

PROLOGUE

The Anasazi didn't disappear; they just kept migrating, following desert paths, rivers, creeks, and springs. Or maybe they're still right here.

Eva closed her eyes, breathed slowly, calmly. No hurry. Practice a journey into the underworld: first visualize a hole, an opening in the earth; any kind of hole (cave, tunnel) will suffice.

This time it was wide: an adult's arm span at least. In her mind she approached the red dirt at the entrance. She knelt knowingly and eased into the vertical cavern, almost dancing into the light below. One handhold after another, weightless like a diver, she skipped from rock to rock until she reached the bottom. Number two. She lifted herself and hovered horizontally, occasionally paddling her arms through the cool air to stay afloat. Number three. She glided under an arch. Number four. Into the large cavern, well lit, as amazing now as it was the first time she came here.

Now she walked easily. She inhaled deeply and noticed the familiar landmarks. She counted five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten, which was a fork in the cavern. She never goes left here. Why not? She asked herself, while remembering to focus and continuing to the right under the short stretch of long stalactites that dripped from the ceiling. Finally she emerged onto the vast mesa.

—Eva, focus on your memory journey, Poppy said. See it in your mind.

She saw it clearly.

Then she was back at the table. The starry night wrapped around her. Her cheek rested on the heel of her sun beaten hand. Smiling, she opened her eyes and saw him approaching.

—Oh it's you, she said.

He stopped as if to listen.

—What do you want?

—Remember.

The Anasazi didn't disappear; they just kept migrating, following desert paths, rivers, creeks, and springs. Or maybe they're still right here. The thought kept recurring, haunting her.

As she pumped the gas lantern into light, she laughed to herself that she could be an advertisement for Coleman. It would read: strong independent woman who loves the outdoors, the future of her sex and civilization. Maybe I should approach them for a grant, she said to herself; there was no one else nearby. I'm certainly not going to get one from my department. Then seriousness became her attractive face. Angular high cheek bones reflected the lantern light. A shadow splayed on the smooth sandstone wall at the edge of her campsite among the piñon pines and junipers.

She took pleasure in her solitude and mused as the sunset turned into starry moonless night. Posture lifted, she sat beside the small folding table she always brought to these remote archaeological sites. The lantern and stove emitted a slight but welcome heat as the desert cooled quickly. She wrote in her notebook:

*A darkness without a moon seems complete or stark,
one extreme or another. The moon is seemingly nothing
while still itself. But to us, lacking perspective, it is an
absent sliver between waning & waxing.*

The moon in Earth's shadow had silently slipped behind the horizon a few hours ago. To her, the silent moon signaled a beginning, as it did to the Egyptians, who announced the new month as the first morning when the waning crescent was no longer visible. But to the Zuni, this was the fifth and final moon phase, the lark phase, the gone moon. To them, it wasn't new until they saw the waxing crescent a day or two later. The beginning, the ending, and everything in between: it depended on how you looked at it.

OPHELIA'S GHOST

Even the ancient astronomers knew that the moon blocks itself from us once every 29.5 days, moving into position between the earth & the sun – the beginning or the ending, a turn in the cycle.

The heavens were bigger here than the ones she remembered dancing above the hills and dales of Virginia.

The shield lifted, we can touch the heavens.

Eva rested her back against the chair and inhaled. The desert still held the smell of the afternoon shower. She closed her eyes and relived. Opening her eyes again, she recorded the details she loved:

*18.V.58 - red bird/rain - 12.17.4.10.19 ●
Hovenweep camp, 37°N 109°W, elev. ~5,800'
Four Corners of Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico.
Short rain, 3-5 min, ~1600, Refreshing.*

Her campsite was within the Land of the Ancients, so referred to by a Navajo man she believed to be a shaman whom she'd interviewed last fall. She arrived here yesterday via a dirt road barely wide enough for two cars to pass. Coming in, she had photographed the sign that proclaimed: *Hovenweep National Monument created by President Warren G. Harding, March 2, 1923.* It was a worthy place to preserve, at least in her mind.

Hovenweep meant *deserted valley* in the languages of the Piute and the Ute, two tribes that had migrated onto the Colorado Plateau around the time of the Anasazi reign. The Piutes moved into sandstone caves to defend themselves against their aggressive northern neighbors, the ancestors of the Navajo and the Apache.

One explanation for the Anasazi abandonment was their need to escape invading tribes or some other thirteenth century aggressor. But signs of warfare & mortal wounds are scant...

Although evidence was incomplete, the mystery drew Eva to it.

She wanted to know what really happened, which meant imagining what it had been like to be here.

Her grandfather's people, the Cherokee, seemed to know more than most about their ancestors. A thousand years ago, tribes fought over land wherever you went. Now this place was mostly unwanted, a sparsely-inhabited maze. Often it had no water. May and June were notoriously dry, before the monsoon rains came to wet Hopi corn, Cortez beans, and Django gentlemen and women.

So what had happened here 700 years ago? And how did that relate to what these people knew or didn't know about the sky, their past, and their future? She had been asking herself these questions for as long as she could remember. She was enchanted by the past all the way back to creation, whatever that meant.

Memory. Long ago she followed her grandfather into the barn and asked all the impossible questions as often as he would listen:

– Poppy, where do we come from?

– Eva, my darling, from our grandparents. Why do you ask?

– I want to know where we come from before then, long ago.

– From their grandparents, he laughed, all the way long ago you want to ask.

He hung the harness for one of their two field horses on the wall. The handsome white horse, twice the size of her grandfather, let himself be nudged into his stall, offering no resistance.

– You know what I mean!

She jumped up from the milking stool and just as quickly sat back down. A jack in the box, she knew that every time she asked he would turn her question into a story. But perhaps that was all she wanted, a story.

– What day is it, Eva?

– Turtle, Poppy, day one. But Daddy just calls today Sunday.

– Yes, but is every Sunday a Turtle day?

– No. Turtle just comes whenever it's day *one* again. We start over with Turtle after we get to Flower, day twenty. But why does Daddy just call it Sunday?

– Well, you see, your father uses weeks, months, and years to describe the passing of time. We use plants and animals as our language. You can picture turtles and flowers better than you can the word *Sunday* can't you? What does Sunday look like?

Eva thought, frowning, then exclaimed:

– Wait! Ice cream!

– Good one, you got me there, my darling. Regardless of the language, it's pictures and symbols that tell the story by bringing the words to life.

Eva used her linguistic skills learned since childhood, and more recently in her undergraduate studies, to help bridge the gap between Navajo code talkers and the U.S. government. She had worked for an agency that was too secretive (because of war, it claimed) to pronounce its own name.

Code talkers: the poor Navajos who were eager to work for the government that had robbed them long ago. They needed to pay the bills. Some wanted to travel. She remembered the Navajo code, which was simple enough for a child to understand, if he or she spoke the language. Animals were important to the Navajo and to Poppy. Neither was very interested in writing. Instead, they had prodigious memories. They could remember English translations many times faster than white Americans could recognize one Navajo from another.

– Just see it, Poppy told her. You don't have to rummage through some file cabinet and read dusty sheets of ink and paper to remember. Just put yourself there in your mind. When you are there, be there, so when you need to go back, you can. There's nothing to it, if you practice.

Poppy said you use animals or symbols you already know for letters: Ant, Bear, Cat, Deer, Elk, Fox, Goat, Horse, Ice, Jackass, Kid, Lamb, Mouse, Needle, Owl, Pig, Quiver, Rabbit, Sheep, Turkey, Ute, Victor, Weasel, Cross, Yucca, Zinc.

Then convert to Navajo: *Wol-la-chee, Shush, Moasi, Be, Dzeh, Ma-e, Klizzie, Lin, Tkin, Tkele-cho-g, Klizzie-yazzie, Dibeh-yazzi, Na-as-tso-si, Tsah, Ne-ahs-jsh, Bi-so-dih, Ca-yeilth, Gah, Dibeh, Than-zie, No-da-ih, A-keh-di-glini, Gloe-ih, Al-an-as-dzoh, Tsah-as-zih, Besh-do-tliz.*

What could be simpler if you could remember? Winning the war depended on it. So she got used to *not* knowing whom she had been working for, resting assured that at least she was contributing to the war effort.

When she first saw her future husband Roy near the end of World War II at the code-breaking headquarters in Tucson, he had

been too tall and gawky and way too intense to attract her. But later (a lot can change in a few weeks) when he reappeared at the office and congratulated her for her work, he seemed somehow more appealing, and she enjoyed talking with him.

–You're from Django? He asked. Will you go back after the war is over?

–Yes, to see my parents. Then I'm going to apply to graduate school, for my master's. My dad's a doctor and wants his girl to be educated.

–Getting educated is smart. The world's changing and will keep changing when all this is over. Women are making up for some of the good men we lost. I hope it works out for you.

Yes, it had worked out for her. And for him too: they were married two years later.

But Roy's story had always seemed vague. It was another question for Eva and another that went unanswered. Now after thirty-six years of life, most of it spent asking questions, she was no nearer to the truth, despite being an acknowledged scientist, an instructor at a small college, a Ph.D. candidate, married, childless, and the rest of it. She recited her liturgy.

She took a deep breath, closed her notebook, and decided to practice one of the memory exercises she used to calm herself, to help her find the ease she needed to continue writing.



Earlier that same day, to the freshness of a young May morning, Eva woke with the sun. She was up and moving before it had completely swept the stars from the sky in a vast breath of photons. As shadows initiated their long morning stretch, she jogged easily, carrying a small pack to the closest ruin. There she sat at the entrance to a small circular tower to watch. She dutifully noted where the sun was on the horizon and where light appeared along the inner wall of the tower, streaming in from a small porthole. She had repeated this ritual at dozens of ruins throughout the Southwest.

The previous owners of these stone dwellings had become figments of themselves, memories. They probably had no word

for *owner* in their language and had been called Anasazi by others. But the name *Anasazi* meant *enemy ancestor*, which is certainly not something you'd want to call yourself, Eva thought. And *Pueblo*, an alternative, was a Spanish word. These people had another name for themselves in their own language. And that's what mattered, right?

Eva carefully sketched the square of light. In a few days, the sun would no longer peer into this tower. It would skirt the porthole until summer solstice. That, Eva thought, couldn't be coincidence; it must have meant something more to the Anasazi. Like the ancient astronomers that constructed these towers in the tenth or eleventh century, Eva tracked the sun's movements across their inner walls. Yet despite her precise measurements, she wondered if that would be enough to ascertain any significance. Was this tower one of the solar observatories that told the Anasazi when to plant and perform their ceremonies? Or were she and the few scholars whose paths she was reconstructing putting too much emphasis on solar rituals and the timing of solar events? After all, we civilized people are also sun worshipers. Beach, ocean, lakes in the summer: we love the combination of sunshine and water on our skin. She heard waves breaking.

Yet how many of us give more than a pittance of a glance into the heavens, especially in the darkness? We are too preoccupied to have time for the night sky, which after all, takes care of itself. But there was a time, she believed, when tracking the movements of the moon, the planets, and the stars in the night sky were as important as following the sun's movements during the day. Perhaps the sun's strength appeals to us while the moon seems frail.

She closed her eyes and pictured the moonlight reaching this tower. Like the Anasazi, she calculated the location, and she wasn't even an astronomer, let alone a mathematician. Maybe, she thought, I should just nap today and do my measuring at night. It would be cooler then but too dark even with a lantern.

Still, she enjoyed the thought as she leaned back against the cool rock. She sipped her tea and nibbled at her mid-morning breakfast of molasses cornbread.

FIELDWORK

Can I be certain about what I see now, let alone those people long ago? Uncertainty is the mantra of modern physicists. But what can you say statistically? If every event is more or less probable, does it ever happen now?

Eva wanted to reveal the unknown. She shared with others of her generation the nagging questions: Where did they go? What does it mean to know? Who are we?

She finished a series of calculations, took more compass bearings, and sketched the layout to jog her memory later. She imagined a surveyor like herself, George Washington perhaps, holding a plumb bob, a fellow Virginian surveying his land two hundred years ago.

These massive Anasazi stone structures, like Stonehenge or the Egyptian pyramids, had been precisely aligned with the stars, sun, and moon. Eva believed that understanding how the ancient architects viewed the heavens would help explain where the Anasazi went and what had become of them. Was there a common thread among ancient cultures around the world? She believed so and hoped to find it. But why did it mean so much to her? She wondered about that too. Perhaps her attitude toward other histories resulted from her own history. Eva had developed her surveying skills during childhood, beelining with Poppy. Beginning at age five, Eva had helped him track honey bees to their hives.

— The queen bee is inside, Eva.

They started in the back field. Poppy cradled the small wooden box that contained anis flowers and a drop of honey from the kitchen. Eva waited beside Poppy. As he instructed, she sketched the familiar landmarks around the field. She recorded those and any new observations in the notebook he insisted she carry.

— It will help you remember, he said.

But this confused her since he rarely wrote. And her question about that he never answered. Instead, she listened, drew, took notes, and remembered.

The twin oaks in front of their house swayed in the breeze. Cardinals sang from lofty branches. The garden was laid out neatly in rows near the road. The grapevine glistened after the

rain with plump Concord grapes hanging just out of her reach. Near the house, the barn where they kept winter hay, horses, and a milk cow was painted by the sunsets. They waited for the bees to come.

When the first bee entered Poppy's box, he quickly slid the lid shut and let the bee drink its fill before opening the box again and releasing it. The bee circled them. Then less confused and well fed, it oriented itself and flew straight back to the hive to deposit its honey. Poppy noted the last landmark it flew by and told Eva to mark it on her map. She drew a line connecting their position to the landmark and labeled it with a 1.

—Numbers are important, Poppy said. Counting helps you remember.

They moved to a second location. Eva noted the position where Poppy offered his box to the next honey bee. When Poppy released the captive, Eva drew another line representing the bee's flight path. She extended the lines to see where the invisible paths would cross, thus approximating the location of the bee tree. Which when found would provide them with a supply of honey destined to become a remedy for sore throats, a salve for wounds, and a sweetener for all those desserts Eva enjoyed.

It was a simple system, and it worked. Poppy managed to harvest the honey without felling the tree. After confirming the location of the bee tree, he chose the next moonless night, preferably a cold night so the bees would fly slowly.

Earlier that same day of the moonless night, Poppy tossed a rope over a branch near the hive and attached a pail to one end. That night while Eva watched breathlessly, he climbed the tree, carrying a smoking torch in one hand and a buck knife in his belt. Reaching the hive, which was nestled into a hollow section of the trunk, he waved the smoking torch 'round and 'round, humming softly. Then he carefully inserted his gloved hand into the hive and cut. He extracted a modest portion, leaving the rest for the bees. Below, Eva held the rope taut, keeping the pail close to him. After Poppy placed the comb in the pail, she let up on the rope little by little to ease the honey safely to the ground. Poppy and the pail landed at the same time. Then the two successful gatherers marched home. They traded off carrying the pail, which

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was weighed down with concentrated nectar and homemade wax. Eva yawned while insisting she wasn't tired.

– How do the bees find the honey? She asked.

– They follow each other.

– How?

– How do you follow me?

– I just know. But how do they know *who* to follow? There are so many of them.

– They know, Eva.

– How?

Recently, part of the mystery had been solved for Eva by Karl von Frisch in Germany. Eva read his dense manuscripts describing how honey bees *followed* their sisters by memorizing an elaborate dance that coded for the location of the flowers. In the narrow quarters of the hive, sisters glided in figure eights that translated into distances, bearings, and details of how rich the nectar or pollen source was. The dance internalized, sisters could complete their own journey to the flowers, using the sun's constant path across the sky as a compass.

Poppy and Eva continued their ritual of following bees until she was twelve when her parents, Doc and Leah, moved the family, without Poppy, to the great Southwest. Now many years later, Eva had her own compass. She reminded herself that to the northeast was Yellow Jacket, a much larger set of Anasazi ruins in the wetter Montezuma basin. How much wetter? She asked, remembered: sixteen inches a year, twice that or more than here. Was this modest group connected with that thriving group only thirty miles away as the raven flies? Dr. Wheat from the University of Colorado had invited her to visit his excavation site earlier that spring, and she marveled that it was so much more developed than Hovenweep. Kivas, the circular ceremonial chambers, occurred in large numbers. You could almost taste the corn being ground in a long ago city, once bustling with life. In contrast, Hovenweep, she imagined not as a deserted outpost but with a brave stillness missing elsewhere. She tried to reconstruct.

*With half the rainfall of Yellow Jacket were these towers
defense outposts guarding the precious springs?*

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Eva doubted it. It couldn't all be about conquering, dividing, and defending. Sometime somewhere long ago, we must have cared about each other. Otherwise, why take the time or want to align buildings so beautifully? Why dance with our neighbors? Once we depended on knowing them. We traded stories and maps of starry honey trails.

Her maps created constellations of observations that she would puzzle over all winter. And who knows? Maybe she could interest her committee in something they hadn't thought of before. She studied her latest notes as she stopped for a lunch break at her third tower. She sat legs crossed in a casual half-lotus on the rim of the canyon, whose bottom was four hundred feet below. One boot started tapping, as if of its own accord, to the beat of a Buddy Holly tune. He brought a smile to her face; he was brilliant, as far as she was concerned, because he had created new music.

Everyday it's a'getting closer,
Going faster than a roller coaster,
Love like yours will surely come my way.

What the heck, it's worth a try. She pulled out her portable Emerson radio and tried to get a signal. No dice. It was static from one end to the other. Then she tried again. Success!

Flying across the desert in a TWA,
I saw a woman walking across the sand.
She been a'walkin' thirty miles en route to Bombay,
To get a brown-eyed handsome man.
Her destination was a brown-eyed handsome man.

Then a commercial for a washing machine superimposed itself on Buddy's version of Chuck Berry's Handsome Man. Maytag. She had one at home and didn't need a new one. Then she heard something flute-like. It grew louder and enchanting. Then Maytag recommenced before the static took charge, and she turned off the radio.

Realizing she had become distracted, she headed to the next tower on her list, the last one of the day: *The Castle*. The

archaeologists referred to the D-shaped tower as The Castle because it was reminiscent of European castles. She finished her measurements, and as she started packing her gear, she was sure she heard the flute again. She listened. Had she forgotten to turn the radio off? She checked. It sounded like water. Then she wondered if the spring was playing tricks on her ears. She peered through a porthole into the box canyon.

As she was leaving she noticed an image on the floor of the adjacent kiva. How had she missed it before? Of course, she thought, there's no *sipapu*, no emergence hole. Instead, there sat Kokopelli, the ancient humpback flute-player. It was rare to find a kiva without a *sipapu*, the place where the ancestors emerged from the third world into this fourth world. Wheat had shown her an unusual kiva like this at Yellow Jacket, so maybe there were more. Moving the dirt away with her hand, she could see him more clearly. Were you playing to me? You divine seducer of the Hopi? You Zuni rain priest porting seeds on your back? You enticing Navajo water-sprinkler? Is it you I hear?

She heard the spring more clearly now and decided to search for the source of this water music. Pack on back, she carefully let herself down into the steep canyon. Violet swallows dived above her, while a fat horny lizard scurried at her feet. She watched the lizard a bit too long and forgot where she was; she lost her footing and slid. Her fingers dug into the ground to break her fall. Sliding to a stop, she caught her breath and, sitting up, assessed the damage. Her hand was scuffed, and bruises would follow, but she was okay. She realized she was tired, enough adventures for one day. She drank from her canteen, letting the cool water knock some sense into her. Then she started back up the canyon. Where was the music? Where had it come from? The reeds?

Once she was out, Eva rested on a boulder. A small blue butterfly fluttered into the patch of silvery lupines. Although only May, the lupines had already begun to produce hairy seedpods. The butterfly flitted nervously around the remaining indigo blooms. Eva noticed the white arrowhead markings under its tattered violet-blue wing: a male arrowhead blue, which was rare, especially here at the edge of its range. This one was patrolling the flowers for one last chance to mate while a handful of caterpillars

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from earlier matings munched on flowers and fruits. Time... Now was past before you realized how it happened. Last year determined what happened now.

Finding no females, the male flew off in search of lupines and mates elsewhere.

Male arrowhead blue

She remembered the scientific names for visitor and host.

Glaucoopsyche piasus patrolling Lupinus argenteus patch. Last of the season. Caterpillars are already munching flowers & fruits. Good year for arrowheads!

This was the sixth time she had seen arrowheads this year, mostly males. Maybe it had been a good year for lupine? Or maybe last year it was a good year for lupines and therefore good for the parental generation of this year's arrowheads. Maybe this was a cycle? Question after question came to her. *Oh Poppy, where art thou?*

She remembered the time she'd been shown similar beauties by the Russian lepidopterist, who said he was also a writer but wrote better in the company of butterflies. That would have been... 1949. What a character. He was a genius clearly. She had seen him and his wife on a steep slope, hurrying to net an arrowhead. He had been delighted and called her over to see. Somehow he had known she'd be interested. The three of them sat on the grassy slope admiring his catch, while he talked about Shakespeare and Poe, whom he admired. He gestured with his arms as he recited Annabelle Lee. He said he always rode in the back seat of their sedan while his wife, Vera, drove. She was beautiful and patient. They were on a collecting trip. He was writing a novel.



She was surprised to see the lights. They were coming toward her. Shouldn't they turn? Eva grabbed her notebook and stepped away from the table. Then the pickup swerved as it neared her. Of course, she thought, relieved, the road curves here.

A VISITOR

Seeing her, the driver slowed. The cab light was on, and she could see his face. A man in his sixties perhaps, wearing a straw cowboy hat, smiled, waved, and continued down the road another fifty yards before stopping. Then he backed into an opening between piñon pines and junipers. He got out and stretched.

A few minutes later he and his truck were illuminated by a large lantern. As she watched, he hung it on a nearby branch and began unfolding a tent that popped into place inside the bed of his truck. Then he hopped inside and disappeared. Before long, he came back out and secured ropes on the corners. Then back inside and out again. His home on wheels reminded her of a turtle, he of a jack rabbit.

He carried a small metal wash pan, a large jug of water, a towel, and a bundle of clothes behind the truck. He reappeared several minutes later wearing a tee shirt and a large towel wrapped around him. With a small washcloth she'd missed earlier, he vigorously washed one ear. Eva couldn't help but laugh at his enthusiasm. Then she returned to her reading and writing. Her little Emerson was on low. She tapped her fingers lightly. Elvis was singing Blue Moon. She had been so absorbed in her observations she almost missed it.

You saw me standing alone
Without a dream in my heart
Without a love of my own

As the King surrendered, the DJ said:

—I know it won't be a blue moon tonight. In fact, there won't be a moon at all. You can see that for yourself. *Eva smiled.* But your old Cowboy Bob, filling in tonight for the Howler, is in the mood. Les Paul and Mary Ford, How High the Moon. First, he cleared his throat, a technical note: Les Paul, a pioneer of the electric guitar, is also an innovator in the studio. I call your attention to two voices; both are Mary's. Yes, that's right. She's harmonizing with herself, as if she became two people.

Yes, it was convincing, and Les was a great guitarist too. That made her think of Roy who long ago had said he wanted to play like Les or Chet, even the French Gypsy... in his wildest dreams.

That would never happen, although the guitar he bought was a beauty.

—It's the only way to play like a gypsy, Roy said.

It had the name for it: Gypsy Mystery, the *Grand Modèle*. A guitar light enough to hold easily in one hand, yet long-necked, with 14 frets and an oval hole. He bought it in 1950 and leaned it against their apartment wall in Tucson. There it had sat, almost from day one, where it started. Roy picked it up occasionally when he came home on weekends from work in field offices that Eva never visited. Then he stopped picking it up at all.

The music faded while she wrote until she was jolted by shouting. Instead of Cowboy Bob, a preacher from Tulsa, Oklahoma skipped across the airwaves, trampling rock 'n roll en route, demanding that everyone pay attention to their sins.

—Praise Jesus. Amen.

Eva was used to the radio evangelists. Sin was their bread and butter, but reception in the remote desert was unpredictable. Most nights one or another of them rode in on the wind. She imagined them sweating as they danced in front of their microphones. Jack Coe, Oral Roberts: prophets of divine healing. Oklahomans who crusaded from city to city preaching the fire and brimstone, convinced hundreds of thousands to believe like them. Jack started with a tent and an old truck, traveling with his wife and preaching from the back of it. He was so impressed by Oral's tent that he measured it.

—Two hundred and twenty feet by four hundred and forty feet, which makes it 96,800 square feet, Jack said. It can hold 22,000 people and is bigger than the Barnum and Bailey Circus.

It was the biggest tent in the world in 1947.

They provided a service as well as entertainment. They promoted the laying on of hands. Like Jesus. Praise Jesus. Hallelujah. Worked too, if you believed what you saw or heard. Some did. But it would be harder to decide, Eva thought, if you were only listening to the radio.

How do you know what to believe? What's true? What constitutes proof? Or is science only about disproving?

Eva closed her notebook and reached into her canvas pack. She pulled out a deck of cards and cleared a small area. While she shuffled she looked up at the stars. They appeared as the last traces of sunlight. She turned over ten cards visualizing each one in her mind before moving on. Then she tested herself. She heard Poppy:

– Visualizing is memory. If you want to remember something for a long time, then you only need to take a few seconds to picture it in your mind. Think of the trade, my darling girl, a few seconds now for a lifetime later. Close your eyes. What counts is seeing the picture in your mind in a particular place. That makes memory. It's a game. You like games, Eva?

– Of course, Poppy. Let's play.

– Eva, I want you to create another journey. You need twenty locations, one for each of your fingers and toes. I will give you twenty items, one for each location. I want you to remember them. Where will you go?

– Past the barn, up the hill, down to the pond, over to Aunt Katie's house, up to the Fletchers, and right into their kitchen where I'll get a big piece of apple pie. But that won't be enough places. I'll have to start over.

– Almost perfect, my darling. But you need to come home when you're done. So perhaps, you should get that piece of pie, then go around the hill, and bring Big White in for his supper. Can you do that for me? And remember, when you stop at each place, look carefully so you can tell me what you saw when you get home.

– Yes, of course, Poppy. I'll lead Big White home. Now, let me make my journey. I'll go past the barn, up the hill, down to the pond...

Eva breathed deeply, closed her eyes, and visualized her journey. The afternoon in Virginia passed by; the red birds sang. Green fields and green forests, then Poppy said:

– Ready Eva?

– Yes.

– Twenty images, one by one?

– Go ahead!

– Turtle, Poppy said.

– Turtle.

– Wind, Poppy said.

– Wind.

One by one, Eva placed the images along her journey: turtle, wind, house, dragon, serpent, the twins, deer, rabbit, the river, wolf, raccoon, rattlesnake tooth, reed, panther, eagle, owl, heron, flint for a knife, red bird, and flower. She looked carefully at each location as she placed each image. Then she recited to Poppy:

– When I passed the barn, I stopped to say hello to Mrs. *Turtle*, and I asked her why she wasn't at the pond. She said she was looking for flies in the barn. And then the *Wind* blew so hard it blew me up the hill, then down to the pond where I saw Mrs. *Turtle's House*. Where I stopped and said to the house: Mrs. Turtle will be home soon, she giggled.

Her eyes closed, she didn't hear him walk up until he was within calling distance. He waited until she looked up toward him.

– Good evening ma'am.

It was the man from the truck earlier. He looked familiar. Had she seen him before? There was something about him...

– Just passin' through, camped down the road there, he pointed. Have you been camped here long?

He walked into the light, and she felt surprisingly comfortable, as if she were not meeting a stranger. She felt almost certain now she had seen him at an Anasazi ruins. Aztec maybe? Or Chaco?

– Not long. Would you like some tea? She asked.

– Thanks, ma'am, I don't want to impose on you. Tea is a fine beverage, and I had some this morning. But right now, after a day in the sun, with a cold night comin' on, I could use something a little stronger, he held out a bottle of whiskey. Perhaps I could offer you a drink in exchange for a few minutes of conversation? I haven't talked to a soul since Wednesday.

She wasn't sure why, but she already liked this man, and she surprised herself again by accepting. Her mother would be rolling her eyes for sure, but Eva trusted her intuition.

– Well, Mr...?

– Will Morgan. I'm from New York, Long Harbor. California, originally, he stepped closer.

– Eva Hail, she said, standing. I'm a native of Virginia; she let

her southern accent slide out as she mentioned her birthplace.

He walked closer. Yes, he was older, but he didn't look especially old. His face seemed more amused by the passing of time than bothered by it. He was square-chinned and had sparkling eyes. He hadn't worn his hat, and she could see his very short receding hair. He had a goatee, and his ears were a little large for his otherwise ruggedly handsome face.

He put the bottle of unopened bourbon on the table and produced two glasses from his jacket pocket.

—I assume you have water? He chuckled. I don't expect ice. At least not out here. If there was ice around, I would've brought it.

Now it was her turn to chuckle:

—Well, Mr. Morgan, she stepped under the nearby juniper, bending to open a small ice chest. As it so happens, I do have it.

Eva chiseled out a cup of shavings from the block of ice.

—I like a woman, or man for that matter, who comes prepared.

—Fortunately, the cooler doubles as a seat when guests come calling unexpectedly.

Together they made two bourbons, water, and ice. Then she insisted he take her chair, while she pulled the cooler over for herself. He noticed her ring.

—I thank you Mrs. Eva Hail for your generous hospitality. Although a true gentleman, unlike myself, would never have allowed a lady to give up her chair, especially for a cooler.

They sipped without talking for a moment until Eva said:

—What brings you to the desert, Will?

—Good question. However, it's quite likely that a person would be in a desert, given that deserts cover a third of the land on earth.

—If only we were distributed randomly. As I recall, deserts are actually sparsely inhabited.

—Got me there. Actually, I'm doing a little research. I'm writing another book. I thought I'd had enough of writing. But there I was in New York with nothing to do but retire and bore myself to death, so I came west to start a new book.

—What kind of books do you write?

—Novels, a few essays. Trying something a little different this time though... What do you do? Something tells me you aren't

entirely on vacation out here.

– Good guess. I'm also doing some research. I'm studying the Anasazi ruins.

– You look for pots, artifacts, that sort of thing?

– Not quite. I leave that to the archaeologists. I'm more interested in the people and how they lived out here: the plants they knew, how they interacted with each other, those kinds of things.

– Are you trying to decide where they went too?

– In a way. I was taken with the Anasazi disappearance theories at first. It's a hot topic to some. But after a season, or not even that, of considering that question, I felt there wasn't a big mystery: the Anasazi migrated to the next watering hole when the droughts came. They spread out.

– Did your thesis migrate with them?

– Maybe, but maybe not. My department would like it if I'd stick to that one. I'm sure I could get my Ph.D. out of it. But there's something about these people, the way they oriented their buildings... Everything is aligned very precisely, nothing seems coincidental, which makes me think they were onto something, that they had a reason for it. It seems like everything they did down here was related to movements in the sky, but why?

– Interesting. I've heard a little about that myself.

– I thought you were a novelist.

– I am. I'm writing about some disappearances that occurred in this area.

– Not the Anasazi?

– Not unless they're still around. No ma'am, the ones I'm writing about are UFO watchers.

– You're writing about aliens? Abductions? You really believe in that?

– I'm not sure yet. And it might not matter what I believe. Some people believe in it, and those are the ones that interest me. But the jury's out; and I don't see it coming in anytime soon. How about another small one, Eva?

He got up and took her glass.

– Small one, she said.

–Most definitely.

He made the drinks and neither of them spoke for a moment. Then she asked:

–How does that tent on your truck work? It looks handy.

–It is, especially when it rains, although that hasn't happened lately. The tent camper is a marvel of modern engineering. I drew up plans for it myself. But fortunately, before I had time to build it, I found someone else who could save me the trouble. In fact, he'd already built one.

–Coleman?

–No, Goodhart. He had a patent. Then he sold it to Apache, who sold it to someone else. That's how you make money in this country: simple idea, well-executed. This one includes a collapsible frame and a cloth top. The frame has inverted fore and aft supports mounted to the sidewalls. The rectangular cloth top and four sides extend over the floor and tailgate. The fore and aft supports are pulled forward and rearward by straps so that they're forced away from each other and thus keep the fabric taut.

–You sound like a scientist, Eva said.

–Have to be sometimes, it depends on the novel. What about your disappearances?

–What I said about the disappearance being a migration makes sense, especially if you consider the Hopi on the mesas just south of here. They keep to themselves, but their customs and buildings are a lot like these, although that could be coincidence. But I think their symbols and stories suggest their migrations were connected to the constellations. That's why I've been mapping and measuring out here and at other ruins throughout the Four Corners: Chaco, Chimney Rock, Yellow Jacket, Aztec. Sounds crazy, but I think where the Anasazi went was related to what they saw in the sky.

–What about the sky?

–Well, many ancient people, like the Maya, Egyptian, Vedic, Sumerian, had very advanced knowledge of the sky. They all created calendars based on movements in the stars, sun, and moon. People in the Americas, including the Anasazi, were intimate with the celestial cycles. They predicted precisely where the sun would appear, and they understood the moon's cycles as

well as we do. The Maya even created a complex calendar that tracks the movement of the Galaxy.

– The Galaxy? I thought the stars were stationary.

– They are, but it looks like they move if you're standing on Earth. And I don't mean just them passing overhead as the earth rotates. There's also a finer rotation, but you can only detect it if you look very closely. It takes the Milky Way almost 26,000 years to come full circle. How they figured that out is a mystery, and apparently they figured it out 5,000 years ago.

– How'd they do that?

– Good question. Short answer is they measured how much the stars move. We now call that movement the Precession of the Equinoxes, or just the Precession, and we know that the earth's wobbling like a top on its axis causes it. Since ancient times, people have observed its effect by watching the stars move through what we call the zodiac.

– The astrological constellations?

– Exactly.

– Okay, but if I understand you correctly, these ancient people were observing some awfully small changes. If the sky circles once every 26,000 years, it doesn't circle much in a day. I suppose they were using the North Star somehow. But if they were, they must have had better eyes than I do.

– Good point. The North Star is too high, so you look for something to watch closer to the horizon where small changes are noticeable.

– Still, the sky moves slowly in this Precessional even if you're watching the horizon closely.

– Got me this time. Even if you were watching the horizon the changes would be subtle. If you lived only fifty years, or even seventy-five years, you'd have to pay very close attention to notice. The sky would have only moved about two full moon widths over your lifetime.

– So these ancient people were paying close attention?

– Very close. And they kept it up, generation after generation, and made some amazing calculations. They seemed to know long ago how the sky would look thousands of years in the future.

– Thousands?

A VISITOR

— Unless you think it's all coincidence. The Mayan Long Count starts in 3114 BC or 0.0.0.0.0 in their notation. That calendar points toward 2012 AD, when the date would be 13.0.0.0.0. Those five numbers together represent the number of millennia or 144,000-day *B'ak'tuns*, the number of decades or 7,200-day *K'atuns*, the number of years or 360-day *Tuns*, the number of months or 20-day *Winals*, and the number of days, which they call *K'ins*.

— I'm not sure what all that means.

— You and most everyone else. But some, who have studied this a lot longer than I have, think that 2012 indicates the end or the beginning of a cycle.

— A 5,000 year cycle?

— Yes. But a cycle that ends in 2012, which is also when the Dark Rift in the Milky Way is aligned with the winter solstice sun.

— You might be losing me. What's the Dark Rift?

— Look up, she pointed. That dark spot in the Milky Way near that bright star, Sagittarius, is the Dark Rift of the Maya. You see it?

— I think so.

— The Maya consider it a place of creation. In contrast, modern physicists think it might be a black hole, a place of destruction where all life gets sucked into never-never land.

— I'm glad you're enjoying your drink.

— I know it sounds a little out there, but it's based on a model that includes the positions of the sky at the start of their Long Count. Based on that model, the Dark Rift of the Milky Way serves as an end point in their calendar.

— Another coincidence?

— Might be. But as the coincidences mount, one wonders why there are so many of them. Although it's not a popular idea, I think the Anasazi, like many ancient people, tuned their lives to the positions of the stars. Almost as if they knew something that we don't.

— Like spaceships?

— How's that?

— Making a joke. No, what I mean is that your Anasazi sound a lot like my UFO watchers. They all seem to see something up there that we don't.

OPHELIA'S GHOST

Eva leaned toward her radio, which was near him, turned it on, and fiddled with the dial to improve the reception. Cowboy Bob, still on duty, said:

– It's a dark one out there tonight. Carry your lanterns if you're walking after midnight. Or get off your coolers and listen to Bobby Freeman. He's only seventeen years old, but I bet his first song makes the top forty by the end of the summer. That's a Cowboy Bob prediction.

Well, do you wanna dance and a'hold my hand,
Tell me I'm your lover man?
Oh, baby do you wanna dance?

– Have you heard this one? Eva asked as the song's quick beat took over the night. Care to?

– Dance? My pleasure, he said taking her hand and pulling her up to an invisible stage.

Do you wanna dance under the moonlight,
Squeeze me all through the night?
Oh Baby, do you wanna da-ance?

Will was full of surprises. Light on his feet, he spun Eva like she hadn't been spun in a long time. The whiskey made them light-headed. Cowboy Boy said:

– Take two, and he played it again.

Then he eased the tempo.

– As Time Goes By. Snuggle close, friends. It's getting cooler 'n cooler out there.

The night suddenly became obvious to them, the stars denser and brighter. They both looked up.

– Eva, I must tell you, it has been a beautiful evening, too short, while as long as a tired older man can stand, his eyes sparkled. In this case, one who needs to get up early in the morning and drive two hundred miles into Nowhere, New Mexico.

– More research?

– That's right. Folks out there saw something. Or said they did.

A VISITOR

I want to hear their stories.

– You’ve got the right vehicle for it. I’d certainly like a tent like yours.

– This is just the beginning. I have an idea for a tent you won’t even have to jack up. You’ll just stop along the road, walk around, crawl into the back, and be ready for supper.

– After a drink of whiskey?

– Of course. Whiskey helps make friends on the road. It loosens people up, makes them forget their distractions.

– You think I have distractions?

– Well, I’m no Cowboy Bob. I won’t predict one way or another about that.

– You should name her. I call my Volks *Luna*.

– Oh, I’ve already named her. I call her *Peony* for one of my favorite flowers back East. But my dream truck will be *Rocinante* after Quixote’s horse. I want my future trips to be quixotic.

– Romantic.

– You know Cervantes?

– Sort of. My high school Spanish teacher, Mr. Neustadt, kept assigning Spanish comic books. But I was bored, so I discovered Cervantes on my own.

– Luna sounds romantic too.

– Coincidentally, if you believe in that, it’s named for one of my favorite Eastern memories, a moth, the luna.

– Sure. They hang out at porch lights, about this time of year.

– Yep. I used to stay out late waiting for a glimpse when I was growing up. I dreamed of flying away with them to the stars.

– The earth falls dreaming from the stars.

– That’s beautiful.

– It’s from a novel... Eva, I do appreciate your taking the time to humor me this evening.

– It was my pleasure. I hope we’ll meet again.

– Well, it is a small world, isn’t it?

OPHELIA'S GHOST



Eva watched Will walk back to his truck, then she decided to review some of the notes she had been taking earlier.

ROBERT MONROE: Out of body experiences require requests for intelligent help.

Another voice rode in on the desert night air:

–Who, really? Are we supposed to believe that anyone knows any more than we do?

–Yes, Eva said, even if it hurts.

The experiences often frightened people at first, but once they recovered themselves, gained a little control...

–Say enough to pick vegetables if presented to them?

–Exactly.

Then they could explore!

–Yes. People brought back information from their voyages.

–Who did? What type of information? Please be more specific.

These explorers,

Eva referred to them as Monroe did.

could bring back information from their travels to the moon, Venus, and the edge of the solar system. All they needed was to ask for help, which was why Monroe included that in their mantras.

She remembered a metaphor of Monroe's.

Like fingers, we have to travel down them one by one, always, because we can't be in two places at once, no matter how we interpret the parallel universes. Then recognizing where we are, we can cross and come up into another world.

It was easy for those physicists to say. They had Einstein to back them. He was another one who wasn't like us. $E=mc^2$. As easy as eating pie, for him. She traced the lines of her fingers on her right hand. Matter and energy as close as close can be.

She remembered one of Roy's stories. He claimed Einstein had spent most of a night a few years ago with Marilyn Monroe. She came to his hotel room in New York where the secret agent from Washington had visited him earlier. The agent had insisted Albert support the Washington position on the communists. Which Albert insisted was absurd. From Einstein's perspective, the Nazis had been the villains, not the Russians.

– World War II, Einstein said, or have you forgotten?

– Isn't that what we all believe? After all, who could forget the holocaust?

– Right, people dying for no reason.

But how could Roy know? He must have made the story up. Was Marilyn related? Same last name, which made you remember them both.

But how could he know?

How suddenly the world changes, in one day it becomes something else entirely. Will. Where had he come from? He was a good dancer.

She remembered where she had been: the opening to the vertical cavern. Had she been in two places at once? She eased over the edge past primroses, this variety that bloomed at night. On nights like this they were brilliant, dancing with eerie light. She remembered a song:

As close as close can be
 You and me babe
 How about it?

Then she heard the flute. The evening primrose grew brighter as the light from Will's camper went out. Or maybe she was too far into her memory tunnel to see Will's light. Out of respect for the flowers, she turned her lantern off, as long ago intended.

Without deciding to, she recited:

– I desire the help... I desire the help of. I desire the help of

OPHELIA'S GHOST

intelligent beings.

Her eyes were fixed on the flowers that lined the cavern entrance. She skipped from one to the next until she reached a remarkable meadow of primroses. She imagined herself hovering, a moth. She had been there before. She was gliding. She landed, became herself. Stood, knelt. She leaned down to one flower and kissed it, as if she were still a moth. The sparkling pollen from the long anthers returned her kiss and splashed onto her eyelids. She flew to the next, stopped, became herself again, knelt and kissed it, moving pollen from one plant to the next.

Rocking back on her heels, she inhaled the night air. Looking up, she saw him.

– Oh it's you.

He stopped as if to listen.

– What do you want?

– Remember.

