely certain of—he doesn’t leave bruises. When Karen’s other appendage came into view, they both saw it at the same time.

A bone was sticking out of her arm.

His face went ghostly pale white, she said. His jaw dropped.

This time, he’d finally done it. He *bruised* her.

Remington was howling outside the room as she cried, “Take me to the hospital,” and only one thought overcame him.

They can’t know.

Nobody can know.

5

BEFORE ANYTHING COULD BE DONE about the bone sticking out of her arm, Karen had to gather their children and safely deliver them to his mother’s house, who lived now just around the corner. “And here’s the best part. Once the children are dropped off with the grandma, and he and I both get into the car and he starts driving me to the hospital, and I’m sitting there in the passenger seat, tears pouring down my face, bone sticking out of my arm, blood running down my arm—he’s worried about what I’m going to tell the hospital.”

You can’t tell them what happened.

What?

“Tell them you fell down the stairs.”

“He was trying to make up all these excuses. I’m sitting there holding my broken arm and he says to me, ‘Don’t do this to me.’”

“And I said, ‘Don’t do this to you...?’”

I just started yelling *FORK you* over and over again—only she wasn’t talking about kitchen appliances. A proper translation would thusly read:

FUCK you. FUCK you. FUCK you. FUCK you.

“I was so over it. I’d been through so much already. And all he could say was, ‘Don’t do this to me. Don’t tell them what happened. You can’t tell them what happened.’ I told him to *shut the fuck up* and drive.”

Even while they were walking into the hospital, bone and blood slathering her, *Synchronicity* was desperate for an answer:

What are you going to tell them?

Meanwhile, hospital staff was trying to check Karen in—you know, fill out a customary form. “The nurse was getting an attitude with me, and I was in so much pain, and I was like, ‘I don’t *fucking* know, I’m in so much pain—the bone is sticking out of my arm! I can’t sit here and answer these *stupid ass* questions!’”

While her husband finished the grizzly paper work, another nurse walked her back into the ER.

What happened? How did this happen?

Karen *refused* to answer.

But as soon as the doors closed behind her—the very moment in which Karen was absolutely certain that he wasn’t able to *hear* her; even *read* her lips from down the hall; ten years of anguish gushed out of her: “Please, you have to call the cops. My husband broke my arm. He did this to me. And I need the cops called right now.”

6

“AND THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME IN TEN YEARS that the cops had actually been called on him for what he did,” Karen said, “All those times I tried to call the cops, all those times I tried to get help on my own, and I couldn’t do it. And then finally—*finally*—finally got the police called on him.”

“I now have a plate in my arm with ten screws. And my right arm will never be the same. It will *never* be the same. It hurts now. Any kind of weird weather or—and sometimes it feels like someone is sticking an ice pick in my wrist, just from the nerve damage.”

And it's so silly, she recalls. “I have a lot of tattoos.”

While Karen was going down for surgery she told the doctor:

Put my tattoo back together.

“And he actually did do a pretty good job. He put it back together.” It was her husband, Karen added, who “ruined my favorite tattoo. I have a giant four inch scar right in the middle of one of my favorite tattoos now, and I kind of go back and forth between fixing it and not fixing it.”

Speaking of which, her husband, who is not to be named *here*, was finally arrested. He spent the night on jail. He *finally* went to jail, Karen said. He should have gone to jail a dozen times. And yet, rather ironically, while Karen spent three days in the hospital, he was out on bail.

Karen had called her mother on her first night in the hospital. She purchased a plane ticket that very hour and was there on the following day. *If only she'd told her years ago*. Upon Karen's release, her mother drove her to the bank so that she might buy the children groceries. Therapy had done wonders on her husband's own ability to deal with *the self*, apparently, because while she was recovering in the hospital, he drained all the money. “He had a bank account with tens of thousands of dollars. He went to the one bank account that I had access to—it had about six thousand dollars in it—and he drained it. So before I could get out of the hospital because of the arm that he broke, he went to the bank and took out all the money that I had access to, because when you're a controlling, abusive, narcissistic, son of a bitch, you just can't help yourself.”

THE ROAD TO RALEIGH

1

THE MOVIE PREMIERE WAS *not* Robbie Davidson's idea. Initially, Brian Mullin, the bearded face and talent behind the wildly popular YouTube series, *Balls Out Physics*, was the accredited executive producer on Davidson's documentary, *Scientism Exposed*, though he had no actual part in its production. "Brian just really believed in the project," Davidson said, "and he just basically sent a check, and it was a very nice donation. I asked him, 'Would you mind going on as executive producer?'"

Mullin replied: *I'd be humbled.*

"We became really good friends," Davidson seemed to gaze upon the precious moments which so easily escape us. "We were talking a lot. I was very close to Brian."

Mark Sargent said, "When Brian Mullin started making videos on YouTube he became *hot* property." Brian Mullin was a *bachelor*. Mullin knew it, and far more importantly, women on every continent knew it. "And for whatever reason he had people inside the community and outside of the community hunting him down. I know for a fact that the woman who ended up marrying him was in direct competition with Orphan Red up in British Columbia."

Sargent then paused to consider his own calling courtiers. "My social life has never been," well, let's put it this way, "I've had more *social activity* in the last four years than I have probably in the previous fifteen, because of flat earth." The woman whom Mullin chose for a wife "didn't make videos. She was just out there. I don't know *how* she tracked him down, probably just through social media. I know full well that Orphan was interested in him because she told me. She was a *huge* fan."

After *Scientism Exposed 2* went into production, the idea for its eventual premiere, Davidson insists, can only be attributed to Mullin's bride, *Nicole*. "Originally it was their idea to do a movie premiere in *their* area." It was up to Nicole to work out the specifics. "I had done some event management, and Nicole had experience in PR and stuff like that." Davidson then pondered over the suggestion. Why settle for a movie

premiere, he thought, when they could commit to a full conference which might *end* with the movie premiere? “I was always the type of person where I’d say, here’s some sort of spark. Okay, let’s make this grand. Let’s make this into a bonfire.”

“They loved the idea.” Davidson’s brightly blazing bonfire was one way, they all agreed, that the budding flat earth community might be further nurtured and expounded upon. The American mathematician Henry Seely White once rehearsed a Native American saying:

“Indians are plenty smart. We catch small wood. Build small fire. Stand close and stay warm all over. White men not so smart. They catch big wood. Build big fire. Stand far away, burn face and freeze ass.”

This was the perfect opportunity for everyone to burn their faces and numb their buns. So Brian and Nicole “started scouting out locations.” In Raleigh, North Carolina, they found *Embassy Suites*, the hallowed ground which would give the Movement its very first recognition of intellectual legitimacy among the curious eyes of the outside world, or perhaps it’s very own Waterloo. But perhaps far more importantly for flat earthists, Brian and Nicole Mullin offered an international community which might finally be based upon another sort of authority altogether; flesh and bone friendship—a coveted companionship which YouTube Land can never hope to offer.

Davidson summed up his own part in the Movement, particularly the conferences, as something of a *visionary*. “That truly is who I am. This is kind of what I do. I’m kind of the big thinker. I’m not the detail guy. I’m the guy that basically thinks of the idea. I’m the visionary, and I have people who help me bring the details together. But one thing about me is that if I put my mind to it or I feel called to it, you know, this is going to be a mission, then it’s going to be done. I won’t accept defeat. And if it comes to something where there’s obstacles in the way, I’m going to work to make sure that I overcome those, and that’s just been my past. If anyone knows me they know also that if I jump into something then I jump in 100 *percent*, in anything I do.”

The announcement was made in February of 2017. But Brian and his wife would never attend. Their sudden exit strategy, matched with an impromptu about-face plight from the limelight, has only continued to perplex, astonish, and ultimately arouse suspicion among the very

individuals who became a part of the flesh and bone community in which they had helped to orchestrate. Within the matter of only a couple of months, they not only wanted *out* of the conference, Brian and Nicole wanted *out* of the community altogether.

“A lot of the stuff at that time was going to their bank, and it was just a mess,” Davidson said. But “because it was the two couples working together, Brian and his wife, me and my wife, Nicole transferred everything over to me. Everything had to be transferred over at that time. I made the announcement that they were out and gone.”

And just like that, without any explanation, Brian Mullin went *dark*. His YouTube channel, *Balls Out Physics* (by which I was a subscriber), along with his dozens of brilliant videos, whereas Mullin stood in front of a white board, illustrious with his equations, ruminating over the improbability, if not *impossibility*, of propulsion through the vacuum of space, among other heavy handed topics, were permanently deleted.

“It’s a shame that he had to leave, and I’m hoping that he comes back,” Sargent said. “I’ve heard a rumor that he may be in the wings *trying* to come back because of his divorce. He was a great early asset because he’s a full blown structural engineer. What I did not know though,” and perhaps Mullin did not either, “and it didn’t surprise me once I figure it out; if you are in a profession where you have to get certified, like an engineer or a lawyer, you are beholden to the institution. *That* I did not know. If someone calls up the ethics board of the United States structural engineers to tell them: *One of your boys is co-sponsoring a conference, a flat earth conference, and I think that’s a conflict of interest*, being a structural engineer, they’re going to take that seriously.”

Sargent laughed. “Again, the trolls—you gotta love them for their diligence. He was a threat. He was a real threat.”

“There’s a lot of rumors and stuff, as far as *‘he’s going to lose his job, people were calling his job.’*” Davidson said. “Yes, someone did call his job—he was trying to make problems. That never was really a big issue. Quite honestly, it was personal. That’s all I can say at this point. He was just dealing with *personal*. And what I can say, and I’ve said this in many interviews, is he was choosing his wife and family before flat earth. He needed to do that. He needed to put priorities in place and spend time with his wife and family.”

Speaking of the divorce, “I think he’s in a better place to come back,” Sargent said. Rumors persist that Brian Mullin is waiting in the wings, carefully watching the Movement which he gave so much legitimacy to at the hour in which it so desperately needed it, but from a padded distance. For some, his return is imminent. “He’s got nothing to lose now.”

The legitimacy in which *Balls Out Physics* delivered to flat earthists in the communities dawning hours cannot be overstated—particularly in its own sense of self-confidence. And though it is true without question that the first generation of flat earthists loved his work (*Balls Out Physics* was so often mirrored that the bulk of his work still remains), since the time of his self-imposed exile the list of subject experts have drastically increased.

“He’ll come back, and the veterans will be like, ‘*That’s great—fantastic!*’ But all the new people will be like: ‘*Who the hell is Brian Mullin?*’ The internet moves really fast nowadays. Windows open and shut really, really quickly.”

Davidson said: “Originally Brian was going to deactivate his YouTube channel. He *accidentally* deleted it. He was very upset about that. He never intended to delete his work. He’s happy that his work lives on all over the place, but it’s not because he’s gone back to the globe or because he was going to lose his job.”

His intention was to deactivate everything, including Facebook. But *Balls Out Physics*, Davidson insists, he wanted his channel to remain. Mullin wanted to go dark—but not *that* dark.

Oops.

“Apparently he accidentally deleted that,” Davidson shrugged. “That’s the story. That’s what he told me. And I believe him.”

DAVIDSON'S FALLOUT WITH GRACE LIFE of Edmonton over *Celebrate Truth* and Amos 9:6 prompted a serious and thorough search for the sort of church where they wouldn't have to look over their shoulder, come every Sunday, always concerned about the faintest whisper or the either/or argument, followed by the inevitable peg-leg clomping sounds of the incoming boot. Though they turned their gaze towards yet another congregation hoping for friendship, family security, and spiritual growth, the pastors of *both* churches, Grace Life and now Fellowship Baptist, they would soon come to learn, *knew* each other.

“My wife had found on their website that they have a clause in their bylaws called *religious liberty*. In that it says, in your own personal time, if it's not fundamental doctrine, if it's secondary, you can believe whatever the heck you want. At this church they have *theistic evolution*. They have six day literal creationists. They have everything under the sun. Everything is good because it's all secondary doctrine.”

In short, there were evolutionists and creationists—all heliocentrists, mind you; and as proponents of Biblical cosmology, Robbie and Rachel Davidson felt safe. *The more the merrier*. “It was a great church,” Davidson reminisced about his own thoughts at the time. “You can believe whatever the heck you want here as far as secondary doctrine. At least we're safe. I don't know if I agree. I don't know if I'm too comfortable knowing the fact that the pastor doesn't even believe in six day literal creationism, but I'm willing to be a little open here just to see where this goes.”

At Fellowship Baptist they reunited with old friends from Grace Life. It was part of the perpetual migration in modern evangelicalism, a cyclic motion whereas jaded congregants seem to wander, rather aimlessly, from one sheepfold to the next—endlessly searching for a deeper unknown and spiritual truth which Churchianity pledges from the pulpit but, like any campaign promise, can never truly hope to offer. There they met author Jeremy Gardiner, founder of the Head Covering Movement, a ministry focused on restoring the symbol of head covering during church gatherings. He even wrote a book on the subject. At Grace Life, Gardiner had also been given an ultimatum.

It's us or the book.

Gardiner chose a dependence on Scripture over the religion of man, and promptly left. At present, he seemed to be doing well at Fellowship Baptist. Davidson said, “So Jeremy was going to this church that we were looking into, and that was part of our decision too. So I meet up with the pastor for coffee. We had three coffees.” The first cup involved only Robbie and the pastor. The second included Rachel. “I laid everything on the table for him. Here’s *Celebrate Truth*. Here’s *Scientism Exposed*.” *Oh, and have your read Gardiner’s book?* “Ask any questions you want. We talked about enclosed cosmology. We went into everything, and he was fine. So we went to the church because everything was cool—no big deal, *secondary doctrine*.”

Six months into their tenure a woman approached Rachel Davidson. It was customary that parents with small children helped out in the nursery once in a while.

Mind volunteering...?

Rachel was excited.

The Davidson’s would not find out until the following week that they’d already been blacklisted.

I’m so, so sorry, the woman said, *I didn’t know. I’m informed by the leadership that you’re not allowed to help out in the nursery.*

Rachel was in tears.

“I knew *exactly* what was going on at that point,” Davidson said. “But I told her to write Pastor Jason Hagan and ask why you’re not allowed to work in the nursery.” He broke from the tension to laugh over the phone. “We joke about it now. What are we going to do, whisper to babies...? *The earth is flat*. It’s so ridiculous.”

After Rachel wrote Hagan a letter, “the letter came back, and *oh boy*, it’s just blasting.”

Dear Rachel,

Thank you for reaching out on this matter. While we are grateful for your interest in serving in our nursery we are not able to accept your offer at this time. As you’re aware, the Board,

pastoral team and I have several major concerns regarding the Flat Earth/Enclosed Cosmology views held and promoted by your husband, Robbie Davidson. These concerns were summarized in our letter to Robbie in October 2016, and repeated in person since that time. We consider this teaching unbiblical, detrimental and antithetical to the advancement of the gospel.

Since you share in promoting this unbiblical teaching, your service in any ministry would be interpreted as a step toward further partnership that we do not wish to endorse. We do have members and adherents serving in various capacities in our church; however, adherents, such as yourself, have agreed to be subject to the authority of the church leadership. Promoting this unbiblical teaching in any way, puts you in conflict with our leadership, and so service in any ministry is not available to you.

I hope this clears up the issue.

Grace and peace,

Jason

Jan 24 2017

To put it in slightly other terms, Robbie and Rachel Davidson were:

H—E—R—E—T—I—C—S.

That earlier letter, by the way, sought to bring up Davidson's associations—mainly, Rob Skiba. You could almost hear it as a whispered echo. *Rob Skiba is the devil*. The issue of Skiba's impending arrest by the Darby police aside, there was of course the common *belief* which united the two men—Hebrew cosmology. Hebrew cosmology disagreed with diplomas, and as a rule to the Doctrine of Accommodation, long enforced in Protestantism, was therefore theologically off-based. "They went on to say that what I am teaching is antithetical to the Gospel and un-Biblical. They said it's a hindrance to the Gospel and they were all concerned."

As if Hagan were not clear enough when writing Rachel, his follow-up correspondence then arrived in the Davidson's mailbox.

It's okay if you come. But do not apply for membership.

You will be denied.

“*This*,” Davidson sighed, “coming from a church that openly advocated evolution.” An evolutionist had called Davidson *unbiblical*, and therefore denied his family access to babies. The world’s largest religion, Davidson had come to learn first-hand, wasn’t Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism or Islam.

Scientism was the world’s largest religion.

3

JON POUNDERS WOULDN’T HAVE HIS *Come to Jesus* moment until he landed himself in jail in 2009. Upon his release, Pounders founded *Now You See TV* in hopes of spreading the Torah Movement through online media. In April of 2017, NYSTV hosted its very first conference, *Blood on the Doorpost*. Chris and Liz Bailey were there for it. The Bailey’s had already been putting on different health conferences in Ohio and Tennessee, which in turn gave them the confidence, the vision, and the know-how to put on something entirely *different*. Liz said, “We knew once we came into this knowledge, it was just laid on our hearts, that we have to bring this to the masses and do a conference.” They arrived in Kentucky hoping to bag their first speaker.

“That was the first Passover conference we ever attended,” Chris said. “We really wanted Rob as our first speaker because we knew, if we got Rob, we could get thirty to forty or fifty people to show up to this thing.” Theirs would be the sort of gathering in which they could talk about Torah, and talk about the flat earth, and talk about the feast days and the Nephilim and Satanic ritual abuse, and end-times prophecies, all in one fell swoop. And maybe they could even get their friends and family to show, *who knows?* This brings up another challenge entirely, because they didn’t even have a venue. Bailey’s hope was to convince his uncle, who was a pastor of the church, to host them on their property. The Bailey’s even offered \$1,500 if they agreed to host it.

“The feast days,” his uncle nodded, “you explained them—they’re about Jesus. I get it, *okay*.”

But then there was this *Nephilim* thing.

His uncle shrugged. “I can *sort of* see that in Scripture,” *I guess*. Satanic ritual abuse, “okay, I know that happens. That’s a hard one.” But the flat earth, *I don’t know*.

“We’ve got to pray about *that*.”

Chris said, “The minute we arrived at that conference we said, we’ve got to pull Rob aside. Little did we know that Rob Skiba, you *cannot* pin down. You can’t get to him. There’s like thirty or forty people asking him questions about flat earth. Flat earth is so fresh on everybody’s mind—everyone’s got a million questions.”

The Bailey’s did manage to sit at the same table as Skiba one night. Dinner was at *Denny’s*, and though they sat two or three chairs away, neither had that chance to have the one on one with him, as they’d hoped or imagined on the drive over.

They were sitting down to their Seder dinner when Chris received a text from his uncle.

We prayed about it.

I don’t think our facility is ready to sponsor that topic.

We don’t want to be associated with that.

“It didn’t help that the church had just suffered a split,” Chris said. “They didn’t need another.”

On the last day of the conference, Rob Skiba’s crowd had failed to disband. Abiding questions seemed to weigh heavily upon his heels, cling to his shadow, pull at his tzitzit—prod at his very soul with a surgical scalpel. “After he spoke, we didn’t see him for the rest of the time, because he had a group of forty people around him,” *always*. In as little as a year, Skiba had climbed out of the muck and mire of disparagement, at least in the eyes of a *noticeable few*, to something *far beyond* a curiosity piece. It was as if Skiba had taken the definition of *Hebrew* to a whole new level, this time breaking through the Matrix. There was no other teacher of Torah on the face of the earth—no *rabbi*, like him.

The Bailey’s packed up their bags in defeat.

After checking out of their room, rolling a cart brimming with enough baggage for a three-person family through the lobby to the back of the hotel, they loaded up the car—a 2009 black Dodge Journey. (Here Liz adds, “Our car hasn’t changed.....fits the story perfectly!”) While

Chris wheeled the cart all the way back through the hotel, Mrs. Bailey and their son Reilly waited in the *Journey*, anticipating their return trip to Cleveland. Chris passed through the lounge area.

Rob Skiba was sitting alone—eating breakfast.

Chris texted Liz: *Rob's sitting alone.*

Likely only Reilly can testify, if questioned, whether or not his mother pedaled the gas with the wild-unflinching determination of an airport bound New York City cab driver in rush hour traffic, just as suddenly screeching its breaks as she pulled the car around the corner to join Chris, who had already been given *the gesture* to sit down at his table.

The Bailey's outlined the premise for their conference.

No dates. No venue. No speakers. *Let's take on the world anyway.*

Dude, Skiba said, *I'm in.*

Let's do it.

And then Chad Schafer walked into the lobby in order to pick Skiba up and drive him to the airport. They invited the Bailey's to lunch, despite the fact that Skiba was apparently already eating his breakfast. Though Skiba has often confessed to the fact that it's an understatement to say he simply *likes* eating. Apparently, wrestling the bread basket from him is a risky proposition. For the next three, nearly four hours, Schafer and his wife, Skiba and the Bailey's discussed their vision for *Take on the World*. By the end of lunch, they had their first two speakers.

4

UP UNTIL MAY OF 2017, ROBBIE DAVIDSON had yet to participate at any speaking engagement *whatsoever*, despite the fact that he was putting on a conference of his own. After he and Mullin had made the initial announcement in February, only three months earlier, the man behind the *Celebrate Truth* channel instantaneously become a blip on the radar. People suddenly wanted Davidson to show up to their own events. In 2017, the scene had drastically changed. People wanted *flat earth* to show up, and as an organizer, Davidson exemplified that. Flat earth garnished gazes. Flat earth sold tickets. By August of that very year, Stephen Ben Denoon, a

Messianic Jew and founder of the DeNoon Institute of Biblical Research, hosted a debate between Zen Garcia and Dr. Stephen Pidgeon, whereas the shape of the earth was carefully prodded and combed over in Scripture. The days of Skiba sitting on a San Diego stage, being mocked and ridiculed by a Torah audience, was no longer the norm. The flat earth had been hidden by two-thousand years of clever caricatures and burlesque laughter. For the first time in modern human history ridicule was a technique no longer working as intended.

Mockery only duplicated their numbers.

Meanwhile, in Austin, Texas, John Gabrielson was putting on a conference of his own. At *Back to the Future* 2017, “one of the topics they wanted to discuss was flat earth,” Davidson said. *Everybody* wanted to discuss it. And what better way to introduce the flat earth to a certain segment of the Truther crowd, here mostly Torah based, than through the very man who was putting on the International Conference?

Back to the Future however would serve other greater purposes. Firstly, it was Davidson’s very first time meeting Rob Skiba and Rick Hummer in person. “We had talked for years leading up to that conference, but it took *that* conference getting us all together, even Jon Pounders. That was the first time meeting Jon Pounders from *Now You See TV*.” Their bond proved instantaneous and lasting.

Secondly, it tested Davidson’s resolve in going forward with crowds of people who thought very differently than him. The **Torah observant** crowd was practically anthropological, and therefore scary. “That was my first introduction, to tell you the truth, to a more Torah leaning crowd. I would say that I was the person who was probably not aligned with that type of thinking, but it’s hard to put into words how enjoyable the community, the people, the conversations we had. We were able to get into some deep, theological—doctrinal talks, and everyone had such a wonderful time.”

They talked late into the night. At one table Davidson strategically positioned himself around Rob Skiba, Rick Hummer, and Jon Pounders, all sitting together, “and we would talk for hours and hours.” Among a smorgasbord of topics, “we talked about flat earth and where it was going, because in 2017 it was just starting to take off. That was a remarkable time. It’s interesting how it all connects and brings everyone together.” An instant friendship was forged between the three men, Davidson, Skiba,

and Hummer, “and they’ve been part of my core team since the very beginning.” Even *Back to the Future*’s organizer John Gabrielson fell in line, quickly becoming Davidson’s International conference director for Raleigh and every event thereafter. Rick Hummer situated comfortably into his MC role for all of Davidson’s conferences, US and Canada. And Rob Skiba showed up to speak at them. Nobody seemed to draw in crowds like Skiba. “That bond has never been severed,” Davidson said. “It’s been constant throughout the years.

5

THE IMPENDING FLAT EARTH CONFERENCE in Raleigh, North Carolina was *never* supposed to happen. Robbie Davidson was a con artist, *they said*. Robbie Davidson was going to steal everyone’s money and run, *they said*. The darn thing had barely even been announced before Brian Mullin went dark. *Somebody* had gotten to him. Mullin, it seemed, had wisened up to flat earth’s shadier back alley happenings—where all the deals were struck. And just to make sure he didn’t go through with his circus act, Robbie Davidson quickly found himself working with bomb threats.

“Just look at the videos and the articles circulating in 2017,” Davidson explained. “If you look up my biggest detractors, the one thing that everyone was saying in 2017, they said I was a scam artist, and the conference would *never* happen, and I was going to run away with everyone’s money. That was the biggest attack that I would get, that I was a scam artist and that I was going to steal everyone’s money—and there would be no conference. Whether it was division inside or outside, or attacks, the big thing was, this conference would never happen.”

Oh, and about those bomb threats.

“People were calling up the hotel. What people don’t realize, when it comes to conferences, there’s really no amount of attack that will basically get a hotel to rescind on their contract. I mean, it’s a contract. It’s legally binding, and *nothing’s* going to happen.”

Before the conference was announced, very few people knew the name of the man behind *Celebrate Truth*; even less the fact that he was practically seven foot tall and Canadian. “Up to that point I had been

pretty active. I had put out the *Global Lie* documentary and other similar YouTube videos,” not to mention *Scientism Exposed*. “And at that point the videos were ranging in the hundreds of thousands of views—even by early 2017. So I was already well known. But I think it was surprising for people to see this channel *Celebrate Truth*, or Robbie Davidson behind *Celebrate Truth*, to be the one that was organizing the conferences.”

John Le Bon, whom Bob Knodel relegates to one of flat earth’s most notorious trolls, “said in his article, I’m totally for him putting this on, even as a business, even if he makes money, but all I hope at the end of the day is that people get their money’s worth. If this event *even happens*, I hope him all the best in the future. John Le Bon wasn’t even a flat earther. He was actually a baller. He was into debates in 2016, actually 2015. He was doing a round table in 2015. And he started going against a lot of different flat earthers. But in the article, because I was able to get a hold of him and say *let’s talk*, he was able to ask me all these questions about things and where they were.”

Davidson’s greatest opposition, as it turns out, would not arrive from *outside* the community gates, which initially he and Mullin, much like Sargent and Steere, had hoped to strengthen the bonds of. They were there within their ranks all along. “It’s unfortunate of all things when you’re trying to bring people together and you’re trying to move things forward, there’s so much opposition. It’s sad that there’s more brutality and vileness from *within* flat earth than without. I mean, I can deal with the world, globbers, people that do not believe in flat earth. If anything I kind of enjoy it. I was there at one point. I laughed at this too. What I simply cannot understand is how much attack and hate comes from *within* flat earth.”

In a stunning, though certainly not unexpected, muddying of events, Eric Dubay turned to American martial arts instructor and comedian Eddie Bravo and coined Davidson’s conference a *shill fest* on his show.

“It was Eric. It was Eric,” Sargent spoke enthusiastically. “It was Eric during an Eddie Bravo interview, *just* before the conference. Eric had given his blessing to the conference. He was invited. And he was like, ‘*No, but you guys have a great time, and I’ll endorse it.*’” But when Eddie Bravo, who was a fan of Dubay’s, did a special interview with him, “I called it. I totally predicted it. I said, ‘If this thing goes over 90 minutes, Eric’s going to start taking shots at us. And about 100 minutes in, Eric couldn’t stand it

anymore. He felt comfortable enough, and that's when he called Raleigh *the shill fest*."

Bravo then asked Dubai some very pointed questions, "and it was very telling. He asked, 'What are the channels that you hate? Rattle off some YouTube channels that you hate.' And he just stayed *silent*." Bravo then took the pendulum approach. He asked Dubai to name a channel—any channel, that he endorsed.

Crickets.

"That was it. Eric was basically on his own. He had no allies. And he was too cowardly to list off his enemies," during a live interview, at least, "even though he has a full blown enemies list on his webpages. And I'm number one with a bullet. I don't know why..." Sargent then corrected himself. "Well, I know *why*. It's pure competition. There's a reason why envy is one of the seven, and no one likes to share the stage in something like this."

Eric Dubai again, David Weiss seemed to sigh over the phone: "Eric Dubai, poisoning the conference, saying that it's a *shill fest*. He coined that term. Eric had a lot of loyal followers, and they needed someone to follow. And there was a lot of interference in trying to scare people away from going to the conference. Again, I didn't pay attention to that. There's a lot of people saying the conferences are a waste of time, that we need street activism, and you're not going to learn anything new at the conference. I look at the conference as a giant meet up where we get to meet people face to face, which is powerful, because me talking to people in chat rooms isn't the same as meeting them face to face."

"All the damage was really done beforehand," Sargent continued. "For whatever reason, the people who listen to Eric, they are extremely enthusiastic, and they will not let it go. His channel has been burned down twice by YouTube for hate speech. He won't leave Thailand. I know for absolute fact—*well*, let's put it this way. I've got an inside source close to him that says he's absolutely scared that he's on a United States no fly list. And I don't know why. It's like *fine*, you've got some class action lawsuit thing that you were part of that you settled and one of the government contractors was involved, and fine, he cashes out for one-hundred grand some years ago. You're not going to be put on a no fly list because of that."

“There were only two people who really caused problems during the conference. All the damage was really done beforehand. One was Eric, because he called it a *Shill Fest*. And the other guy was ODD—ODD Reality. ODD was a big fan of Eric’s—he still is, to this day.”

Though Eric Dubay *cordially* declined his invite to FEIC, Mike Jack, the person behind the YouTube channel *ODD Reality*, which currently holds over 250,000 subscribers, *initially* accepted. Complications then arose when it was discovered that Mike Jack didn’t *really exist* at all. Mike Jack was *in reality* Matthew Procella, a man convicted of first degree sexual assault in 2003. Perhaps this revelation shook ODD’s sensibilities. It is difficult to tell. But for whatever reason, the man we know now as Matthew Procella turned on Robbie Davidson’s conference.

Essentially, when Eric Dubay said Mark and Patricia were government agents, “ODD spread the word,” Sargent said. “He was telling people on his channel, *don’t go*. The problem was some of these people had already bought tickets. The Raleigh conference was sold out, but yet there were a number of empty seats. So where were these people? It shows you his influence.”

ODD said, *don’t go*.

After Robbie Davidson had invited Flat Earth Asshole, aka Jake Gibson, to speak in Raleigh, he too *snapped*.

“Jake, he was a guy that got involved with Matt,” Sargent said.

Math Powerland *again*—

“And I feel bad because we watched that whole thing. That was a slow motion car crash. Jake and Matt were buddies. And the IPS [Infinite Plane Radio] got involved and kind of helped Jake do a road trip, where he was driving across the country, promoting flat earth and meet-ups, couch surfing, and taking *donations* from people.” Marijuana seemed to fuel more than his gas tank. “And the trip went really well. But by the time he got back, he had rubbed Matt the wrong way, because Jake was basically doing his own production. He was ousted. Jake was bitter. He wanted to be—he backed the wrong horse. He backed Matt. When Matt turned on him he had nowhere to go, because he had already burned some of those bridges.”

A slow motion car crash, indeed. In a shocking series of YouTube videos, which played off like *déjà vu*, Flat Earth Asshole turned against

the AE map. Gibson was hell bent on proving the flat earth's circular map, and just as poignantly, the Christians who supported it as something Biblical, wrong—dead wrong. It was *TigerDan* all over again. There was however a stark contrast between the two. Not only was the map controlled opposition, the Bible was too. Where-as TigerDan bowed out alone, Flat Earth Asshole made a show of it, inviting his closest followers to take a wrecking ball to social media.

Flat Earthist Lori Frary, who advocates a simulation stylized Pac-Man map, complete with portals, leveraged Gibson's attacks on the AE map for her own advantages. She too had her own disciples, and everyone it seemed wanted a part in the channel building and the ransacking. Strange indeed that, of all people to contend with, Frary began a heated debate on my own Facebook page, and within the matter of three or four days before I left for the conference in Raleigh.

“Have fun at *the shill fest*,” she said.

Frary then disappeared along with her followers into the fourth dimension, for all I know, because they seemed to blend into Einsteinian formula of their model, and I have rarely seen nor hear from them since.

“The Flat Earth movement is overrun with government agents and full blown retards making unproven claims,” Asshole concluded. Within months, Jake Gibson would drop the moniker *Flat Earth Asshole* for the somewhat more expansive expletive, *Jake the Asshole*.

And then he left the flat earth Movement, apparently for good.

ON THE NIGHT IN WHICH CHRIS AND LIZ Bailey first learned about Freemasonry, years earlier, *neither* slept. They had stayed up late to watch a YouTube documentary called *What Lies Behind the Curtain*, “and if most people saw it today, they’d go: ‘Huh, that’s kind of basic.’” And yet in one fell swoop the Bailey’s learned of Freemasonry, the Illuminati, depopulation control, genetically modified foods and plants, and the impending plan to implant a rice-grain sized microchip in every citizen of the world.

The Bailey household held a stifling, almost unsettling air for two consecutive weeks afterwards, Chris recalls. “We didn’t sleep well.” In every room, a ghostly *quiet* stifled the conversation. “There was nothing but this quietness, which was a very somber feeling. Everything felt eerie. What left us was peace. What left us was comfort.”

“The problem was not what we were learning. The problem was our perspective on those things, and our trust factor on the Father. And that’s when our minds started to change, when we started to put things in proper perspective. And that’s when everything came full circle for us.” The *reality* behind the curtain certainly is scary. “There’s a lot of fear that comes with understanding them. There’s a lot of conspiracy. There’s a lot of, ‘*who’s involved?*’ There’s a lot of researching people dying for this stuff—John Todd of the 1960’s. The list goes on and on.”

The carry-on baggage of Deputy Darby and dispensationalism, particularly a pre-Tribulation rapture mindset, had plagued Chris and Liz Bailey with anxiety for decades. “We always feared the coming of the Lord.” An acceleration of world events like 9/11 seemed only to serve as roadside markers, reminding them of the approaching midnight hour. Christ was coming. And yet, how could His return be a blessed event if it only came with destruction? Visions of *running in terror* filled their imagination, 666 stamped on the foreheads of those *left behind*, and meteors crashing down upon the earth. “All those things were in our heads from the past, growing up in pretribulation rapture type of mindset.”

“And that’s when this whole thing started to really flip and change, once we threw out our dispensational doctrine; once we threw away the pretribulation rapture; when we started to throw those things away and

got back to the two bigger questions, we started to get a proper perspective.”

Why are we here and *what* is our purpose?

“Everybody goes down these tangents of trying to discover the truth. At the end of the day you get all clouded with Torah talk, flat earth talk; you get all clouded with conspiracy talk; clouded with this Bible version or that Bible version. You just keep getting clouded with all these things. But at the end of the day for every human person who lives, the only two questions that really matter are: ‘*Why* are we here and *what* is our purpose?’ That’s really it. And all of those other things just fit right in there.” So after answering those two imposing questions, “we started learning about *those other things*. We already had a Biblical mindset and a background, but I would say, digging into everything really started putting those two other questions right in front of our face.”

And then there’s William Cooper, “who was murdered right after 9/11. You start to look at these things and you see a very real picture. But it all leads you back to, *be anxious for nothing and trust Me*. All of this is a trust issue. We *know* this world is a mess. We *know* these things happen.”

Liz said: “I think for a lot of people, when we believe we’re flying in this universe that’s ever-expanding and all of that, that we feel insignificant, and it doesn’t matter if we do anything with our life. We can just be a slave to this world. It’s how *they’ve* created it for *us* to be. When we understand that the cosmos is small; that He is right above us; that we can have that relationship *with* our Creator—*with* our Father; that ultimately, He’s placed us here for a purpose and for a reason; that makes us special. It makes us unique. It makes us one of a kind.” The unexpected cosmology, “just wants to make you fulfill that great commission and do something magnificent.”

Why are we here and *what* is our purpose?

Chris said, “Ultimately those are the question that we all will be faced with and that we all must answer. What I have come to discover, they’re basically the same question in one. I believe that we’ve been created to be in a relationship with our Creator. He didn’t create us to just make an ant factory of robots, because He could just create people to be in a covenant and in a relationship with. He created us to ultimately choose Him, because that’s the ultimate relationship, when two people are in a party together. That is why we’re here. And our purpose is, not only to give Him the glory, but to lead others to Him so that they can make that same

choice in their life—to ultimately follow and serve Him. I mean, that’s the base of the Biblical mindset. But all of these topics hinder people from that. Most people who are in Christian bubbles and circles, especially young people, they start out with that mindset and the premise, but quickly go to a college, quickly go to a high school who teaches a never ending expanding universe and cosmos, and all of a sudden their minds begin to wander towards big bang cosmology, alien deceptions, evolution—it starts to change their paradigm, because as a church, as a body of believers for decades, we’ve played the fence. We didn’t want to deny Science because Science is always fact. So the church would always have to compromise the Bible to what Science taught, which we *now know*, we call Scientism. So, because we have played the fence, we have turned hearts cold to the Word of God, based upon our acceptance of these lies, which ultimately turn people away. And they all do. Every single one of them turns people away. I’ve never met people who said, ‘I just learned about the heliocentric model,’ and go, ‘Man, I just want to have a relationship with Jesus.’ It tends to get them to question other things. Could there be more gods? You get into this universalism, if they don’t disband the Bible, they become Universalists and loose the faith, or they give up on it altogether.”

“Pat Robertson of the *700 Club* fully accepts the big bang theory, fully accepts evolution, and teaches them from his TBN platform. These are some of the very basics of denying the first line of Scripture. And if you’re going to deny the first line of Scripture, kids aren’t stupid. People aren’t dumb. If you’re a philosophical or an intelligent person, if you’re denying the first part of the book, then why would you even believe the part where the Messiah comes and dies for you?”

“When we start with Eratosthenes rather than God’s Word, we end with Copernicus—and that leads to NASA. But before the Copernican Revolution, written in the Zohar, which is full blown Kabbalah, in the Zohar which is written 1,000 years before the Copernican Revolution, it taught that the earth is a ball and it spins on its axis—written right there. The lines which Satan has interwoven into his deepest, darkest, occults are now fluffy, and we wear them on our t-shirts and we want to teach our kids to be astronauts. That’s the reality of the fact. And now this argument is made to be, you’re absolutely a moron, a conspiratorial tinfoil hat wearing moron to trust the Word of God. *That’s* the problem. We can’t even believe the Word of God over what Science books tell us, because they are the authority of what is truth, not the Holy Spirit inspired

Word. That's a dangerous place to be for anyone who claims to accept the Bible as their authority in their life."

Why are we here and *what* is our purpose?

"That was our journey," he said, "to *Take on the World*, to reveal these things in a proper construct and a proper perspective, with a Biblical mindset and a Biblical perspective, to lead people *to truth*, to comfort and in peace, and to know the Father is in control."

With Skiba and Schafer secured, the Bailey's nabbed George Moss, David Carrico, and Jon Pounders, whom they had managed to speak with at the *Blood on the Doorpost* conference. They still however had nobody coming, and just as importantly, nowhere for them to go. "We had no clue when this was going to take place. We had no clue about anything."

The Bailey's scored a campground ten minutes from their house. It wasn't a church. It wasn't a hotel or a resort. A camp would *do*. From here *Take on the World* would make its stand. Promotion began immediately, as early as April, and continued until the end of August, because a date, September 14-16, had finally been settled. *Take On the World* managed to sneak in flat earth talk, and as a central component to its platform, an entire two months before the Flat Earth International Conference in Raleigh.

"And it sold out," Liz said.

Their past conferences, most of which were only one day events, raked in at most maybe 250 people, often capping off at half that number or less. Though their former contributions may not be considered *Truther* conferences to the unsuspecting public, and certainly not a gateway to much broader, often undesirable, topics, the Bailey's '*Completing Your Health Puzzle*' Conferences perfectly encapsulated the breadth of their Christian worldview to come.

"Health is a puzzle-piece," Chris said. "If you eat well but you don't exercise; if you exercise but you don't eat well; if you don't sleep; if you've got stress in your life; there are so many layers. We called it, *Completing Your Health Puzzle*, because health is *truly* a puzzle. And if you're missing one or two pieces, then that picture is not complete, and you're not going to have full optimization of your health." Therefore, the premise of any successful health conference means bringing in people with different pieces of the puzzle, though, Chris maintains, "they may not agree on

every single point. But they all bring something to the table to help people complete that puzzle in their lives.” A league of such seemingly diverse ideals would also include the sort of vendors needed to help fill in those missing pieces.

“This is how we view the Bible. We’re not going to promote a flat earth conference. We’re not going to promote a Torah conference. We’re not going to promote a satanic ritual abuse conference. We wanted to encompass all of those things, because we wanted to complete *how* people view the Bible, and open them up to new things. Let’s face it, there are parts of the Bible that make us go: ‘*Well, I don’t really want to talk about that. I’m not going to touch that one.*’ Every church has their favorite books that they teach from, and the other books, they probably haven’t touched in 20 or 30 years, because they bring up things that nobody wants to talk about. It’s uncomfortable, it makes you look crazy. We knew when we created the conference that those topics were not going to be off the table.”

That is not to say the Bailey’s have figured out the perfect dosage of puzzle pieces, or quantity, in order to make everything fit perfectly right. “We are too flat earth for the non-flat earth crowd. We’re not flat earth enough for flat earth crowd—so we don’t gain the secular flat earth crowd. We are too Torah for the Christian community. We’re not Torah enough for the Torah community. We are too much satanic ritual abuse for those who don’t want to hear about it, and for those that are stooped in that deliverance ministry, we don’t talk about it enough. No matter what the topic is, we’re either too much or not enough.”

Criticism aside from its two founders, *Take on the World 2017* went off without a hitch. Those who attended enshrined the memories. Instantaneously their event would become a family tradition. *If* the rhetoric of drama was initially uninhabited, it is perhaps due to the fact that September 14-16 simply came and went, mostly unnoticed by the rest of the world. Religiously speaking, *TOTW* was overshadowed by the alignment of Virgo on September 23, 2017, clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet; Mercury, Venus, and Mars crowning her in Leo—what had been dubbed by many as *the Revelation 12* sign. In hindsight, a mountain had been made out of a mole hill, and in the Bailey’s case, a complete reversal can be applied. Chris and Liz set the precedence. They *proved* a confederation of minds could get along. Though, to be fair, the

Bailey's were combing the internet for a Christian audience. Robbie Davidson was casting a wide net intended for *everyone*.

Reeling them in meant Davidson had his work cut out for him.

7

THERE WAS A TIME NOT SO LONG AGO when the paranoid had to receive a hundred rejection letters, if not a thousand, before they were allowed to spread fear for mass consumption in print. Nowadays anyone can set up a window on the internet and invite *everyone* to peer in. Each new technology has inevitably appealed to the fallible human condition. The question of the ages in any good science fiction story is (where the face of humanity and technology are involved), which nurtured what? We needn't even gaze so far back as the printing press either, particularly the wildly unrestrained Reformation to follow, to understand how technology transforms our collective or individual thinking. Clearly, technology was a prerogative to the Reformation. Then again, at the risk of outlining some cyclical loop-holed time travel plot, if we gaze at the script from a slightly different angle, look at how religion *informed* the usage of the printing press.

With the advent of photography, notably in a decade when the public seemed debilitated by the horrific pile-up of casualties in the American Civil War, malpractice was a known *norm* among photographers. Because hobbyists often arrived to the field of battle days *after* the bodies of the dead had been cleared and relic hunters had picked them clean, *opportunists* improvised. Alexander Gardner liked *creating* a scene by posing bodies of the dead for dramatic effect. At Gettysburg, Gardner supposedly found one Confederate infantryman near Devil's Den, probably killed while advancing, rearranged his appendages, and promptly photographed him. He then moved the *same* body into the slopping rock formation of Devil's Den and photographed him again. After all, Gardner was an opportunist, and he needed stories—even if they had to be dramatized for effect, and *retold*.

Immortalizing the dead bodies of loved ones had likewise become an immediate phenomenon, particularly capturing the likeness of *lifeless* children, propped up in various positions to resemble dear little play

things, as their parents always hoped to remember them. Cameras gazed into lives, and *sometimes*, a little further. Dark rooms had an untidy habit of peering into a realm of séances and mesmerism. The spiritists William Mumler famously photographed Mary Todd Lincoln in 1870 poised below the ghost of her husband, Mr. President. Here necromancers found a new niche. Photography as an art became the missing link between science and superstition. As the First World War stacked casualties far beyond any horrors that the American Civil War dared to imagine, the Cottingley Fairies hoax, photographed by 16 year-old Elsie Wright and 9 year-old Frances Griffiths, would once more have many clinging *desperately* to a faith in *anything*. Nietzsche may have killed God, but at least they had fairies.

The advent of Kodak home movie cameras and Super 8 footage gave another immediate rise to speculation, most notably the Zapruder footage in 1963 and the Patterson–Gimlin film in 67.

The nativity of the internet offered an immediate cautionary tale—Heaven’s Gate. In 1997, Marshall Applewhite’s San Diego based religious cult, oddly mirroring Christianity’s first great competitor, Mithraism, determined that the key to ultimate spiritual transcendence meant casting off the shackles of material flesh and hitching a ride on a spaceship believed to be passing in the wake of the Hale-Bopp comet. For 39 members of Heaven’s Gate, a lethal overdose of barbiturates completed their ascension. The twist to this story is Art Bell, host of the late night radio show, *Coast to Coast AM*. The saucer idea cannot even be attributed to Heaven’s Gate, but Bell, who published apparent photographs of the UFO, which he had taken, on several internet websites. Marshall Applewhite simply fixated upon Bell’s photos and let the hysteria clot his acumen.

Am I saying there’s no such thing as fairies? *Nope*. For the record, this author very much believes in the existence of fairies of a Druidic nature—just *not* paper cut-outs. *Is Sasquatch real?* No quarrels here. My opinion on the Patterson-Gimly film is still to this day inconclusive. Second shooter? *Oh yes*, let the speculation continue. Though we are constantly lied to about the happenstances of carnage, and many of war’s own images are clearly fabricated for the purposes of espionage or political control—or in the case of Gardner, commercial gain, is war itself a hoax? *Hell no*. Mankind kills with passion. Was the Civil War simply a conflict of unconfirmed newspaper sketching’s and legions of crisis

actors? Again I say with respect to all arguments: *Hell no*. Maybe Heaven's Gate was in itself a bamboozle operation—a government sponsored Pizza Gate scam dangled like a carrot for first generation internet conspirators. Then again, maybe 39 people really were *that* paranoid. And maybe—just maybe, they really did *catch a ride*, if you get my drift. Either way, whatever the truth, I don't claim to have a finger upon it. But one truth this author is quite firm upon is a partnered recognition of the human condition. *How* we view nature, particularly mankind's nature, will shape our entire worldview.

Why is *irony* so often overlooked here?

The *obvious* is the lost world of the Aether—the ethereal realm. There-*in is* the reality; the espionage; the hoax; the prompter of innovation; the shadowy monsters just itching to conform us to their image; and they're playing *all* sides. And besides, though human beings are inconsistent agents of free will, we make for excellent pawns in the great battle over earth itself—in all its shapes and forms, while the kings and queens and the bishops figure out the rest. Human nature is, after all, *true* to itself.

While commenting on his own work, Michael Crichton once said, “Everyone remembers the scene in *Westworld* where Yul Brynner is a robot that runs amok. But there is a very specific scene where people discuss whether or not to shut down the resort. I think the movie was as much about that decision as anything. They just didn't think it was going to happen. I don't see technology as being out there; doing bad things to us people, like we're inside the circle of covered wagons and technology is out there firing arrows at us. We're making the technology and it is a manifestation of how we think.” Among the internet's vices, it gives credence to all *desires*. Do note that I am purposely abdicating the term “unreliable information” in favor of *desire*. The media's own narrative administers “unreliable information.” Delusion comes in all forms. It peaks the arousal in the bearer of lies and the self-proclaimed truth seeker. But unlike Gnosticism, it is not simply the Demiurge who keeps us enslaved. It is *we* who enslave ourselves. If we must fear *nuclear winters*, real or imaginary, it is only because we “egotistically and irrationally and paradoxically and foolishly” designed our creations precisely as they were intended to.

Fact of the matter is, as my wife dropped me off at Charleston airport in November of 2017 to pick up my car rental reservation, I *too* was paranoid—to a degree. I had let a *certain flow* of information guide me. I

had watched ODD's video. While driving up the I-95 towards Raleigh, I too had shied from wresting the AE map away from Asshole's arm as he strangled it to no end. While crossing into North Carolina I too pondered if the map itself was government controlled opposition—and more. What of Robbie Davidson's speakers—and was Robbie a shill? I too had heard the rumors emanating from Antonio Subirats, without ever knowing the man's name or watching a single video. Walking into hotel lobby, I too questioned: was Patricia Steere a man?

These were the final weeks, day, and hours leading up to Raleigh, wrangled with paranoia. The honeymoon which most to many of us had relished in throughout 2015 and 2016 was *definitely* over—though an absolute few of us had yet to arrive in the throes of an internet Salem. The terrible battle for the flat earth was still to come. And anyways, there we were, flying or driving from all corners of the world, some of us anyways, for Robbie Davidson's flat earth conference. Most if not everyone had discovered the limits, or rather, the outer limits and *edges* of reason. After all, we'd paid good money for a shill fest. One of Frary's recent converts, who was attending the conference, had threatened me personally if I showed. But if not for our physical safety, we worried mostly for our intellectual freedom. There are none happy in the world except those who enjoy freely a vast horizon, and yet Manifest Destiny was already at work in the flat earthist community. For anyone who let it, that horizon was quickly shrinking.

Meanwhile all Robbie Davidson could *really* hope to do, come November 9, 2017, is open the door and flip a light switch, and then *wait* for someone—*anybody* to arrive.



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The Unexpected Cosmology, 2019

Everything That Was Beautiful Became Ugly, 2019

Worthless Mysteries, 2019

In the Eternal Gullible, 2018

Avoid Science Falsely So-Called, 2017