

GATEWAY OF THE SUN

by

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CHAPTER ONE

An Unexpected Journey

The Sun. A tremendous power, equivalent to the force of a hundred billion hydrogen bombs exploding at once. Energy streams off it like a thousand Zulu warriors dancing in frenzy. Blinding electricity speeds earthward-the sound of it crackling as it blasts through the atmosphere and hits the surface of the planet known as earth with the roar of a great wind. The sharp division between night and day swears to the awesome power of the dawn racing across the earth at a thousand miles per hour.

The entire Eurasian continent lies quietly in slumber, cradled in the darkness of the night. Suddenly the sun springs to life as if the hand of God touched it. The dawn electrifies China and, in less than an hour, envelops India, greedily consuming all darkness in its path.

It rapidly spreads across Europe-roosters crow and church bells chime good morning. Life awakens from a long night's sleep, to be tossed about in the river of energy that flows from the mighty sun.

The dawn lights Greenwich, England and then thunders across the Atlantic with the speed and force of a tidal wave. It crosses thousands of miles of ocean in less time than the fastest airplane.

If you, the reader, can grasp the sense of this, you will better understand the mystery of the event about to occur. Let us, together, race ahead of the dawn into the silent black of night with the dawn hot on our heels.

It is a hushed, moonless night on Mystery Hill at North Salem, New Hampshire. A local Boy Scout camps under a blanket of stars on the grounds of America's Stonehenge, (an astronomical complex of huge stones built over four thousand years ago). He came to learn about astronomy and observe the summer solstice.

It is June 21st, the longest day of the year. The sun will soon rise and fourteen-year-old Frankie Fatone senses the energy of the approaching dawn.

In the neighboring pup tent, the Scoutmaster's wind-up alarm clock sounds. He reaches out and turns it off. His usually well-hidden metal flask of Southern Comfort drops to the ground as he rolls over, back to sleep.

Frankie hears the alarm but doesn't realize what it is. He removes his earphones and taps them, wondering how that ringing sound got into his song. He glances at his watch and realizes it is almost time to wake up and view the rising sun of the summer solstice. He rises and leaves his tent, carrying a keyboard under his arm.

Buggsie Houghton, another Scout, opens his weary eyes and sees his best friend walking off into the morning mist. "Frankie?" he calls out softly, so as to not awaken everyone. He glances at his watch and also realizes what time it is. He hurriedly gets up and starts after his pal.

Frankie walks up the stony path. As he nears the top of the hill, he stops at rubble of rocks that form a crude, low-built, stone circle. The square stone in the center makes a perfect seat. He sits down and continues to work on the song he's composing on his keyboard. "The others should be along shortly," he thinks, "and I have the best seat to view the sunrise."

In the darkness, he can only view the shadow of the standing stone about a hundred feet from where he is. But, soon the sun will appear at the top of the giant monolith jutting out of the earth like the blade of a sharp knife.

Buggsie struggled up the rocky incline. "Frankie?" He wondered what his friend is doing up there all alone. But Frankie was so absorbed by his work that he didn't notice his friend come up behind and tap him on the shoulder.

"Aaahh!" cried Frankie, surprised. His cry also startled Buggsie, who screamed, thinking his friend had seen a bear or some other thing. "Buggsie!" Frankie laughed. "You scared the life out of me."

"I saw you leave the tent. What are you doing up here?"

"I couldn't sleep. And then I realized it was almost time to come up here anyway."

"Yeah, those sleepyheads better get up here soon. They're going to miss the sunrise."

"I'm working on a new tune, dude! Check it out. It has an awesome beat." Frankie inserted the RAM card into the compact, one-foot-long keyboard. He pressed a button. "Maybe you can help me with some tight lyrics. It's about Christina Hollander, the blonde in our math class."

As the tune reverberated over the rocky slopes of Mystery Hill, the boys discussed the song. Like a distant chorus, the inaudible sound of the oncoming dawn answered in refrain. The song's rhythm increased in intensity and tension built as the sounds of night creatures suddenly stopped and the roar of dawn approached.

"Make it a play faster," Buggsie suggested. So Frankie slowly turned the tempo dial. Faster and faster the song played. And closer approached the dawn.

A bird cried out and took to the air. The wind picked up and the sudden gust blew Buggsie's cap from his head. If someone could hear the sound of the dawn now, it would be deafening.

Behold! On the horizon, like the dreaded Mongol hordes, thundering like a thousand warrior horsemen, the dawn shattered the silent night. Its first rays hit the standing stone dead center, like a pointed blast of a laser beam. A straight beam of light suddenly appeared without warning or perception of its origin.

It was followed by a booming sound like a chorus of screeching female harpies accompanied by a mist that rose from nowhere. It glowed an eerie green color and everything in the area became blindingly white. Reality lost its very substance and seemed to be carried off by a great tornado into the standing stone.

Frankie clutched wildly at the stone and moaned, frightened. Buggsie cried out, "What's happening...?" His cry echoed up the mountain.

Dawn lit the mountainside. Empty!

CHAPTER TWO

Turmoil in Tiahuanaco

Thousands of miles South, it was dawn in Tiahuanaco, Bolivia, an ancient ruins soaring high up in the Andes Mountains. Truly a place of mystery, drawings of prehistoric animals on fragments of pottery are found there. The Incas thought the gods must have built it.

A thousand feet north of the Akapana, or "Hill of Sacrifices", a gruesome ceremony is taking place on the steps of "The Gateway of the Sun." Above the doorway, carved in the enormous ten ton block of stone, is an imposing figure known, to the Incas, as the Cat God, whose faithful worshipers are performing a human sacrifice in accordance with their old religion-the one the Spanish Conquistadors had swept away.

The victim is a teen-age girl who has been strapped down on the sacrificial stone. It is astonishingly quiet, with no people about except for the fifty followers of the religion. They have all journeyed far, from the jungles below the mountains to this sacred place.

The priest slowly raises his long, ceremonial sword as he awaits dawning sun's rays to penetrate the doorway. Soon the first light of day appears in the Gateway, silently sounding a death knell for the doomed Peruvian girl.

The blade plunges down as the light becomes blindingly white. As if in slow motion, it cleanly lops off the girl's head in a shower of warm blood.

As the light flash fades, two frightened, teen-age boys are heard as Buggsie and Frankie appear in the opening.

The severed head rolls from the sacrificial stone down the stairway beneath the Gateway. Buggsie and Frankie look in horror and shock, screaming in unison, "Shiitake mushrooms!"

The frightened pair turn and run out the other side of the stone doorway.

The priest shouts an order and several men rush up the steps after the boys. The two dash back and forth in opposite directions, like a bad Marx Brothers routine, until Buggsie shouts, "This way!" They

stumble and slide down a ruined stairway and run down what was once a boulevard. The pursuers shout and throw spears and stones at them. The boys run past what was a pyramid and duck around its corner.

Their way appears obstructed as they peer over a stone ledge, which was once a wall. The rubble is loose and, without warning, the ground slides out from under them as they fall off the stone wall.

The frantic pair plops into a small hay cart, which breaks loose from the impact of their fall and rolls down the hill. Frankie stands as a spear from behind passes between his legs. He looks down and cries in disbelief, "Gulp! Kill me, don't castrate me, you idiots!"

"Get down, Frankie!" Buggsie yanks him down, the cart thundering down the bumpy path. The boys look behind, holding straw baskets to fend off their pursuers stones and spears. Suddenly, their attackers stop and smile.

"They're giving up?" Frankie asks in a high-pitched voice. They look at each other and, with the same thought, turn to see where they are headed.

"Aaahh..." they scream as the cart nears the edge of a cliff where the path suddenly turns right.

The cart hits a large rock at the cliff's edge and a wheel collapses, causing the cart to veer sharply. Frankie and Buggsie are thrown from the cart and land in rubble near the edge.

The cart continues on, tumbling and rolling down the sharp incline, eventually shattering. Frankie and Buggsie look themselves over. They're scratched, but alive. They stumble to their feet. "Down here, quick!" Buggsie calls to Frankie. The boys scurry down the loose stone and dirt to a lower path.

They find more ruins here, where people live or have once lived. They duck around a collapsed mud and straw hut and see little cover ahead, and a considerable distance to traverse.

"In here!" Buggsie suggests, pointing to a large clay urn. They climb into the vessel, hoping it will hide them from the again-pursuing savages. Buggsie climbs in first and Frankie tries to pull the wooden cover over them. "Suck your gut in," Frankie whispers, as they jiggle and squeeze into the urn.

Outside, they hear running feet as people shout in the native language. Then suddenly, it becomes quiet.

"I think they've passed us," Frankie whispers hopefully. "I sure hope so, it's wet in here," Buggsie complains.

"Sshh...." Frankie replies.

"Agh!" Buggsie yells.

"Quiet! They'll find us, stupid."

"It's moving!! Get me out of here!" Buggsie screams. Frankie lifts the lid slightly and Buggsie shoves him.

Frankie lifts the lid and sees a savage running towards him, holding a spear aloft. He raises the wooden lid as a shield. The native jabs the cover several times. Now Frankie and Buggsie are both hysterical.

"It's a snake!" Buggsie screams, as he throws a reptile from the clay urn.

Frankie, terrified by both the snake and the spear-wielder, doesn't know which way to turn. He screams in revulsion and flings the snake into the air. The fangs of the bushmaster are exposed and the snake hisses as it descends on the juggler vein of the native. He screams in agony.

The lucky throw tips the heavy urn over and Frankie ducks back inside to avoid being crushed between the urn and the rocky ground. The urn begins to roll down the incline. Faster and faster they roll as the terrain becomes steeper. "Whoa," the guys moan in unison as they tumble around inside like clothes in a dryer.

The pursuing natives watch the rolling urn careen over the edge of the cliff. Down, down, towards Lake Titicaca, the urn plummets, crashing through the roof of a Peruvian lake dweller's hut. The pursuing natives look down into the lake, far below, but see neither the jar nor the boys.

Inside the hut, the boys moan. Frankie rises, dazed, wet and bleeding. He sees a frightened woman staring at him.

Moaning, Buggsie slowly awakens. "My arm, I think it's broken!" Wet, terrified and exhausted, the two boys start crying while choking for air in the thin atmosphere.

The woman mutters words of a mother's concern in Spanish. Seeing the boys are injured, she releases her raft-house from the reeds and uses a pole to push them towards the far side of the lake-and help. All the while, she mutters in her native tongue, with an occasional Saint's name mentioned.

As the raft travels, the boys continue to cry and sniffle as they wonder, "Where are we?" "Well Toto, we're sure not in Kansas anymore," Frankie laments.

CHAPTER THREE

Phone Call From Peru

Back in Buggsie's house, his mother, answers the doorbell. Frankie's parents storm in.

"Any word yet?" asks John Fatone, without even a hello.

"Sshh! I can't hear," shouts Dr. Houghton, Buggsie's father, holding the telephone to his ear.

"I don't understand! Where can they be?" asks a worried Mrs. Fatone.

"I told Hershel not to wander off!" answers Mrs. Houghton.

"Shush! Yes, yes, I'll accept the charges," says Dr. Houghton into the phone.

"What kind of Scoutmaster is this guy, anyway? What if they've been eaten by a bear?" grumbles John Fatone.

"A bear! Oh my god!" screams Mrs. Fatone.

"Now, Helen, don't panic. I'm sure they'll find them.

There were no signs of any wild animals," says Mrs. Houghton. "Maybe they just fell off a cliff!"

"A cliff!" replies Mrs. Fatone, bursting into tears.

"Oh Helen, shut up!" says John Fatone with a huff.

"Will everyone please keep quiet for a moment!" screams Dr. Houghton. "No non hobble'...le Espanola!" He is annoyed. "Yes, yes I have a son named Hershel. Yes, yes I'll hold." He tells the others. "It's the boys. They're calling from Peru!"

"Thank God!" says Mrs. Fatone. "What a relief," adds Mrs. Houghton.

"What the hell are they doing in Peru?" asks John Fatone as he drops the cigarette he was about to light.

Buggsie and Frankie are in a police station and an excited Peruvian police captain says, "Here is your son!" He hands the phone to Buggsie.

"Dad?"

"Hershel, are you alright son?"

"Yes dad, Frankie and I are both okay. Well, actually, I sprained my arm. But, I think it's just a hairline fracture. It's not too bad now."

"Your arm? How did you do that? And what are you doing in Peru? How did you get there?" Dr. Houghton is confused.

"Dad, I don't know how we got here. It was weird. One moment we were on Mystery Hill, and then the next, we were in Peru. It was weird! There was this blinding flash of light and there were these savages who killed this girl and, and..."

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! What girl? This doesn't make any sense."

"I know, I know! But, I don't know how we got here, but we are!"

"Girl?" Mrs. Houghton interjects.

"What are they doing in Peru? Were they kidnapped?" adds Mrs. Fatone.

Dr. Houghton holds his hands over the mouthpiece, "He's not making any sense. He says a blinding light brought them there."

Frankie stands anxiously beside Buggsie and tries to listen in. "Oh, oh, Buggsie! Now my dad is going to start up about U.F.O.s!"

"I knew it! They were abducted by a U.F.O.!" shouts Mr. Fatone.

Buggsie rattles on about their adventure. Finally, Dr. Houghton says, "Son, you sound confused. Put Frankie on."

"Here. I knew he wouldn't believe me," he hands the phone to Frankie.

"Frankie, are you alright?" asks Dr. Houghton.

"Yes, sir, I'm fine. Is my dad talking about U.F.O.s?"

"They were probably used for medical experiments," says Mr. Fatone, rattling on about U.F.O. abductions.

"Well... yes. How did you get to Peru?"

Frankie pauses in thought. Well, we were watching the sun rise and then, bingo, we were in Peru."

"What? Say that again."

"Look, we'll explain when we get home."

"Is that my Frankie?" asks Mrs. Fatone.

"Here, I think they're both disoriented." He hands the phone to Mrs. Fatone.

"Frankie?" asks the excited mother.

"Yes, mom."

"Frankie darling, thank god you're alright. We were so worried." She sighs.

"Peru? Tell them not to drink the water. They'll get sick," says Mrs. Houghton.

Frankie listens to his mom's words of concern and turns to Buggsie, "Your mom says not to drink the water."

Buggsie is gulping down a cup of water that the captain has handed him and, with Frankie's words barely out, spits it out abruptly.

"And I lost my keyboard, Mom."

"Oh, they found that, dear. But they're still looking for you. You had everyone worried sick, running off like that," Mrs. Fatone says, her voice still emotional. "Now, where are you exactly? How far is it?"

"Mom, we're in Peru!" Frankie emphasizes the name.

"Yes dear, what exit do we take?"

"Exit? Give me that phone, you dingbat!" demands Mr. Fatone. "Frankie?"

"Yes, dad."

"Where are you?"

"Puno, Peru."

"How the hell did you manage that? It must be, at least, an eight hour flight."

Frankie holds his hand over the mouthpiece. "Oh no! He's going postal!" he looks at Buggsie, annoyed. "Look, Dad, I'm not quite sure how we got here, but definitely not on any U.F.O.," Frankie says, removing his hand from the mouthpiece.

"How do you know? You're probably brainwashed and can't remember anything."

"No way man! There was no flying saucer! No men in silver suits with long skinny fingers! No E.T., no..."

"How do you know? How do you explain getting there?" Mr. Fatone is now addressing him smugly.

"I don't know. Maybe we're not in Peru at all, and this is a special episode of Totally Hidden Video."
Frankie now sounds desperate.

"Was there any loss of time?" asks Mr. Fatone.

"How should I know? I can't even ask where to take a piss. I flunked Spanish, remember?"

"Don't remind me. If you weren't always goofing off, playing that damn keyboard, you would know how to speak Spanish."

"John, John!" interrupts Dr. Houghton. "Let me talk to the boys. We have to get them home."

"Be careful, son. They may come back for further experiments on you. Dr. Houghton wants to talk to Buggsie again." Fatone hands the phone over.

"Frankie? Buggsie?" Dr. Houghton asks.

"It's me, dad."

"Listen son, we have to get you and Frankie to an airport. We'll wire you money. Can the police captain take you there?"

"Well, I'm not sure. I guess so."

"Well let me talk to him again. Captain, -What was his name?"

"Cordosa. Here." Buggsie hands the captain the phone.

"Si Signore. Si..., si. We will take them there," says the helpful police captain. The two men talk and make the arrangements for the boys' safe return.

"Yes, it is very strange. No, they didn't run away from home. This is all a mystery. Well then, thank you Signore, I mean captain. May I speak with my son again, please?" Dr. Houghton asks. "Hershel?"

"Yes, dad."

"It's all set. The police will take you to Lima. There'll be tickets and some money waiting for you. I want you to give half to the captain's men and the rest is for you and Frankie for food and things."

"Okay, Dad."

"Now, I want you to call me from the Limatambo airport and I'll tell you what to do."

"Yes Dad." Buggsie listens, constantly nodding yes.

"What was that place anyway? It had a big stone archway," Frankie asks Captain Cordosa.

"It is known as the Gateway of the Sun. It is very ancient and many people come to visit it."

"Yeah, like those headhunters." Frankie speaks sarcastically.

"Those evil men are followers of the Cat God. The Church has tried to do away with them for years, but some still insist on following the old ways of human sacrifice," the captain explains.

"Do you think you'll be alright?" Dr. Houghton asks.

"Yes, Dad. I just want to come home." Buggsie sighs.

"You'll be here soon, son. I love you." Dr. Houghton assures him.

"I love you too, dad."

"Alright then, I'll talk to you when you get to the airport in Lima."

"O.K. Dad. Bye." Buggsie says nervously.

"Bye, son."

CHAPTER FOUR

There's No Place Like Home

The door swings open at the Houghton's and Ellie Houghton, Buggsie's older sister, stands there. Buggsie climbs the steps, dragging his feet. Mr. and Mrs. Houghton stand next to the Fatone's station wagon, bidding good-bye to Frankie and his parents.

"Welcome home, Captain Kirk. What Happened? Did your transporter malfunction?" asks Ellie, sarcastically. Smiling, Buggsie turns his head and gives her a blank look, too exhausted to reply.

"Home!" Buggsie sighs. Ellie, you have no idea what a paradise this place really is!"

"Oh boy! Well, now we know what you've been doing in Peru. My little brother, the Peruvian Connection! Who'd have believed it?"

"Peruvian Connection?" asks Mrs. Houghton, as she walks in the door. "You had better not be taking any drugs, Hershel!"

"Oh mom, don't be ridiculous. Ellie is only joking," Buggsie says, plodding his way up to his room.

"Well, I should hope not! Now, I want you to get right upstairs and take a shower. There's no telling what kind of filth you encountered."

"Yes, Mom."

"And later we'll go to your father's office and have some tests run on you. You could have been exposed to God-knows-what!"

"Yeah, maybe U.F.O. germs have destroyed what's left of his brain," snickers Ellie.

"Ellie, have you done the breakfast dishes?" snaps Mrs. Houghton.

"Yes, mom."

"Well then, start the laundry. That is, if you want to use the car later."

"Oh, alright. That little squirt gets to go to Peru and I have to fight to go out on Saturday night. It isn't fair!" Ellie whines.

"I met some fun-loving savages in Peru that would kill to meet you, Ellie." Buggsie remarks, on his way up the stairs.

"Shut up, squirt!" She storms off.

Buggsie makes it to his room, completely exhausted. With a moan, he plops himself into his bed.

His room is a jungle of insects that led to his nickname, Buggsie! On the walls are mounted butterflies and grasshoppers, as well as charts of various insect types and their anatomies. His desk is covered with microscopes and slides.

He gazes at his walls and admires the prize specimens of his collection, which he has worked so hard, to build. As he savors the complexity of their forms, which have always captured his interest, his thoughts are interrupted by questions of his recent experience. What happened? How was it possible? There had to be some logical reason. Even more disturbing was that Science might not hold the answers.

What had really happened? It seemed to defy the security of his world-that through Science, everything could be explained away. In the face of this experience, however, it seemed an empty premise. Before, when he had a question, he would ask his dad, who knew much about Science, but now, even dad has questions.

"Hershel. I know we've been over this all the way home from the airport, son, but are you sure there isn't anything else you remember?" His dad enters, interrupting his thoughts.

"I've told you everything, Dad. And, what does it matter? You don't believe me anyway."

"I do believe you, son," Dr. Houghton says, reassuringly. "At least I believe that this is what you believe what happened. Maybe you were drugged. You know, certain hallucinatory drugs can severely alter perception. These hallucinations can seem very real. The people under the effects of the drug will swear that what they experienced actually occurred," Dr. Houghton explains.

"Well I don't know, Dad. It all seemed pretty real to me. Too real!"

"Of course, of course, son. We have to stick to the facts to get to the bottom of this. There has to be a logical explanation."

"Well, you said yourself that there was no possible way we could have gotten from New Hampshire to Peru in that brief time."

"Now, hold on! Let's stick to the facts. First, your scoutmaster, Coach Davidson, knows that you and Frankie were at the campfire, roasting marshmallows around ten p.m. Some of the boys saw Frankie, still awake, around midnight, playing his keyboard. They told him to go to sleep."

"Right."

"So we can safely establish that you were in New Hampshire at midnight. Then we know from, the police captain, Cor, Cor..."

"Cordossa."

"Right, that the peasant woman found you and Frankie at the lake shortly after dawn, let's say six a.m."

"Right," Buggsie again agrees. "She found us alright, we dropped in for breakfast." He now speaks sarcastically.

"Whatever. We haven't established that part yet. We don't know, for certain, your whereabouts from twelve to six. They're in the same time zone as us so that's six hours. It's certainly not enough time for you to fly there. I checked that with the airlines this morning."

"You checked what? Jeez, I can't believe you did that! You really think Frankie and I would take off for Peru without a word to anyone?"

"No son, of course not, but a good scientist looks at all the possibilities."

"I feel like I'm on trial and you're Perry Mason."

"It's not a trial, but it is a mystery."

Buggsie pauses for a thought. "Well, you said there wasn't enough time to take a flight to Peru. So there! It's not possible. There is no scientific explanation."

"No, I said a commercial flight. That doesn't mean you couldn't have been taken there in a military plane."

"Military! Oh yeah, I'm not supposed to tell you this, dad, but Frankie and I are in the Boy Scout division of the C.I.A. We were on a special mission to Peru to expose a drug cartel of Bolivian head hunters!"

"Hershel! Now, let's say terrorists drugged you and Frankie, and flew you in a military plane to Peru, planning to hold you for ransom."

"Ransom? Who are you? Donald Trump?" asks Buggsie, incredulous.

"Well you are American citizens, and children have more of an impact on the news media. So they came to America to kidnap two American youths."

"Dad!" Buggsie whines in disbelief and rolls his eyes.

"But in your hallucinogenic state, you somehow managed to escape. The events of your story are how you remember them while under the drug."

"Dad! Bolivian terrorists? Come on now!"

"Well, I know it sounds incredible, but I'm only trying to show you it's possible. We have to stick to the facts. It's not supernatural, what happened to you."

"Supernatural? Supernatural! Who's bringing up the supernatural? I never mentioned anything about supernatural. All I said was that there was a blinding white light and the next thing we knew, we were in Peru."

"That light might have been the sun in the window of the plane when you came to after being drugged."

"What about Frankie? He had the same hallucination?" asks Buggsie, angrily.

"I don't know, maybe it was a case of mass hypnosis. Yes, maybe they played a tape over and over while you were on the plane, so that you wouldn't remember what really happened, and wouldn't be able to identify them later."

"Oh Dad, really!"

"It is possible! We don't have to jump to any wild conclusions."

"Wild conclusions? It's your theory that's wild! Terrorists? Drugs? Mass hallucinations? Military planes? It sounds like an episode of Mission Impossible!"

"Really, Hershel. Your passions will be your undoing. You've got to learn to stick to solid facts and not jump to conclusions. There doesn't have to be any unexplained, glamorous phenomena here. As long as there are other plausible explanations."

Buggsie interrupts. "You mean avoid unexplained phenomena at all costs! As long as you can push it under the rug and pretend it doesn't exist!"

"No, that's not it at all. We can only progress from what we're sure of, not from unsupported fantasies."

"So, now I'm fantasizing! This is a child's fantasy, and the Good Fairy waved her magic wand and Frankie and I were in Peru with Attila, the Bolivian decapitator!"

"Hershel Arthur Houghton! I think all this has unsettled your mind. I'm going to run tests on you to find out exactly what drug you've been exposed to."

"No! Dracula is not getting any blood from me. No way!" screams Buggsie.

"What's all this talk about blood?" asks Mrs. Houghton walking into the room and having overheard only part of the conversation.

"Hershel refuses to listen to reason about this affair," Dr. Houghton is now angry.

"Mom, Dad wants to use me for medical experiments! His own son!"

"What?"

"I think we should run blood tests to look for traces of any drug that Hershel might have been exposed to. There could be permanent brain damage from what he was given!"

"How could you tell?" Ellie interjects sarcastically, as she walks by the room.

"Oh, my goodness! Well Hershel, maybe your father is right," cautions Mrs. Houghton.

"Great! Aliens might have done weird things to my body and now my parents want to turn me into a human pincushion." "Now Hershel, darling, we only want what's best for you." Mrs. Houghton pleads.

"It's a plot, that's what!! This is Invasion of the Body Snatchers!!! I'm a prisoner in my own home! Attica! Attica!" Buggsie screams, distraught.

"Alright Hershel, alright! Calm down! I guess you've been through enough, Son," says Dr. Houghton.

"Why don't you take a nap, honey," comforts Mrs. Houghton.

"Ahaah," Buggsie sighs as he throws himself back onto his bed.

"And when you wake up, take that shower, young man!" orders Mrs. Houghton, leaving.

"Who knows, son, maybe John Fatone is right. Perhaps you were abducted by a U.F.O.," Dr. Houghton says, in an effort to humor his son with his best bedside manner.

"There was no U.F.O.!" says Buggsie in a monotone.

"Well at any rate, the whole incident is best forgotten. I want you to put it out of your mind. Forget it ever happened. Understand?"

"I can't forget it. How can I forget it?"

"We'll probably never know what really happened, so the incident is best forgotten."

"Dad, I will never forget that incident. I can't! I have to know what happened. How did I wind up in Peru?"

"I'm sure there are things the Good Lord doesn't want us to know for our own good, son." Dr. Houghton falls back on his religious upbringing, as he always does when science and reason fail him.

"Now, get some rest."

"Rest?? Well, I'll sleep, but my mind won't rest. I'll never rest until I know what happened to me." Buggsie's voice is tired, strained from his ordeal.

"Sleep awhile, and try to forget it," Dr. Houghton says softly.

As his dad leaves, Buggsie looks up at his insect collection. They don't interest him as much as before. Something else has captured his imagination, something more important, and something that won't leave him alone.

Dr. Houghton hopes his son will follow in his footsteps and be a Doctor of medicine like his father before him. Buggsie would probably become a biologist if his life had been left undisturbed. But, fickle fate has now interrupted his all-too predictable life.

The mysterious event has challenged him. It's a question that what he looked forward to, for security and answers, has no answer. The dark mystery of that strange event will haunt him until he can answer the riddle.

"What can unlock time and space like that? That blinding light? The dawn? You're here, your eyes close, and bam! You're at The Gateway of the Sun!" Buggsie mutters as he goes over the sequence of events in his mind. He drifts into slumber, on his bed, whispering, "I won't rest until I know. I won't rest, zzzzzz..."

CHAPTER FIVE

The Best Laid Plans

Several years have passed and Buggsie is no longer the Boy Scout who went on an unexpected journey. He has learned a lot since that eerie day and has formed definite opinions about what happened to Frankie and himself.

It's summer, and Buggsie and Frankie have just graduated from high school. They feel it might be their last summer together, so the two pals plan to spend a lot of time together before they go their separate ways.

They're in Buggsie's room, which has a different decor now. There are no more insect collections on the walls—they're stored in his closet. Maps of the world, with lines drawn in black marker, cover the walls. There are globes everywhere. Books on the shelves have odd titles: *Anti-Gravity and the World Grid*; *Bridge to Infinity*; *Pathway to the Gods*; *Lost Cities and Ancient Mysteries of South America*; *The Philadelphia Experiment*; and other strange names. There are also books on U.F.O.'s.

In short, the room has the look of a junior world-grid researcher, (they believe the world is criss-crossed with a network of invisible lines over which the energy of the earth flows). There's a large map on the wall with a dark line running from Mystery Hill to Tiahuanaco, Bolivia. Buggsie is sure that this must be a major grid line.

He has explored every possible explanation of what transported Frankie and himself all that distance in a blink of an eye. For a while, he even toyed with the idea that maybe John Fatone was right about them being abducted by a U.F.O. But, there wasn't any loss of time that he can determine. It had been dawn in both places. So, he ruled out U.F.O.s. They raised more questions than answers to his dilemma.

Buggsie, at his computer, tries another pattern of intersecting grid lines around the sphere depicted on the monitor. Frankie sits on the bed pounding a portable keyboard. It is larger than the previous one and Frankie has improved at using it.

Buggsie swivels smartly around in the chair and puts his feet on the desk as he glances at the calendar. A certain date is circled, June 21st.

"Hey Frankie! Do you know what tomorrow is?"

"Huh? It's... Wednesday isn't it?"

"It's our anniversary, darling," jokes Buggsie.

"Oh, must you remind me! I've been trying to forget that nightmare for three years." Frankie groans in disgust.

"I think it might have had something to do with the time of year. Y'know, all these ancient sites were astrological observatories. The people were very concerned about where the stars and planets were."

"Here we go again," says Frankie, as he turns away and continues fingering his keyboard.

"Hey dude, I listen to your music, don't I? I could be listening to my own CD's right now, but I've got W-FATONE on my radio dial, playing in my room. Don't I?"

"Yeah, and I listen to you, too, dude. All this weird stuff you talk about, it's interesting sometimes, I admit. Except when you start on that Einstein baloney. Then you really lose me. I don't want to think about that day. I hate it!!"

"But Frankie, it was the most important thing that ever happened to you!"

"Oh no! It was the worst thing that ever happened to me, dude! Look! I've put up with years of being called Mr. Spock, and that "Beam me up Frankie."

"Hey, they've called me Captain Kirk!" Buggsie reminds him.

"Yeah, well, your father didn't take you to all those hypnotists to see if you were abducted. That magician guy made me act like a chicken. For a week, every time my dad whistled, I turned into a chicken! You know how embarrassing that was?"

"Yeah, but your father didn't make you take all those blood tests-collapse your veins, and make your arm black and blue. I had to take all those evaluation tests-What does the inkblot look like Hershel? Duh. It looks like bird poop to me, you jerk. I went through a lot too, you know."

"Look! Can't we just forget that it happened?" pleads Frankie.

"No! I can never forget it. I have to figure it out."

"You've got it figured out, Buggsie. We were at one of those power points you're always talking about at the right moment... well the wrong time as far as I was concerned. And wham! We were zapped to back water Bolivia by some strange invisible energy that's all over the earth, but that science doesn't know crap about! It makes perfect sense to me, dude!"

"Yeah, well, it's something like that, anyway. If we could only test our theory."

"Your theory." Frankie reminds him.

"Alright, my theory. If it is just being in the right place at the right time, then, if we..." Buggsie is thinking aloud.

"How does this sound hit you?" Frankie interjects, as he plays a melody on his keyboard.

"Fine, fine. Then, if we go there at exactly the same time of year..."

"Go there! Where?" Frankie is suddenly concerned.

"Back to Mystery Hill, of course."

"Oh, no! No way, Jose! I'm not going through that again!"

"Frankie, it's the only way! I have to know if I'm right about this."

"I don't. I'm not going to that creepy place again."

"You wouldn't want me to fly solo, would you?"

"No. You're not going there, either. Your father ordered you to never go there again."

"But, I have to, Frankie. I have to know."

"Look, that place is Spook Central. I'd sooner hang out in the Bermuda Triangle." Frankie screams at him.

"Well, if you won't go with me, I'll have to go it alone. Solo recon! I'll have to take on those aliens alone."

"Buggsie, I'll put a headlock on you and hold you there until you come to your senses."

"You and what army, dude?" Buggsie growls at his friend.

The two teens wrestle and get a little rowdy until they are both exhausted. Frankie gets Buggsie in a headlock with his sweater over his head, but Buggsie grabs Frankie's feet and he tumbles, head first, through a cardboard model of the world that Buggsie constructed. As Buggsie pulls his sweater back down, Frankie gets up, his head stuck halfway in the geometrically shaped globe. Both are breathing hard.

"Come on, Frankie. It could be fun. We could get some girls!"

"Girls? Now this sounds better."

"Yeah, we could all spend the night up there and wait for the sunrise."

"Well, the girl part is good, it's the location that isn't." Frankie is no longer adamant.

"Look, if we tell the girls what it's all about, it might be exciting, it could be a good angle to get them up there," suggests Buggsie.

"You know, maybe you've got something. After all, it's a free trip to Peru if it works. How many guys can offer that?"

"Sure, and while we're waiting for the dawn..." Buggsie doesn't have to continue, he already has Frankie excited.

"Yeah, yeah, and hopefully nothing will happen! I mean with the weird stuff... I mean, you know, going places, like other countries."

"Yeah, and either way I'll know if I'm right. If I'm wrong, I'll need comforting to heal my wounded pride."

"Buggsie, our parents would kill us if we called them from Peru again."

"So we won't tell them. I've got bonds in the bank that my grandmother gave me. So do you. We'll take out some money and tell our folks we decided to take a little trip to see some friends for a while. I was thinking of going a few places before college, anyway. We were talking about Europe this summer, weren't we?"

"Yeah, but I meant by plane, not spaceship. I have this thing about exceeding the speed of light!" Jokes Frankie.

"Look. I'm probably wrong, but we'll go prepared," suggests Buggsie.

"I'm taking my dad's rifle this time. I'll blow those headhunters away like Rambo. Boom!"

"That's the ticket, dude. We'll be prepared for the unexpected. We're experienced space-time travelers now!" Buggsie brags.

"Yeah, and I think I know just the two babes to invite on our soiree safari."

"Judy and Trudy!" They both say as one. I knew it. I knew you would say that! Those two chicks are so spaced out, they would buy a pre-Challenger space shuttle from a used car salesman!"

"Yeah, but what machinery. Like a Porche with no one behind the wheel." Frankie drools.

"Okay, then, we'll do it? You'll go?"

"Aw, what the heck. This time I'll be too wasted to get scared!"

They slap hands in high fives as they shout "YEAH" in unison.

CHAPTER SIX

The Camping Trip

The sun drops low in the sky as Frankie's four-by-four skids to a stop at Mystery Hill. The two adventurers are with the reluctant Trudy and Judy.

"Well, this is as far as we can drive. The rest of the way is on foot," Frankie announces.

"Oh God, it's going to be dark soon. What if Jason is in these woods?" Judy worries.

"Yeah, and what about bears?" asks Trudy.

"We'll be fine. Frankie and I were both Eagle Scouts." The two girls look at each other and try to conceal their laughter.

"I have a twenty-two rifle. You're safe with me," Frankie boasts.

"Great! They think they're Daniel Boones!"

"We better leave a trail of bread crumbs, Judy," the girls giggle.

The boys unload the four-by-four and don their backpacks. The boys lead the way, as the girls tag along, whispering and giggling.

They wind their way up the dirt road, the boys constantly reassuring the girls, and the girls joke and giggle about the boys.

They circumvent the gate into the dark parking lot where a small bookstore is located. A sign points to their destination.

"Here we are!" Frankie proudly announces.

The girls look around, bewildered.

"Here we are? Here?! This is just a pile of dirt with a cabin. Who lives here, Grizzly Adams?" Trudy whines.

"Yeah. Where are these ancient ruins you bragged about?" asks Judy. She puts her hands on her hips and looks around.

"There. Just up there on the ridge," answers Buggsie.

"First we make camp here, though," says Frankie.

"Oooh, This is just like on Survivor!" Judy is now excited.

Frankie and Buggsie give each other a "Hoo Boy" look and set up the tent while the girls build a fire, grumbling and whining about how dismal the woods are. They scream at the sight of every bug and ask what every sound is. Frankie and Buggsie realize that these girls are ditzier than they thought.

Later, sitting around the campfire after dinner, they all feel cozier. The boys even toast marshmallows for the girls.

"These are good, but make you thirsty," Trudy says.

"Here, have a soda," offers Frankie.

"Soda?" Beer here!" Judy and Trudy call out. Each takes a beer and pops it open.

"Eee, uuch! It's warm as piss," Judy exclaims.

"Try some of this." Trudy reaches into her knapsack, and brings out a bottle of Jack Daniels. The girls each take a swig and pass the bottle to Buggsie.

"I never touch hard stuff. That's like rocket fuel." He passes the bottle to Frankie and takes another sip of his soda.

"Ahaa yeah." Frankie belches. "Yes sir, just like Grandma used to make." He pretends it didn't burn his throat.

"What you boys need is a hit of this," says Trudy. She takes out a marijuana joint and lights up. Judy takes a hit and passes it to Buggsie.

"Um, no. I have to keep my perception clear. A good scientist can't endanger his powers of observation during an important experiment." Buggsie passes the joint on to Frankie.

"Oh wow! That's like heavy," Judy says.

Frankie pretends to take a quick puff but doesn't inhale. "You know these things have eight times more tar and nicotine than a cigarette." Frankie says, passing the joint quickly to Trudy.

"Yeah, well, the Surgeon General doesn't print any warnings on these." Trudy says sarcastically.

"You want a regular cigarette?" Judy asks.

"Yeah. I'll have one, thanks," Frankie lights the cigarette while trying to appear cool. "Yuck! Nasty...menthol...that's awful! How can you like these?" He coughs.

The two girls laugh. "Oh, like wow, Judy. We really got a couple of party animals here!"

"These guys are like Duds McKinsey."

"Hey, we party! Don't we Buggsie?" Frankie is indignant.

"Yeah, Let's party! We need music. Right, Frankie?" Buggsie leaps to his feet.

"Yeah, hit it, boys." Frankie pops a CD into the portable player and blasts the music. The boys start dancing and the girls join them. They are having a ball and, when the song is over, fall down laughing.

"Okay, now what, party animals?" asks Trudy. She's looking for further entertainment.

"Um, well, Frankie does a great imitation of Uhurra."

"Who's Urar...?"

"Lieutenant Uharra, the communications officer on the old Star Trek."

"You mean the black lady?" asks Trudy.

"Yeah, come on Frankie, do it."

Frankie removes a keyboard from his knapsack.

"Alright Frankie! Hey, that's a new keyboard! Do it!" Buggsie enthuses.

"Check out these sounds!" Frankie sings in a high-pitched female-like voice. "Beyond the stars...beyond Centari..." It's the theme song from Star Trek.

Frankie's singing echoes down the slopes. The dawn is rapidly approaching and the musical sounds of dancing Zulu warriors from the sun clashes with Frankie's vocals.

Buggsie escorts Judy to the spot on the ridge near the standing stone. Frankie and Trudy remain at the campfire.

"Do you have any nail polish remover in your purse?" Frankie asks.

"Why? Do you want to do your nails now?"

"No. I want to show you a trick."

"Yeah, I have a little bottle in here." Trudy digs into her bag and takes it out. "Here."

"Now I need a couple of cigarette filters," Frankie says, picking up butts from around the fire.

"You use only the fuzzy part."

"I think your brain is fuzzy."

"Hold your hand like a cup," Frankie tells her.

"Like this?" Trudy holds out her hand.

"Yeah. Now, this is the male filter, and this is the female filter," Frankie puts the filters into her hand.

"Oh, they are so cute."

"Okay, they're getting hot for each other. So, we pour on a little of this nail polish remover to cool them off."

"Ooo, that's cold," Trudy says.

"Right! Now close your hand and give them a little privacy. That's it, hold them tightly together, you don't want them to get away. Now, shake them up, shake them real good. They are making love and things get all shook up," says Frankie, holding back laughter.

"Trudy, you've got to see the ancient ruins up there. I mean, it's not really much-just some rocks in sort of a circle, but kinda eerie," Judy says excitedly, as she and Buggsie return.

Trudy acknowledges her friend with a smile and Frankie says, "Now open your hands."

"What are you doing Trudie?" Judy asks. She doesn't see Frankie yet.

"Frankie is showing me...me...ah...yuck! Oh, yuck!" Trudie screams as she gets up quickly.

Frankie laughs so hard that he makes no sound and gasps for air.

"What is it Trudy? A bear? Is Frankie hurt?" Judy asks fearfully.

"Look!!" Trudy says as she holds out her hand, now containing a thick, white, milky liquid. The cigarette filters have dissolved into a disgusting snotty mess.

"Trudy, you didn't?!" Judy says.

"No! Those boys are perverts!" Both girls scream and run into the tent.

"Frankie, what happened?" Buggsie asks.

"I...showed...her...," Frankie tries to talk while gasping for air.

"Showed her what?"

"The cigarette gag." Frankie can't stop laughing.

"Oh no! Frankie, you didn't!" Buggsie starts to laugh, too.

"Yeah, I did."

The girls throw the boys' sleeping bags out of the tent and close the front flap.

"You guys are perverts." Trudy screams.

"That's gross and disgusting!" Judy screams.

"You only want us for our bodies."

"Mashers!" The girls continue whispering.

"Nice going, Frankie-Fat Head Fatone! Things were going great for me 'til you pulled that stunt."

"Shut up, Hershel, don't-know-how-to-have-any-fun. It was just a gag."

"Well, forget about staying up and waiting for the dawn now. You wrecked that idea!"

"Aw, these chicks are duds."

"We might as well get some sleep. I'll set the alarm," Buggsie says.

"It's not my fault. It was just a joke."

"Get some sleep!" says Buggsie, annoyed.

"Hey, girls. Sorry." Frankie tries to apologize.

"Stay away, low life!" Trudy screams.

"Oh boy, what a bummer," groans Frankie.

The boys climb into their sleeping bags and Buggsie winds an alarm clock he brought along.

"It was only a little gag. They don't have a sense of humor. I still think it's funny." Frankie chuckles.

"Go to sleep, Frankie."

Silence descends on the camp, but every now and then Frankie chuckles. Soon, Buggsie starts to chuckle, too.

"Go to sleep." Buggsie laughs, shaking his head in disbelief.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Flight 101 to Peru

The night passes slowly for Buggsie. Anticipating testing his theory has him too anxious to sleep. He tosses from side to side.

Frankie is finding it hard to sleep, too. He's afraid that Buggsie might be right, as this place does not hold pleasant memories for him. Even the moon seems too bright tonight. He senses the approaching dawn, just like three years ago. He finally manages to fall into a light sleep, only to awaken time after time.

The alarm sounds shortly after Buggsie has finally fallen asleep.

"Darn, time to wake Frankie."

"So, who's sleeping, I'm already up."

They rise and go to the tent. "Trudy, Judy, up and at'em, girls."

"Who's there?" says Judy, frightened.

"Us. Time to get up."

"Yeah, you know, the mashers, Jason's friends!" Frankie croons.

"C'mon, Trudy, wake up. This is the exciting part!" Judy is really enthusiastic.

"This had better be good!" Trudy groans as she leaves the tent.

They all climb to the ridge, where the standing stone, named the Summer Solstice Monolith, awaits.

"Well, here we are," Buggsie says, excited.

"Yeah, girls. Here we are." Frankie is nervous. "Still time to change our minds. Maybe this was a bad idea. Let's go."

"Frankie!"

"There better be something to this hocus pocus," Trudy warns.

"Take your seats, girls. Flight 101 for Peru will be taking off momentarily. It's still about five minutes before dawn." Buggsie appears anxious.

"Well, at least this time I'm prepared. I have a rifle, compass, water, money, passport..." Frankie itemizes.

"Oh, we need passports?" Judy asks.

"Don't worry about that. They'll be sure to deport you. Now, everyone, please take your seats." Buggsie motions the girls to sit in the center of the circle.

"Where are the ruins?" Trudy asks.

"You're sitting in them. See how this stone is in the middle of a circle? That big stone over there?" Buggsie points.

"That stone could have easily slid down the hill and landed in that rut. It certainly doesn't look like ancient ruins to me." Trudy protests.

"Well it got us to Peru once before, whatever it is," Buggsie replies.

"It scared the life out of me then, and still does," Frankie adds. "What time is it?"

"Any minute now. I'm not exactly sure what time dawn is. Your location makes a difference." Buggsie is a bundle of nervous anticipation.

Everyone becomes quiet. There's tension in the air. They all imagine they can hear the sound of the approaching dawn. It is almost upon them. The silent dance of those frenzied sun warriors draws near.

"Gee, you know, it is kinda spooky here," Trudy remarks.

"You'll be a lot more spooked if you meet the guys we met last time," Frankie warns.

"Any minute now," Buggsie says anxiously.

"Oh God! Buggsie, this is definitely a bad idea," Frankie asserts.

"Maybe we should have wired ahead for hotel reservations," Judy suggests.

"I know a nice grass hut on the lake where we can drop in at a moment's notice." Frankie nervously recalls his nightmare.

"I think my father used to come up here and get plastered back in the sixties." Trudy is looking around.

"Any second now," Buggsie says, looking at his watch.

The wind picks up for a moment and blows up the hillside.

"My hair!" Trudy puts her hands on top of her head.

A bird screeches and takes flight. Its wings flap loudly. "What was that?" Judy asks, startled by the sound.

"A bird. Buggsie, we should go!" Frankie pleads, nervously.

"Any time now!" Buggsie is more excited.

A distant rumble is heard as the sun peeks over the horizon. Its first rays hit the standing stone precisely on top, matching the slope of the notch in the distant cliffs of stone. It is very bright and takes everyone by surprise.

"Ah," "Oooh," "Help," "Mama," they scream, ecstatically.

They clutch the stone seat and pound their feet up and down. Then, suddenly, they stop. A long silence pervades.

"Where are we?" asks Frankie, after what seemed to be an eternity.

"It seems to me that we are in the same God-forsaken wilderness we've been in all night," says Trudy, annoyed.

"Is this Peru?" asks Judy.

"No. We haven't left yet. Hold on a while," Buggsie says.

"Oh thank you God! Yes!! Let's see America first," says a relieved Frankie.

"Just another minute now. It may take more time."

They all pause.

"This is a lot of bunk! You guys just told us this malarkey to get us up here alone," Trudy pouts.

"Yeah, you just want to use our bodies," adds Judy.

"Now, hold on girls. We haven't used anyone."

"Just be patient, it still may work." Buggsie still anticipates.

"No! You used my hand for that dirty trick," Trudy says to Frankie.

"Your hand? Trudy, you told me you didn't." Judy questions.

"Shut up Judy!"

"It may still work!" Buggsie exclaims.

"It's not going to work. Your trick is not going to work. We're on to you. We're on to your scheme."

"Really Trudy, this is not a gag," Frankie says.

"And you expect me to believe you?"

"Scheme?" Judy is a little behind in her comprehension.

"Come on Judy. We're leaving!" says Trudy.

"But what about Peru?"

"Judy! Let's go!" Trudy orders.

"Oh, yeah? How you going to get back without us? Follow your bread crumbs?" Frankie is very angry, sarcastic.

"We'll find our way," snaps Trudy.

"Maybe it takes longer for four people. Please wait," Buggsie asks. "It may still work!"

"Come on, Buggsie. Give it up. It didn't work."

"Maybe if we concentrate."

"Buggsie, come on! We have to go," says Frankie.

"I don't understand. I just don't understand."

"Come on!"

They walk back down the mountain and pack up. As they set off to Frankie's truck. Buggsie is muttering, "I don't understand it. I just don't understand...."

CHAPTER EIGHT

A McRevelation

Later that day, Frankie's four-by-four is parked outside a drive-in restaurant. Frankie sits behind the wheel, eating a sandwich. Buggsie is beside him eating chicken and sipping a shake.

"Boy, real food tastes great after the food those dizzy chicks burned up on the campfire," Frankie mumbles, his mouth full.

"Maybe four people were too heavy," Buggsie still ponders the morning's events.

"Can I have some of your mustard sauce, dude? It's great on fries!" Frankie isn't paying attention to Buggsie.

"No!" Buggsie answers his own question.

"No?"

"Huh? Oh, sure. You know, maybe the position of the planets have to be calculated. Maybe light from the stars can change the exact time it works." Buggsie is muttering aloud as he passes the mustard sauce.

"Mmm... Thanks, dude. You should really try this. It's bodacious!"

"Maybe that's why they were so preoccupied with the stars and the planets. Maybe all the planets have to be in the exact same position they were three years ago. Let's see, the planets will be again like that in about...twenty five years."

"Boy, I would hate to have missed my flight back then." Frankie snickers.

"You're right. Why would the ancients bother to build all those huge stone structures if the thing only worked once in a while? Even once a year seems stupid. There must have been some other thing I'm missing."

"Maybe we used the right password the first time. You know, like Open Sesame...Bun."

Buggsie looks at him with displeasure. "Hum... a secret password?"

"Yeah, we should have screamed, "Holy crap!" like the first time," Frankie says, laughing.

"Well, there must be something we did different this time. A magic word? Naw. Let's see, it was the same time, but..." Buggsie still thinks aloud.

"Maybe the ancients didn't allow women to travel abroad. A-broad. Get it?" Frankie laughs at the joke.

"That's it!" Buggsie proclaims.

"What? Women couldn't travel?"

"No, no! Your keyboard. That's what was different. You were playing your keyboard. Remember?"

"Yeah, so what? They needed a little traveling music?"

"No. You must have played the right series of chords, maybe, like a lock combination. Only this one unlocks space and time." Buggsie is excited now.

"Whoa, boy! I know I write some heavy tunes, but unlocking space and time? I can't hardly get that kind of worldly praise from you," Frankie says, disbelieving.

"No, now wait a minute! Listen to me."

"Oh boy, here comes Einstein," Frankie groans.

"No Einstein. I've read about these guys in India. They levitate rocks by playing music."

"Levitate?" Frankie asks.

"Yeah, you know, like rise up in the air, defy gravity."

"Oh, yeah."

"They gather around in a half circle and play different sized drums and horns. The sound makes a heavy boulder rise up in the air and move to where they want it."

"That's some real heavy sound! When can we catch these dudes in concert?" Frankie asks.

"They don't play concerts, stupid!"

"Bummer! So what does this have to do with us, anyway?"

"Don't you see? It's the right frequencies. Everything has its own frequency. Light has a certain frequency and everything, even matter, is really light. You know, $E = MC^2$ and C is the speed of light, or, really the frequency of light."

"I knew Einstein was coming... Hey! I need more mustard sauce." Frankie loses interest and returns to his meal.

"I know it! You played the right frequencies when the light hit the stone. The frequency is the key to unlocking the gateway. Don't you see?"

"I don't think those ancient dudes spoke English, Buggsie." Frankie replies sarcastically, munching on fries.

"Well, it's interesting that the word, key, means something that unlocks something else and also a musical note which is a frequency."

"A musical key is really a series of frequencies."

"Well, maybe that's it. Maybe it was the song you were playing. You hit the right series of notes. It was the song you were writing for Christina Hollander!"

"Christina Hollander?" They exclaim in unison! "Oh boy! Don't remind me. I can't believe I ever wrote a song about her!"

"The keyboard you had then, do you still have it?"

"That piece of junk? Yeah, in my room somewhere."

"Didn't it use RAM cartridges for recording the songs?"

"Yeah, that was the one."

"Do you think you still have that song on one of those cartridges?" Buggsie asks excitedly.

"God, I hope not."

"Well, let's go find out, dude."

"Wait a minute! Let's suppose I do. I mean, it's probably somewhere. I keep all my songs, and if I do, then what?"

"Then we go back and try it again."

"Back? You mean back up Mystery Hill, Spook Central? When? Next year?" Frankie doesn't like the idea.

Buggsie has been constantly nodding yes to Frankie's questions and finally answers, "No, not next year. Tonight, before the sun rises."

"This is ridiculous! As if last night wasn't a big enough disaster! Those chicks have probably convinced half the town that we are sexed-crazed psychos and should be locked away. It's bad enough I'll be hearing, "What's the matter Scotti? Transporter malfunction? But, no! You want me to go up to the highest peaks and play a love song to fat, ugly, pimple faced Christina Hollander, the girl voted most likely to need plastic surgery!"

"Don't you see how important this is? We might be on the verge of discovering how to travel instantaneously to anywhere on the planet, at no cost! This can be revolutionary. We'll both be famous! You may have accidentally discovered something of great importance when you wrote that song."

"Oh, come on!" Frankie says in disbelief.

"They might be playing your song all over the world to travel anywhere in the world!"

"Hum..." Frankie is suddenly interested. "Well, I could change the words. Nobody has to know it was about Christina."

"Frankie! We've got to find out. This is the opportunity of a lifetime. You can't let it pass!"

Buggsie pleads.

"It'll be our secret that the song was ever about hog faced Hollander? Alright?"

"Of course, of course," Buggsie answers. "Then you'll go?"

"Well?" Frankie thinks about it.

"You have to find that song first."

"Oh, I'm pretty sure I can find it."

"Good, good. We're gonna need batteries for that keyboard. You should use the same brand as you used then. Everything should be the same."

"What? Who the heck knows what kind of batteries I used in that piece of junk!"

Frankie starts the engine and pulls out towards his home. While they're driving, Buggsie talks on about the details of every possible condition that would recreate what had happened on that fateful day, three years ago. They discuss everything, from what they ate to what they wore.

As they drive off, Frankie yells, "No freekin' way! I am not wearing my Boy Scout uniform!"

CHAPTER NINE

Gone Again

It's almost dawn. Buggsie and Frankie sleep in their tent below the ridge. It's very peaceful and the area's natural beauty gives no hint of anything strange.

The dawn approaches with an imaginable roar simulating the ocean smashing against the shore. Its tidal wave of light is about to bathe the state of New Hampshire.

Buggsie's alarm blasts and he slowly rouses from his deep slumber. He stares at the clock. He leaps to his feet.

"Holy shit! Wake up Frankie! It's almost dawn," Buggsie shakes his friend violently.

"I'm too young to be shot at dawn!" Frankie cries out, still in a dream stage.

"Frankie, wake up! You're having a nightmare!"

"What a terrible dream! Yuck! What a terrible place! I don't know what's worse-being shot at dawn or being catapulted to who knows where, at dawn. Maybe the dream wasn't so bad. I'll go back," Frankie mumbles as he falls asleep again.

"Get up, you turkey!" Frankie does.

The boys gather their possessions and scramble to the ridge and the stone circle. Frankie is more hesitant than before. The girls aren't there, so that incentive is gone. He believes that this time it might work.

"Oh, boy." Frankie's quite nervous. "How did I let you talk me into reliving that nightmare? I hate this place, it's creepy!"

Buggsie looks around fearlessly. He appears unafraid of the risk. He is confident and stubbornly determined that he's right and wants to prove it.

"I left my dad's rifle in the car. How could you let me forget it?" Frankie whines.

"I doubt we'll need it." Buggsie glances at his watch. "Okay, it's three minutes till dawn. Get the keyboard out and let's get started." Buggsie ignores Frankie's fears.

"Hearing the song up here is going to freak me out," Frankie complains, as he takes out the keyboard.

"Just turn on the damn switch, you big baby!" Buggsie commands.

"Christina Hollander, you ugly slug! If it weren't for you I wouldn't be in this mess," Frankie grinds his teeth, but reluctantly starts the song playing.

"Now remember, this time, hold onto the keyboard. We might be able to use it to get back." Buggsie reminds him.

"I've got a strap on it. I'll wear it around my neck, like a noose! Just picture the headline-Frankie Fatone was hung at dawn this morning!" Frankie fantasizes.

"Stop it! Keep quiet and let the song play. And remember, slowly speed up the tempo-just like the last time."

Closer and closer the dawn comes. A bird cries out and takes to the air. The wind increases and a sudden gust blows at Buggsie's blonde hair. Frankie grabs hold of the stone they're sitting on, anticipating.

Below their perch, Frankie's song echoes off the stony peaks. The song's refrains are in perfect tune with the inaudible sounds of the dawn. Those Zulu warriors of the sun dance their way ever closer as they move to the rhythm of their own and Frankie's song.

Dawn breaks over the horizon as the distant peaks direct the first rays of the sun into a laser-like ray that hits the top of the stone. "There's that high-pitched sound again," Buggsie thinks aloud. "It wasn't there yesterday, but it was there the first time-like feedback." Buggsie stares hard at the keyboard to see if it's coming from there. He can't tell. A rising blue-green mist encompass them and once again all things around them blurs into blindingly white light.

"It's working!" Buggsie shouts, leaping up and down with the excitement of the very first shuttle launch.

"Oh, no! Not again!" Frankie says in horror. "Shit!" he cries out.

"Yeah!" Buggsie yells, holding aloft a clenched fist.

Their cries echo from the hillside. And once again, they're gone!

CHAPTER TEN

Coven of Witches

Darkness and desolation. The wind-swept Salisbury Plain in Southwest England, two hours before midnight. A Few nearby villagers stand about on the grassland where the great stone circle, called Stonehenge, stands in isolated splendor.

A coven of witches have assembled and taken adequate precautions that they would be undisturbed. A guard's tea had been drugged by a potion one of them concocted.

The twelve women and the male leader are gathered in a semicircle. The women have prostrate themselves in front of the altar on which the priest stands. He wears a sleeveless outer robe of bright scarlet, embroidered with the figures of a green insect and a bear devouring a weasel.

They've just sacrificed a goat, the corpse burns on the altar. The priest reads from a missal of red, white, and black pages, the binding the skin of a wolf. He holds aloft a blood red hexagonal host. The ensemble cries out "Aquerra Beyty, Aquerra Goity, Aquerra Beyty," (the goat above, the goat below).

The priest throws a handful of powder into the fire. It burns green with much smoke. He reads from the book in a solemn voice.

"I conjure thee, Oh Spirit Och, Ruling Prince of the Firmament, of Sunday, the Sun and the number nine. Strengthened by the power of God, I command thee by Baralamensis, Paumachie, Baldaciensis, Apolorosedes, and the most powerful princes Genio and Liachide, Ministers of the Seat of Tartarus and Chief Princes of the Throne of Apologia, in the seventh region. I conjure thee, and command thee, Oh Spirit Oche, by him in the most Holy and glorious names Adonai, El, Elohim, Elohe, Zebaoth, Elion, Eschence, Jah, Tetragramnaton, Sadai, appear forthwith and show thyself to me, here outside this circle in fair and human shape, without loathsome disease or deformity and without decay."

The priest throws more powder into the fire, raises his hands above his head as he chants, "Come at once and answer my questions. Be visible and pleasant, be without duplicity, with honesty, do whatever it is that I desire. For you are conjured up in the name of the everlasting living and true God, Tetragramnaton, to whom thou owest obedience. Come, fulfill my desires and persist unto the end in accordance with my will. I conjure thee. Speak to me visibly, pleasantly, clearly, and without deceit. Come in the name of Adonai, Zebaoth, Sadai, the king of kings, commands thee!"

The priest throws more powder into the flames and the flames now spew a rainbow of color and blinding smoke. He continues in a voice mad with rage, as he chants, "By the dreadful Day of Judgment, by the Sea of Glass, which is before the face of the Divine Majesty, by the four beasts before the throne, by the Holy Angels of Heaven and the mighty wisdom of God. By the Sea of Basdathea, by the name of Primematum, which Moses uttered and the earth opened and swallowed up Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, answer all of my demands and perform all that I desire. Come peaceably, visibly, and without delay.

Once more the priest throws handfuls of powder into the flames. His voice strikes a fever pitch as the words thunder from his lips and the flames well up around him.

He cries out, "Appear by Adonai, Perai, Tetragrammaton, Anaxeton, Inessensataol, Pathumaton, and Itemon. I threaten by Eve and by the one who binds the whole host of heaven. Curse you if you do not come. Curse you to the bottomless pit, to the Lake of Eternal Fire, to the Lake of Fire and Brimstone. Come, in the names of Adonai, Zebaoth, Amiorame, Come, Adonai, I command thee!"

The priest throws still more powder into the flames and they again flare, then rapidly die down. There's a hush. The wind increases. Then, a light pours through the center stone doorway. The light becomes blindingly white and the priest shields his eyes with his hands.

The light fades and two figures are silhouetted in the doorway.

A green fog flows from the site as the wind subsides. The coven stands there, their mouth agape in wild anticipation. As their eyes adjust to the darkness, a nervous pair of teen-agers look about cautiously.

Buggsie and Frankie stare at the strangely clad people who stand stunned, not uttering a sound. The boys lean to the right and the eyes and heads of the coven move with theirs, as if there is but one mind between them. The boys lean left, and again the eyes and heads follow them.

The priest breaks the silence, calling to the newcomers, "Thou are not Och. What manner of duplicity are thee?"

Buggsie and Frankie look at each other. They haven't a clue as to what this man refers.

"Speak demons! Who art thou? Adonai commands thee," the priest bellows.

"Oh, no!" Frankie whines in disbelief. Once again Buggsie has dragged him to another weird place.

"Ono and Balzar!" Buggsie says, quickly recognizing where they are and what's happening. He recognizes Stonehenge from pictures he has seen of the place. He also notices the circle with the pentagram that the priest stands in-this is some sort of magical rite. Thinking quickly, he comes up with the name Balzar, a demon in the movie, "Ghostbusters". Frankie looks at him in total confusion.

"What?" Frankie asks in wonderment.

Buggsie elbows Frankie in the ribs. He picks up on Frankie's words, "Um... What do you want of us, oh master?"

The whole coven sighs relief in unison.

"Balzar and Ono, I do not know of thee from the grimories.

Why have you come in the place of Och?" The priest asks.

"Och is, uh, busy. He sent us," Buggsie says as he calculates the situation. Frankie looks at Buggsie, questioning.

"He's, uh, detained by an exorcism," Buggsie adds.

"Exorcism?" The priest questions.

"Eh, yes. A Catholic priest is exorcising Och from a little girl in Texas," Buggsie quips.

"Och is besieged by a Catholic priest? Death to the priest! Pray for Och, my sisters. May Och devour him! Praise Och! Glory to you, Och!"

The priest and the coven chant several praises to Och.

"What the hell is going on?" Frankie whispers.

"Just play along. These dudes are Satanists!" Buggsie whispers nervously, trying to convey their danger.

As the coven chants praises to Och, the boys step away from the arches, hoping to get out of there.

"Stop! Do not move from that place, Balzar and Ono," the priest orders. The coven turns in one swift movement, like a precision dance group. Their eyes each have the same evil stare.

The boys freeze. The faces of the witches sends an eerie chill up their spines. The witches' gazes have a hypnotic effect.

"Come closer, great minions of Och, but do not attempt to enter the circle in which I stand. I shall write thy names on this parchment, along with Och's name and symbol."

Buggsie and Frankie move cautiously, their heads high and their eyes open wide. They glance from side to side, then stand before the priest. They're greatly apprehensive.

The priest grabs a jeweled knife from beneath his garment and slashes the back of his hand. The whole emits a gleeful hiss. He holds the knife up, letting the blood trickle down the blade edge. He writes, in blood, as he repeats their names aloud.

"Balzar and Ono." He marks the parchment. "There, I have placed thy names beside the great Och. I now place the parchment in this box. Obey me, demons!" the priest commands. "As thy names, and the names and the seal of the great Och are bound in this box, choked by sulfurous and stinking substance and about to burn in this material fire. So, in the name of Jehovah and by the power and dignity of Tetragrammaton, Anhexaton, and Primematum, may they drive thee into the lake of fire prepared for the damned and accursed spirits, to remain there until the Day of Wrath? No more remembered before the face of God, who shall come to judge the quick and the dead of the whole by fire."

"Rad, dude," Frankie says. Buggsie elbows him in the ribs.

"Serve us, demons! You shall teach us things to do our bidding. Show us how to make a potion to restore youth. Make us a charm that will bring instant death to our enemies. Give us a crystal that will see tomorrow's race results. Speak to me, demons! Tell me of these things," the priest intones.

Buggsie and Frankie look at each other.

"Um... Och didn't teach us much about that," Buggsie replies.

"Yeah, we're sort of apprentice demons."

"Yeah." Buggsie nods in agreement.

"You try my patience, demons. Tell us Balzar and Ono, what has the Great Och taught you that you might convey to us? What powers do you command?"

"Well, we're not very powerful. We just sort of help Och out. There's not much we can show you," Buggsie says meekly.

"Yeah. We get all the shit jobs. You know," Frankie adds.

"If you can tell me nothing, I will destroy you. Speak, demons!" the priest says, very angry.

"The Great Och will wreak revenge if you harm us," Buggsie warns.

"Then, give me some power that I might play with," the priest shouts.

Buggsie and Frankie turn to each other nervously.

"Um, um..." Buggsie stutters.

"Have you tried Nintendo?" Frankie remarks.

"Death to you both!" The priest screams as he throws the box into the flames.

"Pretend you're dying," Buggsie whispers to Frankie.

"Ugh!" as Buggsie grabs his throat and fakes death poorly.

"Ugh!" Frankie staggers back and forth with an even worse routine.

The two boys contort and stagger around ridiculously. Buggsie drops to his knees and, with a final groan, falls face first to the ground. Frankie twitches and holds his hands to his head. "What a world! What a world! I'm melting!" he says in a witch-like voice from the "Wizard of Oz". He shrinks down and then falls over backward throwing his feet up high before collapsing like a rag doll.

The priest and the coven stand silent, dumbfounded, for a very long moment. Then, the Priest's look of disbelief changes to rage. He bellows, "seize them!"

The witches move rapidly. Two of the young women are endowed with the strength of obsession. They move with lightening precision-their capes flying open like wings of vultures. They seize Buggsie's wrists and bring him to his feet.

Two others grab Frankie and lift him as one slaps him violently with her hand.

"Bind them!" The priest orders, as the boys struggle. The women produce cords to bind their captives' feet and hands behind their back.

"Girls! Girls! Please, there's plenty of me to go around. Let me go, you bitches!" Frankie cries as he struggles. "I knew it! Here's another fine mess you've gotten me into Houghton!" he whines.

"Big help you were, I'm melting? Who were you supposed to be, Frosty the Snowman?" Buggsie asks as he, too, struggles.

"Place the one who calls himself Ono on the altar stone!" The priest orders.

The witches holding Frankie are joined by others. They lift and throw him over one's shoulder. She carries him to the stone at the center of the circle. Like the stone in the ruin on Mystery Hill, it appears as a seat.

Frankie struggles. "Let me lose you muscle-bound bitches!" They drop him onto the stone. He lands on his back with a thud.

"Bring the other!" The priest orders.

The witches holding Buggsie haul him forward, while another pushes him from behind. He continues to struggle to free himself.

"So, you thought you would deceive us, you young fool!" The priest cackles. "You are no demon! You are flesh and blood!" The priest gloats.

"I'm Hershel Houghton, an American citizen and there will be an investigation if you harm us! They will find you!" Buggsie yells.

The priest lets out an uproarious laugh and bellows, "How pathetic you are! Did you think your cheap parlor trick really fooled us? Some flash powder and you appear like amateur magicians. What did two of you think to accomplish alone out here on the plains? This was a sophomoric joke, no doubt. You mock us! Let us now see who the joke is on?"

"Our being here is an accident. Let us go. This isn't a prank." Buggsie still struggles.

The priest turns to his coven and, ignoring the boy completely, says, "Little lambs came to the slaughter. They will make a more fitting sacrifice to the Great Och, my sisters."

He turns to Buggsie and points. "We will not harm you, would-be demons. It is you who will do the killing for us!" The priest throws a handful of powder into the blazing fire. He blows smoke from the powder into Buggsie's face. The witches holding him turn away and hold their breath, knowing full-well what the priest is doing. Buggsie coughs and, suddenly feeling woozy, sways from side to side, shaking his head.

The priest reaches inside his robe and pulls out a tiny metal skull. In its mouth is a spinning jewel that emits a light of all the colors of a rainbow. It spins like a mirrored orb in a dancehall, producing a hypnotic effect. "Look into the face of death!" The priest commands, as he holds the object directly in front of Buggsie.

As the lights dance before his eyes, Buggsie can't help but stare. He feels as if he's being drawn into the lights—as though the lights were stars and he was on a journey into space.

The coven members fall to their knees and murmur. Their words are indistinguishable, but create a droning effect. The priest eagerly joins the chanting, his voice slightly louder. A knowledgeable listener would recognize the chanting as ancient Latin.

Frankie's eyes dart about, trying to understand what's happening. "Bugsie, don't listen to them! Snap out of it!" He cries. One witch rises and gags Frankie with her black sash.

Bugsie barely hears Frankie as he falls deeper and deeper into a trance. Lights dance faster and faster. Everything spins like a carousel and the world drifts away from him like a dream. His eyes close.

The priest puts the seductive skull away in his robe. The witches continue their chant. It takes on the rhythm and sound of Carmina Beriana music, (banned by the church during the dark ages). The priest unties Bugsie, then holds his hand high above the boy's head. "You are Hunding, the great hunter," the priest states in a low, forceful voice.

"I...am...hum...Hunding, the hunter," Bugsie murmurs in his trance.

"You are hunting in a forest. It is dark. You are afraid."

"I am hunting."

"You hear the vicious sound of a great beast-a lion. You turn."

"What was that?" Bugsie murmurs as he turns. "A lion?"

"You reach for your weapon." The priest hands Bugsie the sacrificial knife.

Bugsie reaches out and takes the knife. "You raise the knife. You are ready for the beast." The priest continues.

"I'm ready." Bugsie murmurs.

"You stalk your prey. The lion does not see you yet."

Bugsie tiptoes towards Frankie. Frankie, struggles violently to get free, but his bonds won't come loose. He tries, over and over to call out through the cloth that gags him.

"There is your prey! Kill him! Quickly, before he turns and sees you!" The priest commands.

Bugsie raises the knife as sweat runs down his face. He's completely lost in the dream and doesn't realize it's Frankie who he is about to kill.

He raises the knife higher and higher. Frankie again tries to scream.

Bugsie tenses his muscles and howls, "Aah...!" He thrusts downward.

Frankie rolls over to avoid the knife. It rips through his jacket.

Suddenly, a very high pitched squeal is heard-piercing and oscillating electronically. Bugsie reels from the sound, awakens from his stupor and looks down at Frankie, still struggling. He realizes that he holds the knife. Thinking quickly, he grabs the priest and puts the blade to the man's throat, holding his hands behind his back. The startled Satanist struggles briefly, but goes limp, and trembling with fear.

The witches rise and approach Bugsie.

"Stand back or I'll slit his throat!" Bugsie's threatens.

The witches freeze, unsure of what to do. The priest trembles and perspiration appears on his forehead.

"Now, free my friend!" Buggsie orders. The witches look at Frankie, but do not move. "Now, or Merlin here gets it!" Buggsie presses the knife blade harder against the priest's throat.

Several witches quickly untie Frankie and Frankie removes his gag.

"Are you hurt?" Buggsie asks desperately.

"Uh, I think I'm okay, nothing hurts." Frankie unties his feet and opens his jacket. He pulls the keyboard from around his neck and looks at it—crushed in the center where the knife struck it. It wails a high-pitched tone. Frantically, he unbuttons his shirt and feels his chest.

"It's just a scratch. I'm barely bleeding. Baby, you saved my life!" he says as he kisses the keyboard. "But, don't worry, I'll fix you up, good as new."

"Thank God!" Buggsie sighs with relief.

"Yeah, now you're concerned. Just a minute ago you were Jack the Ripper!" Frankie grumbles.

"I...I... thought you were a lion."

"Yeah, I almost was! A lie-on down pushing up daisies," Frankie exclaims.

"Never mind that, now. Grab those ropes and tie up this devil-worshipping geek," Buggsie shouts.

Frankie ties the priest's legs and hands together as the witches hiss and growl. He pulls the ropes together extra hard and says, "You're probably into bondage shit. Getting excited yet, sicko?"

"Stay where you are, all of you!" Buggsie shouts to the witches. He drags the priest backwards as he and Frankie step back. The entire band of witches reach out with their claw-like hands, but never step forward. Buggsie presses the knife even harder against the priest's neck. He struggles for breath.

They reach the perimeter of the stone circle and Buggsie stops. He calls out, "It's been nice meeting you all. If I ever have a Halloween party I'll be sure to send an invitation."

"Yeah, and may your broomsticks get termites!" Frankie adds.

Buggsie lets the priest drop to the ground. "Let's boogie, Frankie." The two boys scurry away as the witches rush to the priest. No one chases the boys.

They run past the outer stone of the circle called the "Slaughter Stone", along a path called the "Avenue to Avon". In the distance they see the lights of a village.

"There, over there, let's head for it," Buggsie says, pointing.

As they race along the path, Buggsie begins to feel strange. It feels like he is in Africa, clad like Tarzan, and running barefoot on the open plains. He looks back and sees not Frankie following, but instead, a big black panther.

Frankie notices the strange expression on Buggsie's face. He asks, "You okay Dude?"

Buggsie doesn't hear Frankie. Instead, he sees the Black Panther turn its head and roar, baring its ivory-white fangs. Buggsie still holds the sacrificial knife and feels the compulsion to strike at the

panther. He looks at the knife. He hears the panther roar again, more menacing. "Wait a minute, this can't be real," he thinks. "How did I get here? Where's Frankie?"

As the two runners approach the River Avon, Buggsie stops. He shakes his head, and with a cry of anger, throws the knife far into the river. The evil blade plunges into the water as Frankie asks, "Buggsie, what's wrong? You okay?"

"Now I am. It must have been that strange smoke they blew in my face. Come on, let's go!"

They resume running, slower now, following the river to the village. Frogs croak as the boys' sneakers plop in the moist grass.

Frankie begins to feel light-headed. "I'm in worse shape than I thought. I better work out more," he thinks to himself. He takes a few deep breaths and flaps his arms, like a track star warming up. He reaches down and picks up a bat-sized stick as he trots. He puts his arms behind his back and stretches his arms. Twisting from side to side, while still running, he muses.

Frankie's daydream is about being a runner in an early Greek Olympiad. It becomes more and more vivid, so much so that he can actually hear the crowd roar. He wins the race and now wears Grecian garb, a laurel wreath and leather sandals. He trots around the stadium. He looks to the right. Beautiful Greek women cheer for him. One exceptionally beautiful girl tosses him roses and blows him a kiss as he runs his solo lap. A fat, ugly one calls out, "Yoo hoo, Frankie, it's me, Christina Hollander!" "What the hell is she doing in ancient Greece?" Frankie wonders.

Buggsie glances at Frankie and sees there is now something strange about his expression. Frankie now holds the stick in front of him. Buggsie can't imagine what the grin on Frankie's face is about.

In his continuing dream, Frankie now carries the Olympic torch. The crowd roars louder and more beautiful women throw roses. Some gesture sexily toward him.

Frankie waves hello towards the river and Buggsie realizes there is definitely something wrong. "Frankie!"

Frankie hears his name and turns to his head. What he sees, to his horror, is Freddie Kruger running alongside him.

"Frankie!" Freddie Kruger calls his name with a blood curdling tone, as though he was there to collect his soul. "Ah!" Frankie screams. He strikes out at his nightmarish opponent with the "burning Olympic torch". Kruger's knife-like hands grab the torch, the razor-like talons sinking into it. Frankie attempts to pull the torch away, but can't. Kruger grabs him and they both fall to the ground. Frankie can see the face as it comes closer, closer.

"Frankie! Frankie! What the hell are you doing?" Buggsie screams as Freddie Kruger's face fades and Buggsie's replaces it. Frankie realizes it's Buggsie he's struggling with. They both tumble down the

levee to the river edge. Frankie lands hard on his back. Buggsie gets up, takes the stick from Frankie's hand and throws it angrily into the river.

"Why the hell did you hit me with that? What's wrong with you?" Buggsie asks.

"Buggsie? Oh, like wow! I thought you were Freddie Kruger. It was so real! A nightmare!"

"Come on, let's go! If anything like that happens to you again, remember it's not real," Buggsie tells him.

"Yeah, just an illusion, okay." Frankie mumbles as he climbs to his feet. The two boys climb back to the path and resume running to the village ahead.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

An Amesbury Pub

It's now closing time at the pub in Amesbury. The barkeep cleans up as some of his regulars rattle on while nursing their whiskeys.

Jonathon Stokes, in his thick cockney accent, tells a tall tale as he leans back in his bar stool, precariously balancing it on two legs. "...and it was even bigger than the Queen's castle. It shone so bright that it lit up the countryside and hung there, above Stonehenge, glowing and humming an eerie noise."

"Agh, go on!" Henry Wright says, scratching his thick, black beard. "Next thing you'll be telling me is that little green men popped out of it and came after you," Henry scoffs.

"I'm telling you, it was there! As sure as I'm sitting here now!" Jonathon insists.

At that moment the door flies open with a crash. Jonathon turns to see whose burst into the place, loses his balance and falls over backwards.

"I'm sorry lads, we're closed for the night." The startled barkeep states.

"You've got to help us! They're after us!" Buggsie pleads.

"They tried to kill us!" Frankie gasps for air.

"Now, hold on boys. Who's trying to kill you? What's this all about?" The barkeep asks.

"Witches!" Frankie says.

"They're Satanists! Out there at that stone circle. It's Stonehenge isn't it? We're in England, aren't we?" Buggsie asks excitedly.

"Now, hold on a minute. Apparently you two are Yanks. You don't know what country you're in?" The barkeep asks.

"Stupid, of course we are in England. Just listen to this dude talk." Frankie slaps Buggsie on the shoulder.

Buggsie realizes how strange this must seem to the barkeep and that Frankie's remark was even more stupid than his. "Oh yes, of course, I know we're in England. I meant, are we still in England? I

thought maybe we, we crossed over to...um... Wales maybe? You see, we were driving and got lost, and our car broke down," Buggsie extemporizes.

"Yeah, battery trouble," Frankie interjects, nodding.

"Lost are ya? Where are the two of you headed, may I ask?" The barkeep inquires.

"London." Buggsie replies.

"Yeah, we want to check out Big Ben and the Changing of the Guard, all that stuff," Frankie adds.

"You're here on holiday then?"

"No, summer vacation," Frankie replies.

Buggsie hits Frankie in the shoulder for his stupid reply. "Yes we're here sightseeing. From North Salem, New Hampshire."

"Oh? Salem? Well, that explains an awful lot," Henry Wright says from his stool. "They're not fond of witches, coming from a place like that and all."

"North Salem, New Hampshire numskull, not Salem, Massachusetts." Jonathon Stokes says to Henry. They both snicker.

"We broke down out there and were looking for help. We saw people gathered and when we neared them, they turned out to be Satanists." Buggsie explains.

"They tried to kill us! Look at these rope burns on my wrists," Frankie adds.

"Yeah, they tied us up and wanted to sacrifice us to Satan."

"This all sounds a might fishy to me. Maybe I should telephone the Constable," the barkeep says, knowingly.

"The police! Yes, please do." Buggsie says approvingly.

"Yeah, call Scotland Yard. Get me a bunch of those Bobbie dudes with them num-chuck sticks," Frankie adds.

The barkeep walks to the phone. "You think they followed us?" Buggsie asks Frankie.

"Naw, we left them in the dust. Those chicks had heavy robes on. They couldn't run like that." Frankie answers.

"What if they had a car? Look outside and see if you see any of them." Buggsie tells Frankie.

"Well I'll look, but I doubt..." Frankie opens the door and sees someone dart into the alley across the street. He can barely distinguish the cape on the person. "Oh shit!" Frankie exclaims.

"What?" Buggsie asks with concern.

"I think I saw one." Frankie gulps.

"No! Really?" Buggsie says nervously.

Frankie again has his head out the door, searching the darkness. Buggsie, nervously wonders what they should do. As he turns, he spots an evil face peering through the side window of the tavern. "Look!" he shouts, pointing towards the window.

Frankie and all the others in the bar turn to see what has excited Buggsie, but the face has already disappeared.

"These lads are spooked bad," Henry Wright exclaims.

"Better to call a trick-cyclist or the men in the white coats than to bother the Constable, I say." Jonathon Stokes remarks.

"There was a woman staring in the window. I think it was one of the witches." Buggsie says, hysterically.

Henrietta Whelsley gets up from a booth in a dark corner of the pub where she has been sitting with her Uncle Raymond. She is a very attractive eighteen-year-old girl with long blonde hair flowing softly over her shoulders. She wears a tweed skirt, jacket, cashmere sweater, knee high socks and penny loafers. She is a beautiful woman and would look good wearing a burlap bag. She has an air of refinement.

She crosses the room with great poise and confidence. "Is it all the women you're afraid of, or just the ones versed in the black arts?" She asks in a seductive, English accent.

"Well, hello, hello," Frankie imitates an English accent and is quite taken by Henrietta's beauty.

"If the women chasing us looked like you, we certainly wouldn't be running from them," Buggsie says, smiling.

"Then you're frightened, but not shy I see," Henrietta says.

"This is Franklin Fatone and I'm Hershel Houghton," Buggsie says.

"Hello. I'm Henrietta Whelsley and that's my Uncle, Raymond Fosgood sitting over there. Can we be of assistance to you? Are you in some sort of trouble?" she asks kindly.

"Um..., well...", Buggsie stammers. He pauses for thought, totally lost in her eyes. He feels his heart pound and a ringing in his ears. He's becomes light-headed and off balance. He hopes he doesn't exhibit any of these symptoms as he doesn't want to seem immature in his reaction to this vision of loveliness. He summons all his willpower, so that he can answer her sensibly. "No we're not really in trouble. We just ran into some weird people outside of town who tried to harm us." Buggsie stares into her eyes.

"Yes, harm us permanently, as in death!" Frankie adds, not believing how mildly Buggsie put it.

"Well now, who were these people? Why do you think they were witches, of all things?" Henrietta asks.

"Um..., they wore black robes and chanted in Latin. There was a man in a red robe cooking an animal over a fire inside the stone circle." Buggsie relates.

"They tied us up, hypnotized him and tried to force him to kill me with a big knife," Frankie adds.

"Gracious, that does sound like some sort of Satanic cult," Henrietta agrees.

The front door swings open and the coven's priest enters, dressed differently than before. He has on a black suit and appears like a business man. He is accompanied by several women of the coven who too, are dressed differently. Their capes are gone and they wear conservative, dark dresses.

The priests' glaring sinister eyes stare about the pub. A silver ring on his hand flashes in the light as he turns his hand and points his long, bony finger. "There they are! The thieves who stole from us!" The priest announces as he points to Buggsie and Frankie. "Where is it? Return the sacred object you took, and may you be damned for defiling our religious services!" he rants.

"Now, see here my good man, what seems to be the trouble?" The stone-faced barkeep asks as he crosses the room.

"These young hooligans disrupted our religious services and stole a valuable religious object from us." The priest states, raging.

"That's him! He's the leader of the witches who tried to kill us." Buggsie shouts.

"And those are witches! They've changed clothes!" Frankie points.

A firm rapping noise comes from the pub's door. It is forceful, as if from a nightstick. "That'll be the Constable. He'll straighten this out quick." The barkeep declares. He opens the door and the Constable enters with two Bobbies.

The Constable sternly looks over his thick, handlebar mustache. He is a big, strapping man and his boots make a clumping sound as he walks across the old, bare wooden floor. "You lads claim someone tried to kill you?" The Constable asks, looking Buggsie and Frankie straight in the eyes.

"Yes sir. That man there tried to kill us," Buggsie points.

"Those women tied us up and helped him!" Frankie adds.

"Let me see your passports, lads," the Constable demands.

This time the boys were prepared and brought their passports. They pull them from their pockets and hand them to the Constable.

"Hershel Houghton and Franklin Fatone. Hum, a Yank and an I-talian Yank. These passports aren't stamped. How did you enter the U.K., lads?" The Constable asks.

"They aren't?" Um.. We flew in," Buggsie replies.

"Heathrow?" The Constable asks.

"No, jet." Frankie replies.

Buggsie elbows Frankie and says, "Uh, yes. Heathrow airport in London, sir. I don't know why they didn't stamp them."

"Probably just an oversight." The Constable says. "And you sir?" He turns to the priest.

"I am Reverend Jeremy Wayland, head of the church of the Sisterhood of Sadai, and these are some of my congregants. Those thieves desecrated my services and ran off with a valuable twelfth century misericord, inlaid with precious stones, which we use in our ceremonies." The irate priest states as he hands the Constable identification.

"Hum, what about it lads? Did you steal anything from this bloke?"

"We didn't take anything." Buggsie replies.

"Yeah, we didn't steal no miserable chord."

"That's misericord, you dullard!" Wayland fumes. "What have you done with it?"

"What's a misericord? What are you talking about?" Buggsie asks.

"The misericord! The jeweled dagger! Where is it?" Wayland demands.

"Dagger? You mean the knife you tried to kill us with?" Frankie asks.

"The knife? He tries to kill us and then wants his knife back? I threw your knife in the river, you blood sucking creep!" Buggsie fumes.

"So you did take it then?" The Constable asks.

"Well, they tried to kill us with it," Buggsie replies.

"I never touched you, it was you who held the knife to my throat!" Wayland shouts, pointing his finger at Buggsie.

"You tied us up! Look at the rope burns on my wrists." Frankie argues.

"You desecrated our services and mocked us! We tried to detain you until we could summon the police. You escaped and took our valuable antique misericord!"

Buggsie shouts, "These people are Satanists! They used hypnosis on me. Then, they drugged me and tried to make me kill my friend!"

"They're witches! They wanted to use us as a human sacrifice." Frankie says.

"But you did take the knife, then?" The Constable asks.

"Well...", Buggsie stammers, realizing things don't look too good for them.

"I think I can clear this up, Constable." Henrietta interrupts. "These young gentlemen are my guests at the manor and I vouch for their integrity. This Reverend, or whatever he calls himself, you will find is really Nathaniel Baxton. I recognize him from my father's files. He is wanted on several counts of espionage and his fingerprints are on file at Scotland Yard," Henrietta states flatly.

The Constable turns to the surprised priest. "Well now, maybe I better take you all in and fingerprint the lot of ya and see just who is who!"

The nervous priest tries to run for the door. The Bobbies grab at him but the witches block their way. The priest is almost out the door when the barkeep clobbers him with his broom. One Bobbie then grabs the priest and handcuffs him. The other handcuffs the witches.

"Well, I guess we can see who the guilty ones are. You lads are free to go, but I'll be needing a statement from you. I'll send someone by the manor in the morning, if that is convenient for you, Miss Whelsley?"

"Of course Constable. My friends and I will be waiting for you. Won't we?" Henrietta replies.

"Yeah, we'll be there." Buggsie says.

"Way to go Bobbies! Lock those devil dudes up!" Frankie says.

The officers haul the Priest and witches away, as the barkeep shakes his head in disbelief.

"This is an outrage! You got the wrong persons, you idiots. Those two aren't from this planet. We saw their craft looking for them!" The priest rants.

"Sure, sure. Come along now, tell it to the Judge," the Constable says.

"Bloody good show, Henry. What's the next act, Dancing Bears?" Jonathon Stokes snickers from the bar, but Henry the barkeep continues shaking his head.

"Thanks for helping us out. How did you really know who that guy was?" Buggsie asks Henrietta.

"I've seen his picture in my father's office. I help father with his paperwork whenever I can."

Henrietta replies.

"Who is your father? What does he do?" Buggsie asks.

"He works for Parliament."

"The cigarette company?" Frankie asks.

"No, you Bozak. She means British Parliament. Their Government!" Buggsie scolds Frankie with a slap in the arm.

"Is your father a member of Parliament?" Buggsie asks.

"No, he has an appointed position, sort of liaison between Parliament and British Intelligence."

"Wow, he sounds pretty important." Buggsie says.

"Yes, actually he is quite important. You'll stay with us, Uncle and I, at the manor tonight, won't you?"

"We'd be honored." Buggsie answers.

"A manor, righteous accommodations! We accept!" Frankie adds.

"Splendid. It will be such fun to have guests, won't it, Uncle? It gets so lonely there. Our car is 'round back," Henrietta says excitedly.

"Lead the way, m'lady!" Buggsie says.

"After you, Sir Hershel." Frankie bows.

"No, no, after you, Lord Franklin."

As they leave the pub, Buggsie looks to the right and Frankie to the left for signs of witches. They turn to each other and sigh in relief.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Fosgood Manor

Stately Fosgood Manor sits majestically overlooking the River Avon just outside the village of Amesbury. Henrietta is staying at her family's ancestral home while her father attends to business. She is delighted to have company of her own age to break the monotony of her stay. Moreover, she is delighted with Hershel, (she won't call him Buggsie).

Buggsie is falling head-over-heels in love with her. During the ride to the mansion, they virtually ignore Frankie and Uncle Raymond. They have many interests in common and Buggsie is awed by such an intelligent and beautiful young woman. Before, girls have been merely objects of sexual attraction for him, but Henrietta is someone he can communicate with. And, besides, she is exceedingly attractive. He feels he has found his perfect mate.

Frankie can't believe the conversation between Buggsie and Henrietta. It's like listening to one of Buggsie's boring talks in stereo. "These two eggheads are made for each other!" he thinks.

When they arrive at the mansion, they are greeted by two, pretty, maids. Frankie immediately begins entertaining them and the women think Frankie is funny and cute. He keeps them in stitches.

It takes an effort to get the boys away from the girls and to bed that night. Poor Uncle Raymond has to practically order them to their rooms like a boarding school counselor.

At noon the next morning, they finish their breakfast on the veranda. "Well, my dear, I am going to check on the ponies, if you'll excuse me," Uncle Raymond says, and rises from the table.

"Of course, Uncle. Perhaps we'll join you a bit later," Henrietta replies.

"Very good then." He walks off.

"You have horses?" Buggsie asks.

"Oh yes, they're Uncle's pride and joy." Henrietta responds. "Maybe later we'll all go riding."

"More coffee?" One of the maids asks Frankie.

"Why sure. I just can't believe it, there's so many pretty little fillies around these here parts," Frankie responds, mimicking a Texas accent.

"Oh, do go on now!" The maid blushes and turns to the other maid. They both giggle, then scurry off to the kitchen.

"My, it's beautiful here. Must be nice to ride in the countryside," Buggsie conveys to Henrietta.

"Oh, yes. I've spent every summer here, ever since I was a child. It's always so peaceful, but it can also be lonely at times. There's not much excitement about the place."

"Well, I guess we livened it up somewhat."

"Heavens, yes. Satanists! Right in our back yard practically! And you were so brave to escape them. It was simply wizard, if you'll excuse the expression. I know we'll all be safer with Nathaniel Baxton behind bars."

"Yeah well, thanks to you and Constable McClain."

"Yes, it was very nice of him to come by personally this morning," says Henrietta.

"I got the feeling he was checking up on us, to make sure we were alright guys." Frankie sneers.

"Well, you must admit, it is strange that they never stamped your passports and there's no record of you on any incoming flights."

Bugsie bows his head. He feels guilty about lying to her. He wants to tell her the truth, but is afraid she won't believe him. "Look Henrietta, there's something I've been meaning to tell you, but I don't think you will believe me." Bugsie says.

"Hershel! Of course I'd believe you," she says.

"Well, we didn't arrive by plane." Bugsie admits.

"By boat then?"

"Um, no."

"You drove here from the Continent?"

"No." Bugsie shakes his head.

"Helicopter?" she asks.

"No."

"Submarine???"

"Oh, no!"

"Dirigible?"

"No."

"Well now, I don't understand. Am I omitting something? What other way is there? You didn't swim here, did you?"

"Hardly."

"Would you believe space shuttle?" Frankie interjects, mimicking Maxwell Smart.

"No, Frankie, I don't think I'd would believe that."

"Well, you're never gonna believe this, then."

"This isn't involving flying saucers, is it?" Henrietta asks, painfully.

"Agh!!" Frankie screams, pulls his hair and falls to the ground.

"Um, he has a little problem with that subject," Bugsie says, explaining Frankie's actions.

"Apparently," Henrietta says, as she barely gives Frankie a glance. She stares into Buggsie's eyes for an explanation.

"This is rather difficult to explain. We didn't get here using any conventional means of transportation," Buggsie says dryly.

"What do you mean? Have you invented something?"

"Well, let's say we've discovered something."

"Oh, how terribly exciting."

"Yes, terribly!" Frankie says sarcastically, from his prone position.

"It has to do with specific positions of key places around the globe. Certain places are intersections of the magnetic field of the Earth, places like Stonehenge," Buggsie explains.

"Oh, you mean the ley lines. We know all about them here in England. That all started here, you realize."

"Yes! The ley lines, exactly!" Buggsie says excitedly.

"But, what do they have to do with you getting here?"

"Well, we've discovered that being at one of those points at certain times, that is, when the sun energizes them and activated by a sequence of frequencies, we can be transported to another of those places."

"Hum, come again?" Henrietta's puzzled.

"He means, if you're at the wrong place at the right time and you play the song I wrote, you get zapped to God-knows-where before you know it," Frankie interjects.

Henrietta quickly glances back and forth at Buggsie and Frankie to see if this is a put-on. "You're serious?"

"It happened to us by accident when we were kids, and ever since, we've been trying to figure out how it works." Buggsie explains.

"You! You've been trying to figure it out," Frankie interjects.

"And now we've done it again. Last night, we hit the right sequence." Buggsie continues.

"Song, dude. My song is not a sequence," Frankie interrupts.

"Of course, of course... We played the song and suddenly, we were at Stonehenge with those witches."

Henrietta takes a deep breath as she ingests this. "Really now?"

"Really! I know this sounds incredible, but it's the truth. Right, Frankie?"

"Oh, how I wish it weren't. I don't even believe this shit!" Frankie whines.

"Well, this is amazing, astounding! Can it be done again or do you think it was just an accident?" Henrietta asks.

"Oh, it was definitely an accident!" Frankie cracks.

"Quiet, Frankie! We're not sure exactly when it works. I think it's only at certain times of the year, and we're not sure where it will send us next," Buggsie answers.

"How exciting! This is a discovery of tremendous importance. It must be studied thoroughly," Henrietta is excited, enthusiastic.

"Yeah, it really should."

"Yeah, by some other dudes who know what they're doing, not us!" Frankie adds.

"Who else have you told about this?" Henrietta asks.

"No one. You're the very first. Our parents don't even know we're here. They think we're camping," Buggsie answers.

"Well you should bring this to someone."

"Yeah, but who is gonna believe us? Except you, I mean. They're going to want proof. We have to be able to demonstrate it or they'll going to think we're just a couple of whackos," Buggsie continues.

"Hum, you may be right about that. Without proof it does sound a bit unbelievable."

"Oh, yeah. I can see it now! Front page of the Enquirer, "Teen-agers teleported to England!" We'll be the laughing stock of the entire planet!" Frankie says. "No way dude! You're not going to humiliate me like that!"

Henrietta and Buggsie look at each other. "Frankie is right. We can't tell anyone about this until we have documented proof of it," Buggsie concludes. "We have to try it again. Only this time we need witnesses."

"Again! No, no! Me and my big mouth!" Frankie slaps himself on the back of his head.

"Yes, but you'll need men of unquestionable character and reputation. Someone of position and authority to give it the endorsement of an official experiment," Henrietta suggests.

"Yes, but who?" Buggsie asks.

"Daddy will know who to get. I'll phone him immediately," Henrietta says excitedly.

"Buggsie we can't try it again. The keyboard is smashed," Frankie reminds them.

"Well, the cartridge with the sequence, I mean the song, on it, is still okay, isn't it?" Buggsie asks.

"Yeah."

"I've seen those keyboards before. I know where we can get another one in London," Henrietta says.

"We have to go back to Mystery Hill anyway, right?" Frankie is hoping to get out of it once he is home.

"Hum, maybe not. If it works from New Hampshire to here, then maybe it will work at Stonehenge, too." Buggsie proposes.

"It's certainly worth a try," Henrietta comments.

"I mean, I don't even know if it has to be a certain day of the year. We've been trying to recreate the original conditions when it happened to us by accident, but I'm sure it has to be at dawn. At least, that's how it worked so far." Buggsie says.

"Even if it doesn't work you'll have learned something," Henrietta notes.

"That's true."

"And we can tell scientists that we've observed certain musical sounds have an effect on the magnetic field at Stonehenge," Henrietta adds.

"What a great idea! That way we won't sound like crack pots."

"Daddy will gladly finance the entire experiment. He's fascinated by Stonehenge and that sort of thing. He'll get us the right people, with the right instruments we need to measure things with," Henrietta says, excitedly.

"Wow! This is fantastic!"

"I can't wait to tell him. He'll be happy that I'm involved in a meaningful event instead of frittering away the entire summer. I'm going to call him right now!" Henrietta gets up from the table and hurries inside.

"Wow, Frankie, can you believe it? We're going to have financial backing for our project," Buggsie says.

"I hope this includes a heavy medical plan." Frankie sounds dubious.

"Gosh. I wonder if it will work from Stonehenge," Buggsie thinks out loud.

"I wonder what kind of mess we're going to land in next."

"Hey! If this works we'll be famous."

"What if we land among a tribe of hungry cannibals?" Frankie visualizes his nightmare.

"Everyone will want to meet us!"

"No! Everyone will want to eat us!" Frankie responds.

"We'll be able to pick from lots of neat job offers."

"They'll be picking the meat from our dead corpses," Frankie says in horror.

"When we're done..." Buggsie puts his arm around Frankie.

"Agh!" Frankie screams, thinking the cannibals have gotten him.

"Frankie, what's wrong with you?"

"Oh, I got a bad feeling about this," Frankie says, clutching his heart.

"But Frankie, don't you realize how important this is?"

"Yeah, but don't you see how dangerous it is?"

"If we can control this phenomenon, it can revolutionize transportation," Buggsie says, with great hopes.

"But we can't! It, however, can transport us to our death."

"Look, this time we'll take guns with us."

"Yeah, yeah. And we'll probably leave them in the car. Then we'll have a rifle in the four-by-four in New Hampshire, another in the car in England, but we'll be in Africa with a herd of rhinos charging us. We'll ask them to wait a second because we left our guns in the car. Oh, Buggsie, will you please run twelve thousand miles back to the car and get my gun so I can shoot the rhinos."

"We'll remember the gun this time, I promise!" Buggsie assures him.

"Yeah, but what if the place is on the bottom of the ocean, or the middle of the ocean, then what?" Frankie pleads.

"All these places once had standing stones built by ancient people. They somehow harness the natural energy of the earth. So, there won't be any man-made structures on the bottom of the ocean, or even in the middle of it."

"Well, what about Atlantis? Maybe they built it and it sunk." Frankie still searches for an excuse to get out of the experiment.

"If there really was an Atlantis, any standing stones would have probably toppled when it sunk and so it wouldn't be functioning anymore."

"Yeah. But, there's always a bunch of weirdoes hanging out at these places," Frankie whines.

"There was only you and me at Mystery Hill," Buggsie points out.

"See what I mean!" Buggsie smirks. "Oh, why couldn't I have been friends with someone who had a nice safe hobby, like lion taming?" Frankie laments.

Henrietta comes bouncing back onto the veranda. "It's all set. Father knows a man, Paul Devereux, who heads the Dragon Project. He's one of the top researchers of earth's energy associated with standing stones, and they also have the latest scientific instruments used to measure minute traces of energy."

"Radical!" says Buggsie.

"He and his co-workers will be here tonight! My father, too; and he's financing everything. I'm so excited!"

"I'm doomed." Frankie groans.

"We have lots to do. We have to get a new keyboard for Frankie." Buggsie reminds her.

"Righto," she agrees.

"At least I get to look at keyboards before I die," Frankie mumbles.

"And while we're in London, I can pick up something new to wear. What does one wear to this sort of thing, I wonder?" Henrietta muses.

"Come on, we better get moving if we have to be back by tonight," Buggsie says.

"Took. I'll tell Uncle we're borrowing a car, and the maids that we're having guests. Oh, what fun?"

"Come on Frankie," Buggsie calls as he and Henrietta leave the veranda.

"Into the valley of death rides the... rides?" Frankie asks himself as he stops by the doorway. "Scotti! Beam me up with about five hundred mounted soldiers." Frankie holds an imaginary communication device and mimics Star Trek's Captain Kirk.

"Come on!" Buggsie says as he pulls Frankie along. They pass a phone in the vestibule.

"I should phone my folks. Mind if I make a collect call?" Frankie asks Henrietta.

"Go right ahead," she gestures.

"Good idea, I'll call mine when we get back," Buggsie adds. She and Buggsie walk outside. Frankie dials for an operator.

In New Hampshire, Mrs. Fatone picks up her phone. "Yes operator, I'll accept the charges. Frankie?" she asks.

"Who's that?" Mr. Fatone asks, looking up from behind his newspaper.

"It's Frankie dear. He's in England," she tells him, covering the mouthpiece in a matter-of-factly style. She removes her hand and speaks again into the phone, "That's nice, Frankie. Have a nice time, honey. Okay. Bye, bye." She hangs up.

Mr. Fatone is shocked. "England? They're camping in England? Where? Sherwood Forest?"

Frankie hangs up. "Hey Sherlock, wait for Watson. Tally ho!" he calls out as he bolts out the door in a canter.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Experiment

Shortly before dawn, at the megalithic sentinel called Stonehenge, the stone giants loom broodingly over the reticent plains. But their slumber is suddenly interrupted. A small battalion of men with strange devices besiege them at this ungodly hour. Geiger counters, electronic scanners, magnetometers, and other strange instruments are aimed, like artillery, at the ancient standing stones. Legend states these massive blocks were once an army of giants who were turned into stone. What must they think of this technological siege?

Buggsie, Frankie, and Henrietta are seated in Uncle Raymond's Rolls Royce in the parking lot. Frankie pours coffee from a thermos that the maids have prepared especially for him. "This is so exciting!" Henrietta proclaims.

"I hope it works, today, or at least their instruments show some sort of change when we play the music," Buggsie says hopefully.

"Those stone giants look like a tough audience to me," Frankie cracks.

In the distance, near the Heal Stone outside the great stone circle, Paul Devereux talks with Thorton Whelsley, Henrietta's father.

"She's a bright girl. Her grades are outstanding and she's an excellent judge of character. If she sees something to this theory these Yanks have, then I say there must be something to it."

"It's an interesting notion, actually," Paul Devereux grants him. "But this place has been studied much more than all the others. Our readings are within the range of what we expect. We get readings of ultrasound from twenty minutes before sunrise to one or two hours after. You see, we're getting them now." He points to the reading of a nearby instrument.

"And that's normal, you say?" Whelsley asks.

"Quite. It's an interesting notion that musical sounds can affect these energies. We had a douser who could cause fluctuations on a sensitive voltmeter by placing his hands on the stones. The rest of us tried it with no effect. So, why not music?"

"Indeed." Whelsley ponders Devereux' words.

"Well, we'll see momentarily. Perhaps you should go fetch them, it's getting close to dawn."

Inside the Rolls Royce, Henrietta and Buggsie are chatting and flirting. "I love the way your nose crinkles up when you smile," Buggsie says to her. She blushes.

"Never mind that, did you get the guns?" Frankie asks Henrietta, tapping her on the arm.

"Oh yes, here, in my bag." She removes two pistols from her purse and hands one to Frankie.

"A German Luger? This thing's a relic!" he complains.

"They're war mementos of Uncle Raymond's. Careful! They're loaded."

"Wow, radical!" Buggsie comments.

"Watch us land in a secret Nazi camp next!" Frankie whines.

"Put them away, here comes father," Henrietta whispers.

Buggsie rolls down the window and looks at Mr. Whelsley. "It's time, lads," Whelsley calls to them.

They get out of the car and start the long walk across the grassy plain. As they approach the outer stones, Buggsie turns to Henrietta. "Well, this is it. Wish us luck." Henrietta kisses him passionately on the lips.

"Hey, he said to wish us luck!" Frankie complains when they finally part.

"Oh, bon chance," Henrietta says in French and kisses Frankie on the cheek.

"You know, I'm beginning to suspect you like him better." They laugh.

Buggsie and Frankie walk to the flat square stone in the center, the one to which the witches tied Frankie.

"I'm armed and dangerous, Dude. You try to stab me again and I'll blow you away this time," Frankie jokes, looking at the stone.

"You're dangerous, alright," Buggsie says sarcastically.

They sit on the stone and look around. With all the technicians there, they feel like a specimen under Buggsie's microscope.

Paul Devereux walks to them. Looking down, he scratches his beard. "It'll be dawn in exactly three minutes and twenty nine seconds." He looks at his watch.

"Take out the keyboard and start the sequence, uh, song." Buggsie tells Frankie.

"Right, we'll soon see if there is anything to this theory of yours," Devereux says curtly. He turns and walks away.

Frankie takes his new keyboard from inside his jacket and loops the strap around his neck. He feels inside his vest pocket, making sure the gun is there. He pats it, "I'm ready this time."

"Hit it Frankie!" Buggsie says, nervously.

Frankie inserts the RAM card and presses the buttons that start the song. He gradually increases the tempo. A reverberation of the sound increases inside the circle. Buggsie looks out curiously.

Paul Devereux is monitoring his equipment and Mr. Whelsley is standing behind him, casually smoking his pipe. "Anything?" Whelsley asks.

"Nothing yet. These readings are what to expect at this hour."

They wait, shuffling around, their hands in their pockets. Every so often someone coughs. Frankie's music plays on with the attention of a classical concert. Devereux glances at his watch, it's almost dawn.

The shadow of night retreats as dawn engulfs it. It is upon them now. A crow cries in the distance to herald the dawn's approach. A sudden gust of wind raises a cloud of dust and the first rays of light hit the Heal Stone.

A high, squealing sound is heard. Buggsie looks around. He realizes that it's working. Paul Devereux drops his clipboard and checks his instruments. "What the bloody hell!?"

A greenish-blue fog rises from the ground as one of the stone archways floods with a blinding white light. The sun lights the adjacent archway and then the next. A strange scraping, rumbling sound is heard as the sunlight passes through the last archway. It revolves around the stone circle, seen only through the archways.

At the far side of the circle, one technician, monitoring a voltmeter, is puzzled by the high readings. Suddenly the instrument sparks and crackles with electricity. The technician touches it and is struck down by a sharp jolt of electric current.

A distant sound, like metal objects clanging across water, is heard. Then, as the green mist rises higher, ghostly objects appear in the mist. The long missing sections of the complex can now be viewed, in a ghostly form.

The light fills each archway, spinning around the complex faster and faster. Its movement is somewhat erratic at first, but as it picks up speed it evens out. Frankie's music plays faster and faster and the light paces the music.

The light finally reaches a speed where no one can tell which archway the light occupies. It flickers in all of them, like pulsating Christmas tree lights. Ghostly images of priests in white-hooded robes appear to move about inside the complex. The images take no notice of the boys until one stops and looks hard for a moment.

Buggsie and Frankie look around nervously. The stone on which they sit slowly rises. Everyone outside the circle is too rapt to move. A single column of blinding-white light rises from the ground, engulfing Buggsie and Frankie.

Paul Devereux shields his eyes from the light and Mr. Whelsley drops his pipe in astonishment. Henrietta gasps.

As suddenly as it appeared, the light disappears, along with the other phenomena. The stone drops to the ground with a thud, but is no longer occupied.

There is now a strange silence. The only sounds are birds chirping and a gentle breeze blowing. "My God! Where are they? They're gone!" says the astonished Paul Devereux.