

MONRIA

Volume 3



Monria Discovered
The Beginning

Pinthas Schmenke Dorian

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Foreword ... as written by Dark Moon Enigma

Monria is on her second colony with a community that is progressively growing. However, discoveries have given us plausible consideration with regard to why the first colony didn't fair so well. [The Kipling Chronicles](#) revealed a parchment with a Rudyard Kipling poem inscribed on it, along with a recovered ancient 4-drawer file cabinet from the West Crater that the Cultists were protecting. We soon learned why. It produced a hidden compartment with a journal rich with information, and gave an accounting of the dark history of the Cultists prior to their exodus from Earth that inspired book two of Monria's storyline, [Historical Data | Journal Entries](#).

We are now at the point where we learn when Monria was discovered by the Deep Space Extraction Corporation (DSEC). It's the beginning of the first colony who eventually learned that they were not alone. They were uncertain of what they had uncovered through their drilling and extraction efforts, and soon were faced with challenges unlike any they had ever encountered before.

There is no question that dark forces inhabit the Moon, and that the fate of the first settlement and extraction team hung in the balance. What choices did they have for survival? What valuable discoveries were made, and what not so valuable? I suppose though, that every discovery has its value, because every experience teaches in its own way, and, whether right or wrong decisions were made.

Follow the path of the first exploration team and their attempt to establish a Moon colony while struggling with dark and evil forces that didn't want them there. The path of mystery and shadowed secrets keep everyone on edge as they begin to second guess the stability of their sanity.

This book continues to bridge the gap between the past and the present, where we learned along the way that all is rarely what it seems. Strange occurrences have happened on Monria. Some are questioning their sanity because experiences are difficult to reconcile. I have had my own experiences with telepathic transmission of messages that I don't know what to make of, as well as my constant draw to the dark energy of the Moon which has me baffled. Gothgorath says I will learn in time, but for now, the struggles are real, and the answers are few.

Perhaps learning the history of Monria, and why such a darkness prevails, we will begin to strengthen our resolve even more, and not find ourselves in the same situation the first Moon colony did; seemingly locked in darkness with no escape.

Side-Note ... Pinthas Smencke Dorian wrote the contents of this book while he was a member of the original Monria Management Team the first two years of the Moon's existence. It was never published in its entirety. We are happy to have Pinthas as part of our Monria Media Team to be able to honor his body of work.

Prologue

-Excerpt from classified DSEC database-

DSEC, short for Deep Space Extraction Corporation, established a base on the planetoid Monria. Considered a moon, it was thought at first that it may have orbited a nearby planet, but further research proved it to be a wrong assumption. DSEC found rich deposits of ore during the initial exploration and drilling phase. High grade levels of Maladrite and Zoldenite deposits were found in several locations on Monria, making the find the most valuable in this solar system.

After the initial exploration, full-scale mining operations penetrated deeper inside Monria's surface. It came as a shock to discover water beneath the surface with conditions suitable for organic life. Volcanic activity released enough Co2 gasses to sustain a living ecosystem within the naturally-formed caves. Dreams of fully terraforming Monria began to take shape, as cutting expensive food import costs would seriously improve the company's bottom line.

Seismic tests showed an unexplained network of tunnels beneath the surface in several locations, as well as a relatively high concentration of electromagnetic radiation originating from within these locations. DSEC's scientists scrambled to find a reasonable explanation for the nature of these anomalies. Plutonium and Uranium were initially considered as potential sources of radiation in combination with the volcanic activity, though the level of these readings didn't quite satisfy a few skeptics among the scientific team.

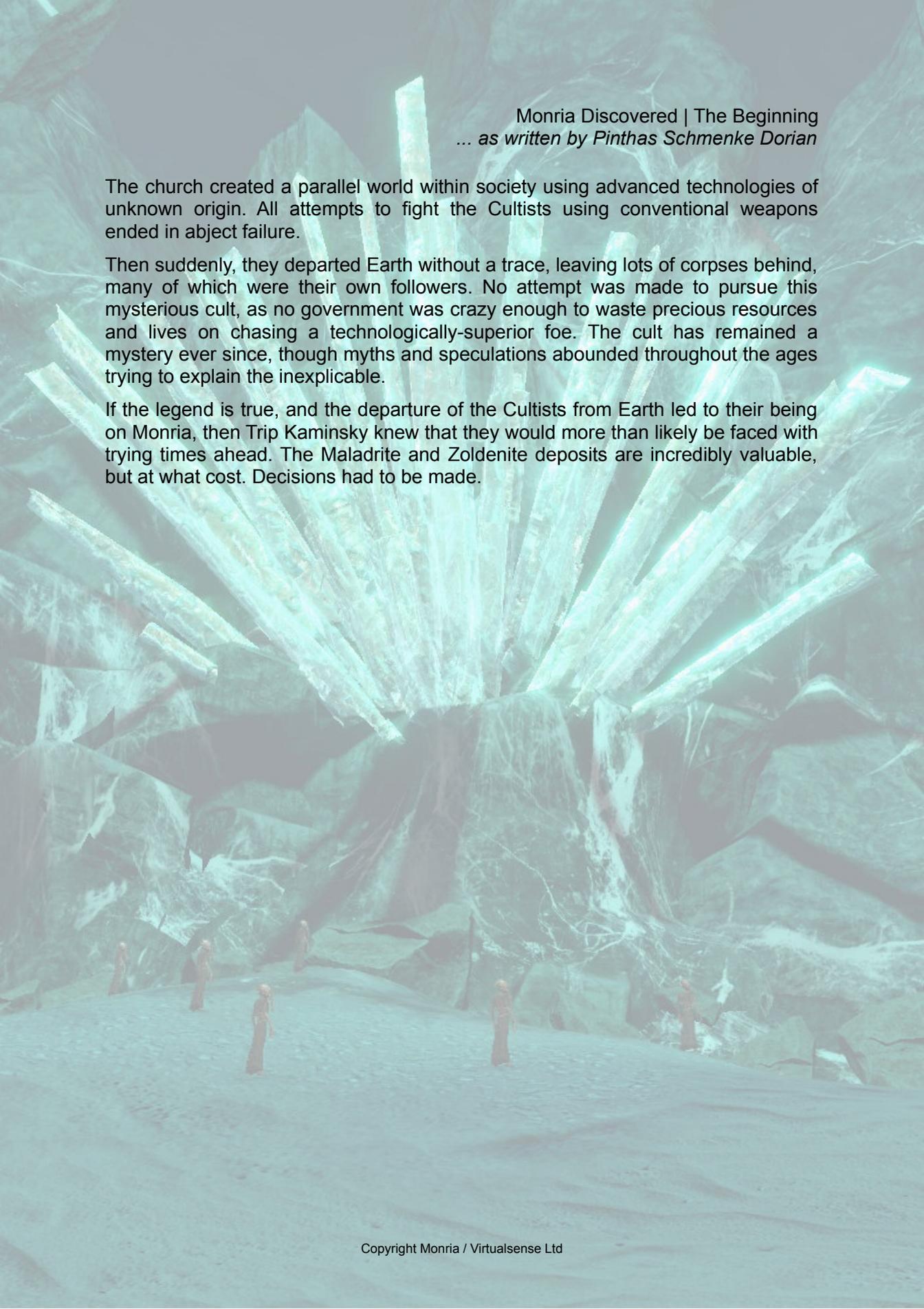
Six months into the project, a mining crew lost contact with the surface HQs. The radio communications stopped abruptly. The crew's last communication mentioned that mining excavations had crossed into one of the mysterious tunnels, claiming a light source similar to natural sunlight was emanating from the tunnel.

A security team was dispatched immediately. It took the team approximately one hour to reach the dig site. The team found abandoned machines and a strange light coming from the tunnel ahead. There was no sign of the mining crew.

Upon entering the tunnel, the team was shocked to discover huge caverns full of lush green vegetation and waterfalls. Weird looking crystals were providing a natural source of light.

A familiar-looking vehicle that resembled a hover bike was sitting near a tree overgrown with vegetation. The vehicle seemed to be in top shape. Upon closer inspection, the inscription *Church of Cthulhu* was written in green, while *Cult of Shut'thend* was written below it in purple with a black framed background stamped on the forward part of the bike. This strange finding was radioed in to HQs, after which the team was quickly recalled to the surface.

Top scientist Trip Kaminsky, the oldest member of the crew at the respectable age of 170, recalled a legend about a *Church of Cthulhu* that took the lives of many around 1250 years ago. Millions were slaughtered on many planets following the rise of this cult, without explanation or understanding of the reasons behind it.



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... as written by Pinthas Schmenke Dorian

The church created a parallel world within society using advanced technologies of unknown origin. All attempts to fight the Cultists using conventional weapons ended in abject failure.

Then suddenly, they departed Earth without a trace, leaving lots of corpses behind, many of which were their own followers. No attempt was made to pursue this mysterious cult, as no government was crazy enough to waste precious resources and lives on chasing a technologically-superior foe. The cult has remained a mystery ever since, though myths and speculations abounded throughout the ages trying to explain the inexplicable.

If the legend is true, and the departure of the Cultists from Earth led to their being on Monria, then Trip Kaminsky knew that they would more than likely be faced with trying times ahead. The Maladrite and Zoldenite deposits are incredibly valuable, but at what cost. Decisions had to be made.

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Ch 1 / First Contact with a Dark Hooded Figure

It was in the midst of the dust and darkness that a lone hooded figure watched as the team quickly collected their belongings and hurried to the surface, not sure of what they had really seen, or whether they even wanted to think about what they had seen. In their haste, no one thought to bring back the hover bike with them. No one really thought it would be of any use at the time. But then nobody really understood the *Church of Cthulhu* either. They were told to come back to the surface immediately, and that's what they were going to do. They were just as glad to get out of that cavern.

There was only one team member who took a final look around as the others were collecting their equipment. Out of the corner of her eye, Narissa - one of the newest security members of the team - saw something. It was just a glimpse, but she *knew* she saw something in the corner, in the darkness, not moving, just staring. She felt almost a penetration of thought into her mind, a buzz, a sound, a whisper, and then the words formed:

"We are the Church of Cthulhu; your companions should leave here. Only you may stay if you wish, to see the marvels we have achieved over eons."

The dark hooded figure stood there watching as the team slowly ascended to the surface. Waiting to see what Narissa would do, waiting to see what the prophecy had foretold. Then just as quietly as it had appeared, the hooded figure disappeared into the shadows, unseen, knowing they would meet again.

As the hooded figure receded into the darkness of the cavern, the link to Narissa's mind was broken, the lingering of the thought burning, then slowly fading, but still in her consciousness.

What seemed like an eternity was only a moment. However, she was startled out of her trance-like state when one of her team members touched her on the shoulder and asked if she was coming. She took one final look and saw nothing, felt no presence like before, but felt a sensation in the pit of her stomach - a sense that something was definitely down there, and that this something was dangerous.

At the same time, she couldn't help but think that this thing - this creature, this unknown entity - was speaking to her. She didn't know if she should tell the others, or ask if they had also heard something telepathically. She didn't want them to think of her as being weak. After all, she was the newest member of the team and no one really knew her yet. No, for now she would keep it to herself and see what other clues she could find before she let the others know about her encounter - if it was an encounter at all.

Ch 2 / Debriefing of the Cavern Encounter

It had only taken an hour to get to the site but it seemed like an eternity to get back to the Command Center. The telepathic message lingered, etched in her mind. She could actually see the words until they eventually disappeared, but the emotion and the feeling still remained. What was it, she wondered? In all of the confusion, no one really took a good look around to find the mining team or even took the time to look for them. She saw no sign of a struggle, no signs of anyone, not even much equipment, just that hover bike. Where were the miners, and what happened to the equipment?

They finally made it back to the Command Center and were immediately rushed into a debriefing room for a conversation with the security team comprised of Trip Kaminsky and a few other scientists, as well as some of the leaders of the corporation via the intergalactic channel.

“Alright everyone, take your seats and let’s get this meeting to order,” said Hank Powers, the Project Manager at the station. Everyone was in the private meeting area, where only the top executives met once a month or so, depending upon the monthly agenda. It was a common room with not much more than a long table and chairs, all positioned at the main screen on the opposite wall facing North. There was a counter on the far wall with refreshments if anyone wanted, as well as a door in the back that led to another meeting area reserved for only a select few.

In the room they could see the communication screen completely uninterrupted by other objects. The walls were see-through on the other two sides for full view of the operations as well as a spectacular uninterrupted view of Monria’s surface.

However, the usual clear windows were now covered with a transparent matrix polymer protecting everyone from outside elements and any interruptions. No one could see in, and no one could see out. This polymer was a special addition that DSEC was able to create as one of its patents that helped to revolutionize the industry. People could now have the advantage of seeing outside and not worrying about the elements. It gave protection from cosmic storms, or a stray meteorite, as this matrix was practically impenetrable in either of those events.

It was this breakthrough in technology using some of the newly-discovered elements in this system that put DSEC on the map, and everyone wanted this material - everyone - but it was in short supply. Short supply until now that is, as Monria had practically 5000 lifetimes of the ores and materials they needed to supply most of the known universes. That was why this project was so important, and that was why this new event was putting the project in jeopardy. Mr. Gabriel Donovan, the CEO, knew deep in his heart, without a doubt, that a find of this magnitude would not be as straightforward as it first seemed.

Ch 3 / What Do We Know | Where Do We Go From Here

“Alright everyone, let’s discuss what’s happened so far,” said Gabriel Donovan, CEO of DSEC who was now on the view screen. He was an ordinary looking man who appeared to be in his mid 50’s. However, his real age was more than double that. He had a full complement of salt-and-pepper hair, cut short, but not military short. He was clean shaven and sported a designer pair of glasses, which, along with his crisp look, gave him a somewhat stately appearance. Although he was an extremely wealthy man, he still had a consistent casual side, dressing in designer button down shirts, and rarely wore a tie. He kept his jewelry at a minimum, except for a single diamond earring in his left ear. What struck you when you saw Mr. Donovan was his intensely sharp, deeply-etched cleft chin that seemed to mesmerize. He had a keen wit, but at times he was also known to be intensely passionate about the topic he was discussing, especially when he wanted to make his point. He was not a man who, having come up from poverty to wealth, was about to have anyone step on his toes, and was not ashamed to let you know if you were about to do so.

“From my understanding,” began Mr. Donovan, “we have a missing mining team, and the only thing that is left down there is a hover bike with graffiti from the *Church of Cthulhu*, whoever they are. Trip Kaminsky has already briefed us on what he knows, but we seem to be in the dark as far as anyone knowing who and what they are, and what they want from us. We don’t even know if the mining team is alive or not.”

Dan Frances, the team leader, spoke first. “Sir, I was only down there for a few moments, but it seems as though the caverns are both natural formations, and somehow modified by something, or someone with advanced technology. The walls of the cavern have a type of rock that appears to generate its own light source, not unlike the photophosphorescent microorganism from the planet Tarsus. It seemed natural to the area but we did not get a close enough look. However, the modification in certain areas definitely seem to be man-made. It would take another science team to go down there to do some testing, or bring samples of the rocks back to the forensics lab for further investigation. I think that even in the midst of trying to find out what happened to the miners, we should not forget that this is new territory with completely unknown areas. We need to be sure to be on our guard for possible dangers down there.”

Ben Connors, one of the security personnel, spoke next. “One would have to assume we are dealing with intelligent life who have either been living in the caverns, or have been using them for some purpose. Based on what we found, it would appear that we have been officially warned that we are trespassing. The missing miners left no sign of a struggle as far as I could see, and for someone to have moved the machinery that was down there would have taken a lot of effort; not to mention the short time interval between when we lost communication and when we were able to get down there to investigate.

We have to assume we are not only dealing with a highly advanced species, but also, if it *is* this *Church of Cthulhu*, we have to understand who they are and what they want."

"Agreed," said Mr. Donovan. "Anyone else have comments or insights that we should know about?"

During the discussion, Narissa had been listening, and wanting to volunteer what she knew or had felt, but she was still new to the team and was not sure what to do. She wanted to listen more and perhaps speak to someone. If only she could talk with Mr. Donovan privately she thought, maybe he would understand and listen to her, but what would the others think? She decided to make an effort to get them back down to the cavern so she could continue her private investigation, and maybe find out more without risking harm to the team. She would never forgive herself if she knew something and didn't tell anyone, and then someone got hurt because of her.

Narissa raised her hand slowly and asked to speak.

"Yes Narissa, do you have something to add," Hank asked?

At that moment all eyes focused their attention on her. Not just because she was about to ask a question, but also due to her beauty. Narissa Thompson was one of the most conscientious security personnel they had worked with in recent years. She was five foot seven with short, flaming red hair, but it was her eyes that attracted men. They were as green as the deep sea and penetrated one's soul with a gentle caress that warmed the heart the moment her gaze was met. Yet at times she looked as if she had the wisdom of 1000 lifetimes. Narissa was one of the fortunate people who had been treated kindly by Mother Nature. Her skin was smooth and youthful. She looked like a woman who might be in her forties, but she would never reveal her true age.

She'd worked with Trip on one other project and was a great help to him. She was the sort of person who made sure all was in order, regardless of chaos. The best part was that when asked to do something, she either did it or somehow managed to get it done. No questions asked! She wasn't one of those whining individuals who questioned every action, or gave you a hard time with cross-talk. She did her job and did it well. Narissa kept the movement of the team working in ways others could not begin to appreciate, and always worked as a team player, except for the rare occasion when she knew that there was another agenda to keep in mind. She knew how to read between the lines better than most, and this always seemed to give her a tactical advantage.

She felt the pit in her stomach start to turn, and she thought in that moment she was going to pass out; her nerves started, her head grew heavy and the blood rushed out of her face. She'd better get control of herself she thought, before she made a laughing stock out of this whole event.

However, in that moment, she felt the cavern presence once again, and heard the voice in her head say, *We are the Church of Cthulhu*. What seemed like minutes was only a fleeting moment when she composed herself and started to speak. Her mouth was dry and she had to clear her throat. She was glad there was a glass of water in front of her and she slowly took a sip, refocusing her thoughts, all while hearing that voice in her head. She didn't want to reveal anything that would create any disbelief, while at the same time making sure she got to return to the cavern.

"Sir," she said, "I was wondering. If only the hover bike was left behind with the graffiti on it, would it not be wise to inspect it more thoroughly? I believe that the writing was not only there as a possible warning to us but a kind of opening to let us know that someone was down there. Maybe they were trying to alert us before we attempted to do anything to an area that they are trying to protect that might be sacred to them. Maybe we could make an effort to try to communicate with them without appearing as a threat. We did not have any issues or problems outside the cavern, and it was only when we broke through and entered that we got the first inkling that there was even the remote possibility of intelligent life down there."

Now this is where Narissa was going to go out on a limb and try her damndest to make sure she got to go down there again.

"I believe there *is* intelligent life," she continued, "and we need to investigate. I would like to be able to inspect the hover bike more thoroughly and take a good look with one of your scientists at the actual writing on the bike. I think it is more than a message, and I think the material they used to write us the message is also important. This biophosphorescence-like material appears to be what they used on the bike writing. I think they are trying to communicate with us as well."

There was complete silence in the room along with a buzzing in her head. She was not sure why she had said what she said and wasn't even sure it was her that made those comments. How would she even come to think of that? After all, she was on the security team and not a scientist. She knew that she was right and could only believe that it was the voice in her head that was trying to make her understand.

It was Trip Kaminsky who broke the silence first.

"Mr. Donovan, I agree," said Trip. "We need to investigate all parts of that cave and start with the hover bike first. If the writing on it was something important, we shouldn't leave it down there for something else to happen to it. Let's get it up here ASAP, put it in the forensics lab in isolation and perform some experiments on the writing. Perhaps it was penned using the green phosphorescence, or perhaps not, but we know it has to be something to investigate. In addition, we should bring a small security team down with a few scientists to start with and continue the investigation. Maybe the miners are still alive and the longer we wait up here, the higher the probability we will not find them.

“Agreed,” said Mr. Donovan. “Hank, assemble a small team of security personnel and scientists to go down there immediately. Trip you choose your team, and Dan, you choose yours. Make sure Narissa is on your team, and I want everyone checking in on the hour, every hour. The first sign of trouble, get out of there. We need to know what is going on down there and find those miners.”

“Yes sir!” was the resounding response from all members.

With that, communication ended and the screen went blank. There was a tiny mumbling in the room as members of the teams started to talk among themselves until Hank Powers spoke up.

“Okay everyone,” said Hank. “I know this is a difficult time and we haven't informed the families of the miners up to this point, but I don't believe we need to yet, and should have a story ready just in case. For now, we are just going to say that they are down there on extended work duty and will be home soon. Does everyone understand what the plan is?”

We will now assemble our teams. I think three security personnel and three scientists will do for a start. Trip, make your team and meet me in the station ready to go within 30 minutes. We will use our same team, including Narissa as Mr. Donovan requested, but I want you to know Narissa, you will have to be on your guard. You are new to the team and we are in a dangerous place. You come highly recommended, but this is still your first mission with us, and I'm sorry that you have such a difficult one to start with. Nonetheless, people's lives are in your hands, don't forget that! We meet ready in 30 minutes, now get started packing.”

Ch 4 / A Close Encounter

Everyone met as scheduled in the Command Center getting all the gear ready and loaded into the transport craft. The transport was simple in design, capable of transporting up to 15 people comfortably. Not full of frills as far as comfort but made to withstand attacks from potential enemies. It was equipped with a full complement of weaponry from a laser-mounted turret, as well as front and rear internally-mounted weapons that could be used from within the vehicle. It was designed with outriggers that could be activated for a more advanced attack and defense maneuvers where a person could sit or lay for not only protection but better line of sight for defense from any hostile encounters.

It took nearly an hour to get to the area, and once they arrived, they started to make their way back to the location where they last saw the hover bike. The bike seemed to be the same and unmoved from where they last saw it next to the large tree with overgrown vegetation. In the distance, they could see the lights in the cave from the phosphorescence in the rocks as they made their way cautiously to the bike. Narissa wondered if she would feel the sensation in her mind again, but so far, she felt nothing. She started to doubt herself but kept her mind sharp and on the lookout for any disturbances in the cave ahead.

The hover bike was an ordinary model equipped with the DSEC logo as usual. A few of the scientists approached as the security team created a small perimeter watch and set up sensors just in case anything was coming their way.

"Look at this," said Chuck Iverson, one of the scientists in the group, as he pointed to the green shimmering letters on the bike.

The green phosphorescence looked as if it was in one place, yet also shifted. The glitter and green seemed to move depending on eye position. Chuck took out a sample tube and spatula-like scraper and attempted to remove a small sample from the bike. He did so with no difficulty and placed the small sample into the tube. It was a little sticky he thought while scraping the material onto the side of the tube in order to remove it from the spatula. Once in the tube, he finally closed the lid tightly. The green sticky substance continued to glow on the side of the tube.

"Ok, I have a sample of this material," Chuck said, "are we going to take the bike directly back to the lab, or secure it at the Command Center in confinement?"

"Let's get this wrapped in containment and onto the hovercraft in isolation," Dan said, "we can get it back to the station safely and check it out more thoroughly. We can continue into the cave, but be careful. Watch the walls and watch your step."

The cave extended outward from where they were in an opening over 100 feet in diameter that seemed to get even larger as they started to move forward. Along the walls was the glowing phosphorescence but it was not globule, and did not appear to be sticky. However, it looked as if it was inside the rock walls.

When Andy Greenfield, the third member of the scientific team, touched the rock surface, the material seemed to move with the outline of his hand as if making an identical impression, then quickly faded to its original glow. The men continued walking and went through an opening traveling deeper into the cave. The area continued to get larger, and they could make out from the lighted passageway that this was indeed carved out in places using some giant tool or machine.

The technology to accomplish this was definitely years ahead of what the DSEC team had, and would take years to do the same thing on their own. In addition, there was lush vegetation in all areas, and even some large trees inside the cave. In certain areas the cave seemed to curve and elongate, and in others, it was as straight as can be. The teams kept walking and even heard running water in the distance. They saw what they thought was a waterfall on one side of the wall which was glowing a soft green hue from the rocks behind it. The atmosphere was comfortable, as the deep volcanic activity kept the caves a constant temperature. At times it even seemed a little warm and the team had to put away their jackets.

Up to this point, there was no sign of active life or recent activity. There was no sign of the miners either. In the next moment they heard a sound, not a human sound, but more like a gurgling growl. Everyone stopped. It seemed to be coming from a side tunnel up ahead.

Dan Frances held up his hand making a gesture to stop, be quiet and listen. Again, the gurgling growl could be heard. Dan motioned to one of the other security personnel, Ben Connors, to slowly approach the opening where they heard the sound. He approached it cautiously and peeked into the tunnel to get a better look.

Ben positioned himself so he could barely be seen, but froze for a moment when he gazed face-to-face with the creature making the gurgling growl sound. He was so close that he could both feel and smell its breath. The part of the creature that Ben could see was that of a tar-like gelatinous head with many eyes that appeared to be looking in all directions at the same time.

It seemed as if the creature was modifying its body to mimic that of a normal head, and the eyes seemed to disappear into the newly modified form leaving only two eyes. There was another slow gurgling growl right into Ben's face. He froze where he stood in terror as he looked into the now *two red eyes* of this creature. His heart was racing faster than he could ever remember and he wanted to move backwards but his feet were cemented in fear. It was all he could do to try to regain his composure. Finally, he felt his foot move backwards, ever so slowly, backwards.

The creature sniffed and appeared to look right into Ben's eyes yet it seemed as if he didn't see him. The creature sniffed again, and then gave out a spine-tingling, ear-piercing gurgling growl. This time it was much louder than the previous one, and it penetrated deeply into Ben's head. The creature seemed to have been just as surprised as Ben as they both regained their composure.

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In addition, Ben noticed something around the neck of the creature as he slowly backed up. The creature continued to advance forward until it stopped with a jerk at its neck. Ben could now see what looked like a collar, and it seemed to be tethered to something that was at its maximum length. He was just out of reach he thought when he then felt something sharp grab at his arm. His natural reflexes quickly moved his arm out of the way of almost being grabbed by the creature. Ben continued to move further out of reach.

While this was happening, the team was advancing and watching from a few feet away, not certain what they should do. Weapons drawn, they all seemed to freeze as they watched their teammate continue to walk slowly backward towards them, while never taking his eyes off the creature. There was another shrill gurgling growl that filtered through the air as the creature backed away out of their sight.

At the same time, Narissa's head began to pound, and she could see the creature in her mind backing up and fading into the darkness away from the glow of the rocks in the tunnel ahead. It felt as if she was somehow connected in thought to this creature, but she was not sure how and why. She started to think that the strange hooded figure had something to do with it but she did not feel that presence. This was different, it was a kind of psychic link to the creature, not to a person. Her head continued to pound as she saw; no, *felt* this creature's torment as it covered back into the darkness. She knew that there was someone controlling it in some way, but she was not sure how.

Ch 5 / Now You See Them | Now You Don't

The team backed up a little further and discussed what just happened. A creature, chained to a tether which gave it room to move up to a point as if someone was using it as a watchdog of some sort. This meant there was intelligent life for sure, and if it was the cult, then what were they using it for, what are they doing, and how long have they been here? Too many questions to answer, and with each question they could think of more. They decided to continue further while attempting to stay out of the creature's grasp as best they could.

Cautiously, they moved into the area ahead, but the creature was no longer there. Instead, they saw what they thought was a dark circle 100 yards in the distance. Although there was luminescence from the rocks, in this area it seemed to be darker, and they could not make out what was there. They kept moving forward toward the darker area and then suddenly froze. They saw a group of hooded figures sitting cross-legged in a circle around what appeared to be a creature.

Soft chanting was heard but no discernable language that could be understood. There were seven hooded figures, all of whom seemed to be in a trance-like state. The creature was surrounded by a greenish hue and levitating about five feet above the cave floor. It slowly rotated, intermittently facing each of the hooded figures for a moment before moving onto the next. At three equidistant parts of the circle between the hooded figures was a small iconic pillar with a type of ancient writing on all sides. These too were glowing with a slight greenish hue. An energy beam was emanating out of each of the three pillar tops with the beam entering the creature's body at different locations; one entering the head, one entering the chest and one entering the abdomen.

The team found this disturbing as they watched from a distance not knowing what to do next. Soon the chanting began to get louder and more synchronized. The green beams coming out of the pillars were getting stronger and had merged. The creature was now completely engulfed in this green hue.

All at once the chanting stopped. There was a vibration in the air, and a zap-like sound. The creature had vanished. No disintegration similar to the results of a laser weapon; just vanished. The pillars ceased to glow, the beams were all gone, all was silent and the creature was gone. Just then the hooded figures stood up still in their circle formation facing each other. Moments later, a green hue encircled each of the seven and they too just vanished. There was a momentary vibration in the air and a scent of something unfamiliar to the team that also disappeared quite quickly. Only the pillars remained.

It took another moment for the team to collect themselves. They all agreed to cautiously approach the area where the hooded figures and the creature had been. As they searched the area, the scientists took a closer look at the pillars that had an ancient look to them.

They were in the shape of a five-pointed star about 4 feet high and 12 inches in diameter with an ornate carving on them. There was a smooth depression in the center. The tips were partially broken off and there were signs of other cleavage at the inward angles and in the center of the surface. Upon closer inspection, Chuck Iverson, one of the scientists, thought he could make out groups of tiny dots in regular patterns. The writing looked ancient, and nothing the scientists had ever seen. More importantly, they saw a carving of a creature, a hideous creature that they assumed could only be this Cthulhu, and the carvings portrayed what appeared to be Cultists praying to this beast. Who or what were these hooded Cultist figures, and what kind of powers did they have to be able to concentrate with focused energy and not only make a creature vanish but themselves as well.

The team attempted to move the star-shaped pillars without success. No matter how hard they tried, the pillars were solidly anchored and they couldn't budge them. The team gave up, but took images of them to send back to the Command Center for further examination. They even tried to scrape a piece of material off the pillar but to no avail. Not even a small spec of dust could they remove.

The team decided to investigate further into the cave and saw another tunnel leading to yet another cave. In their investigations so far, they had found what they believed to be five separate caves, and some had a connecting system of tunnels. Each also had a type of mechanical device, but they had not come up close to the devices until now, and they wanted a closer look.

The device looked of alien design. It had a circular platform with three rising pillars equidistant around the edge and curving toward the center. It did not seem to be active at the moment but there was what looked like a power source and an internal keypad. The letters were all in a language none of the team understood but they believed that this must be a teleport or televator of some kind, not unlike their own technology. It was interesting that the Cultists needed no such device to move from area to area, if in fact that is what they did when they disappeared. It appeared to be more like some form of mind control on both the creature and themselves. If this was the case, then the rumors and stories that floated around may not be just legend and myth.

One of the scientists spoke first. "Sir, I believe I know how to activate this device, and believe it to be some sort of transport not unlike what we use back home."

"I agree," said Dan. "Get it working and let's see where it takes us, but be on guard, we don't want to come in contact with the Cultists or even creatures. We don't know that much about them, nor what type of defense would be required. Keep in mind the stories that Trip Kaminsky told of mass destruction by these Cultists years ago. It's possible that these may be the same ones we are facing.

Moments later, a few buttons were pushed and there was a slight static in the air, and a low-pitched hum as the energy matter flowed into the machine. All three pillars were activated and completely powered up.

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“Okay everyone, how do you want to proceed” asked Andy, the scientist who was working and monitoring the terminal.

“Teams of two,” Dan said, “one scientist and one security officer; wait for the okay from the first and then send the second through? Any volunteers?”

With that, Narissa was the first to raise her hand. “I will volunteer to go first if no one else wants to,” she said, “I don’t think this machine is harmful, we just don’t know where it will send us. Who wants to be on my team?”

Andy said, “Chuck, you go with Narissa. To the rest of you, once they get to where this sends them and we get the all safe signal, then Trip and Ben can be the next team. I will go last with Dan and bring up the rear.”

Everyone agreed and took their positions as Narissa and Chuck approached the center of the platform. Andy activated the buttons on the panel. Almost immediately they heard a loud hum, and then they had instantly vanished.

Ch 6 / Dangerous Rescue of Miner from Original Team

Narissa and Chuck found themselves in a new cave inside another similar open pyramid-like device. It definitely was a teleporter, and who knew what else if anything. They felt a slight tingle all over, but moments later it was gone. Must be a result of the teleportation Narissa thought to herself as she inspected the other member of the team; he gave her the okay sign. Moments flew by as they regrouped and Narissa made a quick glimpse around to see if anything was near, or if she felt any sense that anything was near. Nothing was seen or felt and she motioned for Chuck to follow her over to a corner of the cave that looked safe for contacting the team on their communication device.

Narissa whispered, "All seems quiet here, send in the next group and come back to the south end of the cave, we are in the corner. There will be a momentary tingle sensation as you regain your bearings but it seems safe enough."

Out of the corner of her eye Narissa saw what she thought was an information transmitter on the ground in front of her. Seconds later the other group was in the teleporter heading towards her in the corner of the cave. Narissa was trying to pay attention to the oncoming group to wave them in at the same time she was keeping her eye on the transmitter just ahead of her. She motioned the group over and told them to guide in the last team as she made her way over to it. As she picked it up, she activated the transmitter and listened to what appeared to be a message from one of the missing miners. As she listened to it, it seemed like a comment out of a mining log.

"Journal Entry #1: Core samples seem to indicate massive amounts of an unknown supply of Maladrite and Zoldenite resources needed for enhancing development of our transparent polymer matrix. I would expect these materials to be of great benefit for a range of items - everything from amplification of seismic mining equipment to high energy weaponry."

It was definitely from one of the miners in the lost team. This proves they were here, or were brought here and hopefully they were still alive. Maybe the transmitter was dropped in order to leave a trail for them to follow, or maybe it was just lost in the shuffle when they were being taken to wherever they were taken.

Just then a horrible thought flashed through Narissa's mind. What if the Cultists took the miners and were performing some horrible ritual on them, not unlike what was happening to that other creature in the other tunnel. She shook her head and cleared her mind of that thought. She took a final look at the transmitter before putting it in her pocket and saw what she thought was a holograph with some odd markings. Initially she thought they were only doodles, but she saw some repetitiveness to a few of the markings. They must be a form of writing she thought, and perhaps there was some hidden meaning in them. It seemed as if the miners were taking notes on these markings and maybe they were trying to interpret some ancient writing.

She didn't have time to compare the writings with the writings she saw on the pillars or in the ancient device but she thought that she almost recognized some similarities. She would have to check them out further and inform the team.

Narissa placed the device in her pocket and turned to head back to the rest of the team, and at that moment the teleporter activated and everyone rushed to get out of the way and backed into the darkness. What they saw astonished the team as three hooded Cultists appeared and headed into the cave in front of them, moving away in the opposite direction. Everyone held their breath as the Cultists seemed not to notice them and continued to walk away into the cave. The outline of the Cultists could easily be seen as the lighting in the cave seemed to follow them, lighting their way and then fading again behind them to a lower light level.

Narissa's head began to pound and she knew that painful yet familiar feeling was about to return. "*We are the Church of the Cthulhu, why have you come to our sacred home?*"

The pounding stopped as quickly as it started and she felt a kind of connection to someone or something as she tried to respond with words.

"We are looking for our friends, people who were down here in the other cave, can you help us, we do not mean you any harm."

The rest of the team turned to look at Narissa and wondered who she was speaking to as they saw no one near and the hooded figures were not in sight.

Just then the security leader, Dan Frances, ran over to where she was and put his hand over her mouth.

"Quiet," he whispered. "What are you doing? There could be more Cultists just around the corner. You are talking out loud, not even thinking about what you are doing, putting us in jeopardy. Who are you speaking to anyway, there is no one here?"

With that he cautiously removed his hand from her mouth and motioned for her to whisper and to get herself under control.

Fearful to tell him what she really thought was happening; that one of the Cultists seemed to be trying to communicate with her telepathically, she replied, "I am sorry, I seemed to have thought I heard something, it won't happen again. She realized that she needed to communicate to the voice, and speaking out loud certainly was not going to be the answer. She believed that the voice knew what happened and perhaps was trying to help her find her friends. She also knew that it could be a trap and that she needed to be even more cautious.

"Dan," Narissa whispered. "I found this over there just before the teleporter activated. It seems to be a transmitter from one of the miners. I think it may be a way that they are trying to let us know where they were taken."

Dan took the device and listened to it. He agreed with her, it was definitely from the miners and they must have been taken this way.

“Good, now we know we are heading in the right direction. Let’s head out towards where those Cultists went, but stay close to the side of the cave just to be safe.”

They headed in the direction away from the teleporter and started into the cave following the path of the Cultists. The cave seemed very large to the members of the team. It stretched out above their head so high that in the dim light they could not see the rooftop over them. On either side, the cave was also amazingly wide, and the vegetation was spread out all over. There were full-sized trees of some alien type in a variety of colors from green to purple and included some bioluminescence of orange and red. The rock walls eerily seemed to read their minds as the brightness of the cave changed at different times after they had mentioned that they would like to see more of the sights.

They could almost see the other side of the cave when they noticed another transporter similar to the one on the far side of the cave. Next to it there was a group of Cultists hovering around three of the creatures they had seen earlier in the first cave. They paused, but it was moments too late as all three Cultists turned their gaze on them. Narissa’s head was burning as she realized that things were not going well at this moment, and the Cultists, without speaking a word, separated and silently unleashed the three beasts upon them.

It was Ben who reacted first, “Narissa, get all of the scientists back, draw your weapons and open fire, attack position Alpha.”

Attack position Alpha meant that the members would form a three-pronged approach to not only protect themselves and the scientists, but one would be in the front and the other two would flank each side slightly behind to the outer area forming a sort of triangle with the point facing the opponent. The scientists would be within the center of the triangle and towards the back so they could continue moving back while being protected. Only Trip was trained in high level fighting tactics. He had been involved in combat situations far longer than anyone on the team and had extensive training prior to becoming a scientist. They all knew the rules and knew they needed to help in order to survive.

They assumed the formation and the team started to open fire with their laser pistols. Soon the room was lit with laser blasts and the beasts were hit numerous times before they had a chance to reach the team. The creatures took a significant amount of damage and finally stopped in their path and fell to the ground. Gurgling growl sounds were heard as they approached, and the pitch echoed louder as they took each laser blast before there was silence again in the cave.

By the time everyone had a chance to make sure each other was safe, the Cultists disappeared and were nowhere to be found. At some level everyone was glad they were gone, as they were facing a force they did not understand and wanted more time to investigate to make sure they were equipped enough for any future battles.

“Is everyone okay?” Dan asked.

They all responded they were and stopped to take in their surroundings. To their surprise, the room was fully lit and the glowing walls were at the highest illumination they had been yet. The team went over to inspect the three creatures that now lay lifeless on the ground.

Around each of the necks of the creatures was the same type of collar that Ben saw earlier in their first encounter. This was either a collar for a leash, or some type of controlling device in order to make these creatures do the bidding of the Cultists, not unlike a beast of burden, or enslaved creature. There were no other outstanding features except that which they had already seen. Ensuring that the creatures were in fact dead, they continued to move back to the area of the Cultists to check it out before they continued onto the next area using the teleporter once again. They knew they needed to be on guard even more, as they may be coming up to an area where the Cultists congregate and perform rituals.

Narissa and her teammate were the first to go through the teleporter, instantly vanishing and reappearing in yet another cave as large as the prior cave. After recovering from the vibrations and noticing the familiar aroma, they started to look around once again. Narissa gave the green light for the rest of the team to come through. Once all together again, they began exploring the surrounding area.

Up ahead they heard that familiar gurgling growl, but this time it was much louder. It sounded as if there may have been a larger gathering of these creatures. The team wasn't sure they should go further, or go back to the base to make a report and get more reinforcements. Just then they heard a voice. It was a human voice, crying out in slight despair but also with a very emphatic command.

“Leave me alone. I am not your enemy. I am only here to find out about the ore on this moon. I am truly sorry I entered your cave. It was an accident. We will leave here and leave you alone. Please leave me and let me go back to my people. GET OUT OF MY HEAD!”

It was definitely one of the miners shouting out and seemingly begging for his life.

Dan motioned to Narissa and Chuck to make their way quietly over to the far end of the cave and approach as best they can to see what was going on. They quietly moved over to the far end of the cave and slowly clung to the wall as they moved further into the cave. As if the cave knew what they had intended to do, the glowing green rocks seemed to lower the lighting and aid them in being more secretive in their movement. Even the cave floor seemed to get quieter under their feet.

The two person team moved almost forty feet before getting a better view. They saw a group of creatures hovering around what appeared to be one of the lost miners. There were three hooded Cultists outside the circle, each at equidistant positions around the creatures. The miner was inside the circle that the creatures made and they could make out another of the star shaped pillars next to the miner.

He seemed to be sitting on the ground holding his head with his hands rocking back and forth as if trying to relieve some kind of pain, but to no avail. The team could hear the occasional outburst of the miner speaking some odd words which they could only make out as ... *Tekeli-li*.

They cautiously moved back to report to the team what they saw and to determine what course of action to take. At best count there were 15 of the creatures and 3 of the Cultists against the 6 of them. A decision had to be made because it looked as though there was some kind of ritual going on, and the miner's chance for survival was getting less the longer they waited to rescue him.

"What is your suggestion," asked Narissa?

"I think we make a surprise assault on the group, come in blazing and scatter them as fast as possible. Then one of us can run in and grab the miner and run like hell back to the teleporter to get out fast," Ben said.

"Well, the element of surprise is with us and that could work, but the risk to the miner, as well as ourselves, is pretty great. If we wait for backup, it would be over an hour, and I don't think he has that much time left from what you are telling me."

"Taking them out one at a time would be much too difficult, and I am not even sure that would work. The question is, if we take out the leader, would that create enough confusion to scramble the creatures and give us a chance to rescue him while they are confused," asked Trip.

"You are assuming that one of the Cultists is in charge. What if all three are controlling the creatures? I think we need to take out all three Cultists at the same time, and then we would be able to disrupt their control over them and the miner. I think if we don't do that, we are not going to get very far," said Narissa.

"Okay, then we take out the three Cultists at the same time. The first one who is able to distract the creatures and get into where the miner is, grabs him and gets him out of there. We meet back here at the teleporter. However, we teleport out with the miner ASAP to the prior cave and meet at that location. Then we regroup and get the hell out of here and report back from outside the first cave away from the activity. We get back into the transport, get to the Command Center to give report and make a new plan for moving ahead after that."

Narissa didn't think that the plan had any remote chance of working and relied on a lot of unknowns. However, unless they made an attempt, they knew the miner would be dead within the hour and perhaps made out to be some sort of sacrifice to the Cultist gods or whatever they were praying to. She knew that there was a good chance that in trying to save the miner that someone else would die along the way as only the three security detail and Trip really had any decent combat training. The three scientists were agreeing to go along with the plan but were in reality not going to be much of a help under these circumstances.

No, she would have to be part of the team and stay focused on accomplishing the mission. She was trained for this, and the CEO specifically asked her on the mission. She was not going to let anyone down, not on her watch.

The team split sides of the cave, half on the far wall and the other half on the near wall, slowly advancing toward the group of creatures and Cultists. Again, the walls seemed to know exactly what they were trying to accomplish and let them advance in almost complete darkness and silence. The team reached their position and signaled to each other as to what each team of two was going to do and what specific Cultist they were to take on initially as their mark. The signal was given and in seconds short bursts of laser blasts were sounding off in the cave.

Surprisingly, the Cultists were taken out almost without difficulty and dropped instantly. The organized chanting and gurgling growls stopped and there was almost a sense of relief in the air as the creatures stopped their ritual. Confusion started to run through the group and Narissa immediately took advantage of the situation. She eyed what she thought was an opening in the group as they seemed to start to wander away from their perfectly formed circle around the miner. She dashed in and grabbed the miner and pulled him to his feet.

“Come with me,” Narissa said as she continued to push him to his feet, motioning him back to the outer wall.

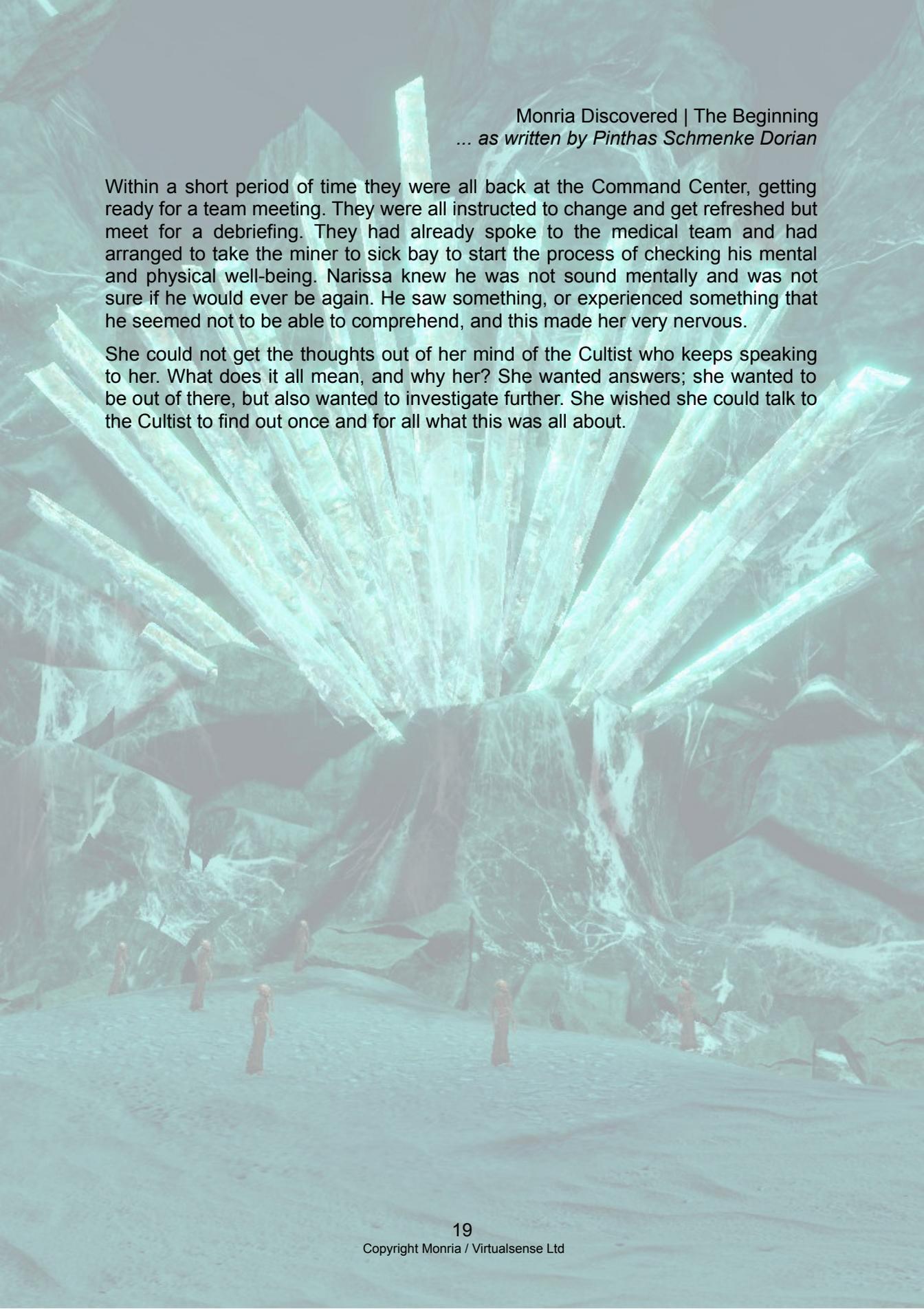
He got up from the ground unsteady, but followed her while still holding his head with one arm as Narissa took him the other, leading him away from the circles. “SHOGGOTH he was mumbling. They are called SHOGGOTH.”

Narissa made it to the wall and saw out of the corner of her eye a hooded figure in the distance as she looked back. Not one of the fallen Cultists, but another, and felt the familiar buzzing in her head. She knew it was the Cultist who seemed to be trying to communicate with her. It was all she could do to keep her composure, carry this unsteady and weak miner back to the teleporter area and deal with the buzzing in her head that she knew was coming from this Cultist.

“*You will soon come to us,*” she heard the voice in her head say. “*Be prepared, as we will be meeting very soon my Narissa.*”

There was then a sharp and intense snap in her head as if the Cultist had slammed a door in her face. She stumbled over her feet while running to the teleporter. Amazingly, the Shoggoth did not follow; they seemed to be staying where they were. Narissa knew that this Cultist regained control of them and they were instructed not to follow. For some unknown reason they were being allowed to take the miner and return back to base. Why, she wasn't sure, but nonetheless, she was glad to be getting out of there and going back to safety.

In the ride back to the Command Center, one of the scientists helped the miner to relax but was worried about his state of mind. He kept making sounds and repeating words ... *Tekeli-li.*” No one was really sure what he was trying to say but were sure they would soon find out.



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Within a short period of time they were all back at the Command Center, getting ready for a team meeting. They were all instructed to change and get refreshed but meet for a debriefing. They had already spoke to the medical team and had arranged to take the miner to sick bay to start the process of checking his mental and physical well-being. Narissa knew he was not sound mentally and was not sure if he would ever be again. He saw something, or experienced something that he seemed not to be able to comprehend, and this made her very nervous.

She could not get the thoughts out of her mind of the Cultist who keeps speaking to her. What does it all mean, and why her? She wanted answers; she wanted to be out of there, but also wanted to investigate further. She wished she could talk to the Cultist to find out once and for all what this was all about.

Ch 7 / An Exciting Discovery

Back in the Command Center, work was underway in the geological lab with a group of scientists. It seemed there was an excited buzz in the air with one of the recent discoveries regarding the Maladrite and Zoldenite ores.

"Trip, come here," said Karl Benson, one of the senior scientists on the project, "you have to see what we have discovered."

Trip was at one of the other tables in the lab speaking to another scientist about the events down in the cave. Trip was tall and trim; 5'10" about 185 lbs with toned muscles, *just lean and mean* as the saying goes. He kept in excellent condition for his youthful 170 years. He sported a full beard trimmed close to his face and had a balding head that was always closely shaved. He didn't like to wear reading glasses, but due to his age, he knew he had to. Trip was the kind of man who always seemed to look majestic, even when returning in an unkempt state from a recent exploration in the field. He looked over his glasses, which were always propped a little too low on his nose, and required him to adjust them frequently before they fell onto the floor.

"On my way, one sec," replied Trip as he started over to the table where Karl was working. About 5 feet away from the table Trip saw what he thought was a slight glow on the tabletop where there was a small piece of Maladrite ore.

"Is that ore glowing," Trip asked?

"Indeed, look at this," Karl said as he picked up the ore with a set of tongs. The glow seemed to radiate a fiery blaze of iridescent green in all directions.

It was one of the most beautiful colors Trip had ever seen, he thought. Deep green with a hint of iridescence that clearly captures the eye. The small piece of ore was so illuminating it gave a slight green hue to Karl's face.

"How are you doing that," Trip asked?

"I was testing the ore for its component properties," Karl responded. "I started with raw ore and progressed through various levels of refining up to 75% purity and then the glow appeared. I took what we learned from the transpolymer matrix that we use for the meteor resistant glass. While attempting to make a modified form of this ingredient, I added a different type of electromagnetic energy and manipulated the shape into more of a flat panel similar to what we manage on the polymer. Only this time I adapted the electromagnetic energy to penetrate a beam to the center of the crystal instead of the whole area. Apparently, some of the electromagnetic energy of the beam was stored in the crystal and then activated this energy aura.

I haven't finished testing this yet, but have also been measuring for any dangerous radiation exposure. There is none being given off currently. You see, this is a form of trans-storage. It absorbs the energy and then converts it to this light not unlike a photovoltaic cell but a bit different.

I think this is how the rocks underground are generating the natural light that was reported. I still don't know how it is completely accomplished but I know that somehow that electromagnetic radiation is being converted by the ore, then redistributed by the matrix of the crystal and converted to light. If all this is true, this is an amazing energy source that can be used for multiple purposes. With enough of the ore aligned properly, I believe that this could eventually power almost everything, including our transportation and travel over long distances with very little cost. In essence, this could change the way we travel in space. I know it may take years to figure out but it is the start of a breakthrough we never dreamed of in our lifetime. I believe it is only years away or even sooner with the proper funding."

Trip was incredibly excited about the discovery and offered further possibilities.

"Do you know what this means," Karl said excitedly, "I think we can control the energy release and harness it into small packages. If I am correct, we can make amplifiers that would be able to magnify the natural power source of a detector and identify a mining claim, as well as amplify the source of the claim itself. We can upgrade our weapons many times over utilizing this energy. Almost any weapon could be enhanced if this was put into a device attached to the weapon and add intense energy damage to every strike. Really, this is an amazing discovery. I am sure I can work on creating a type of resistor for controlled release of energy; one pulse at a time. I would have to determine the recharge rate and speed ratios in which to manifest the charges. It would have to be stored in a limited use container and replaced at intervals, almost like a cartridge, but we could adapt it to work."

Trip's mind was reeling with this discovery. The amount of energy that this ore was able to utilize and store was second to none. They had never found anything like this in any planetary system to date, and they were sitting on the largest hoard of this mineral on Monria.

Trip asked the scientist to show him once again an independent trial on another piece of ore in order to make sure that this was truly able to be accomplished and it wasn't specific to an isolated event. He wanted verifiable results before discussing this with Gabriel Donovan to avoid looking like a fool.

Karl took another small piece of ore and isolated it within the holding cell. He then took another device to redistribute electromagnetic energy in the form of a beam and placed it approximately 3 feet away from the ore inside the container. He turned on the machine and powered up the electromagnetic array. Trip looked in amazement as he watched the beam penetrate the small piece of ore. In a matter of seconds the ore started to glow and radiate the same green iridescent hue. Karl turned off the beam and the piece of ore maintained its glow inside the box.

"That is amazing," stated Trip. "I definitely think you're onto something. Continue your experiments and let's discuss this later this afternoon when you've had time to evaluate in more detail what is happening within the ore matrix. Let's see if there's a way to maintain this energy source and manipulate the ore in its more refined state to use in sheet-like formations or even small cube-like shapes.

I think if we can identify a structure that will work within a small device we could easily create the amplifiers that you are speaking about.”

Trip left the geology lab in a hurry and made his way up the stairs of the space station, heading towards the meeting room. Trip was just about to enter the meeting room when he was stopped by Narissa.

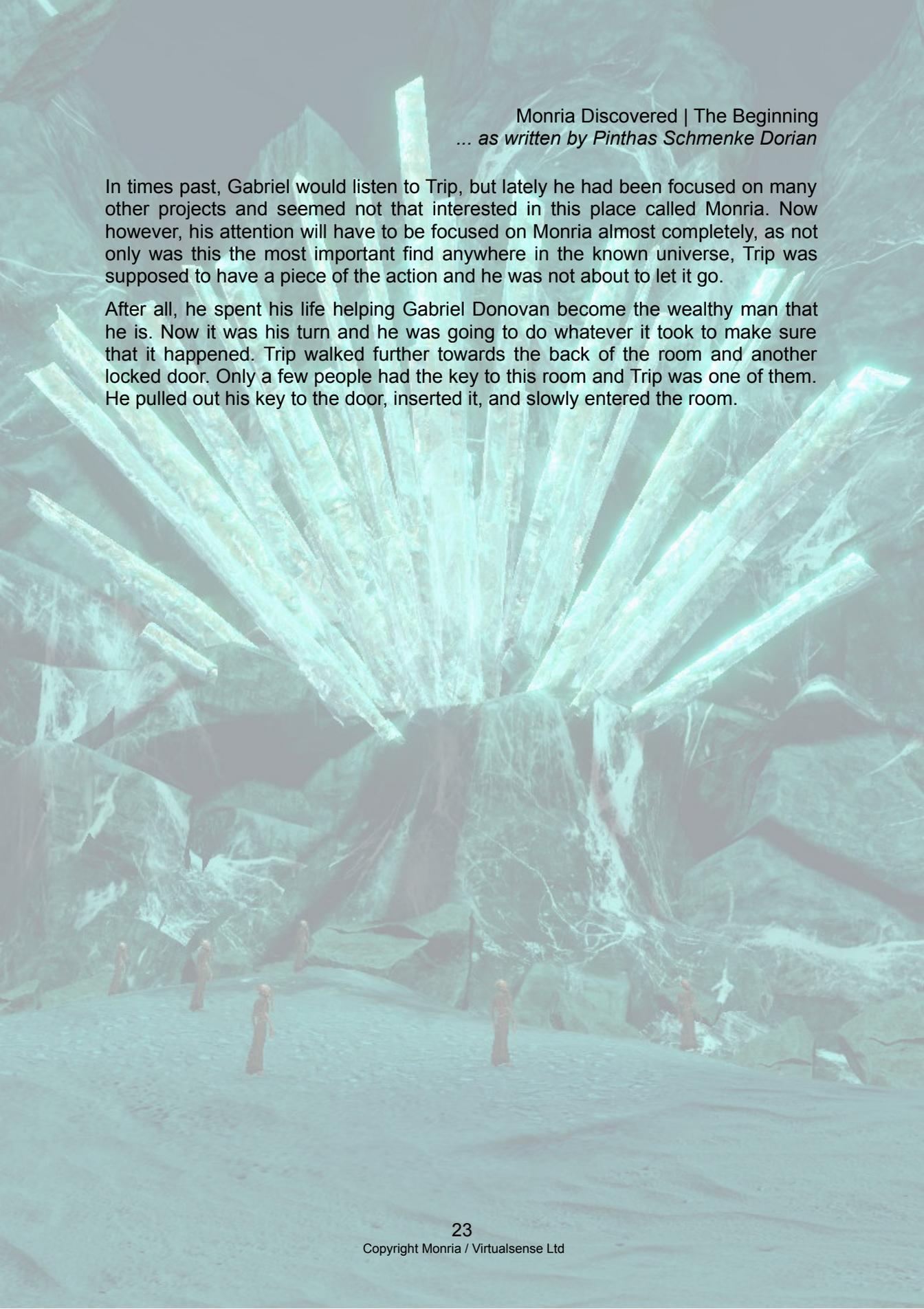
“Trip,” Narissa called after him, “I wonder if you have a moment to speak to me regarding the miner that we brought back from the caves. I’m concerned about his state of mind. I realize this may be an issue for the medical team to evaluate but since you’re in charge of the mining team I wanted to get your input. I’m curious if you had a chance to think about the timing of going back to the caves and how you would like us to approach that with regard to the mining operation. You see, I need to be prepared for anything, and I don’t need to remind you that anything could be down there. I think the Cultists and creatures we encountered may just be the tip of the iceberg. We’ve only been able to glance at three of the caves, and we know there is expected to be more areas to be evaluated. It is my concern that there may even be more dangerous creatures that we have yet to meet, as well as more organized Cultist activity.”

“Yes Narissa,” Trip responded, “I am just as concerned as you are, and I am giving this situation my highest priority. I was just going into the briefing room to have a conversation with the CEO to discuss this very issue. I will let you know what his recommendations are once I finish my debriefing with him. After that, if you have any questions, I would be happy to discuss them with you and even bring them up to Mr. Donovan myself.”

“Thank you Trip,” Narissa replied, “I will keep you informed with regard to how the miner is recovering. My concern however, is for his mental state. I am not sure what kind of mind tricks the Cultists use but I am concerned that they were able to use them on the rescued miner if not the other miners that we haven’t found yet. I am anxious to return so that we can rescue the rest of them, and hopefully, they are still alive and well.”

With that, Trip nodded his head and turned to enter the meeting room. Trip paused first to get himself a glass of water. His hands were shaking just a little as he poured the water from the pitcher into the glass. He took a deep breath and tried to calm himself. He had been involved in this industry for many years and came across situations that required extra care. However, this situation was even more complicated. This was not just a mining operation that required a little security to keep the locals out. This was the largest find of one of the most valuable ores known, and not only did they need to protect their assets, they needed to deal with a group of unknown Cultists and creatures they had not experienced before.

He was concerned that this current security team was not capable of performing the task and was going to need a “special” team to be deployed in order to protect their assets. This is what he needed to explain to the CEO, and make sure that he understood the seriousness of their situation.



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In times past, Gabriel would listen to Trip, but lately he had been focused on many other projects and seemed not that interested in this place called Monria. Now however, his attention will have to be focused on Monria almost completely, as not only was this the most important find anywhere in the known universe, Trip was supposed to have a piece of the action and he was not about to let it go.

After all, he spent his life helping Gabriel Donovan become the wealthy man that he is. Now it was his turn and he was going to do whatever it took to make sure that it happened. Trip walked further towards the back of the room and another locked door. Only a few people had the key to this room and Trip was one of them. He pulled out his key to the door, inserted it, and slowly entered the room.

Ch 8 / Debriefing the CEO, Gabriel Donovan

The room was not a very ornate room; as a matter of fact, one could almost say it was rather dull and simple. That was how it was supposed to appear to anyone who accidentally entered, or had purposefully attempted to break in. This room was far from that. There was, however, an ornate antique desk on the far side of the room with a very comfortable office chair. Hidden within the makings of the desk and chair was some of the highest technological instrumentation ever invented that money could buy, and Gabriel Donovan invested plenty for his secrecy from many things and many people. Not that he had enemies (of course there were some), but the issue was industrial espionage.

Ultimately, you were only as successful as your best secret, and if you had the edge in technology, you better have the edge in keeping that technology very secret. Your competition was always out there trying to destroy you, to take what you accomplished and duplicate it at a cheaper price. After all, *it's only business* as they all say. As long as it was not their business that was getting destroyed.

Trip sat in the chair and almost immediately a variety of lights and sounds were activated in front of him in an array of holographic images, along with screens of the Command Center and the caves as far as they have investigated. There was a screen in front of Trip which was specific to Mr. Donovan's office back on Earth hundreds of light years away, and the link took only seconds to register. Amazing, Trip thought, who would have ever dreamed they would be able to overcome linear communications but they did, and now, intergalactic communication was common.

The holograph monitor activated and Gabriel was on screen sitting in his chair at a desk similar to Trip's.

"Hello, Trip," greeted Gabriel, "how are you doing on this lovely evening, or is it day time where you are?"

"Very good, sir," Trip responded, and it is evening here as well, and sunset is just about to be upon us where we are."

"I hope you have good news for me," replied Gabriel.

"Indeed sir," Trip offered, "however, there is a slight fly in the ointment, but we can overcome it. I do have exciting news for you though. Something that we did not expect was discovered."

With this, Trip started explaining the ore and its glowing properties to Gabriel. He left nothing out while trying to explain the concepts to him and making sure he understood how important a find this was. After a few interjecting questions from the CEO, Trip had concluded his briefing with him. He covered everything from updates on the disappearance of the group of miners, to finding one of the miners and his mental condition. He also included their encounter with the Cultists and Shoggoth creatures in the caves. There was a pause in the conversation until Gabriel spoke up.

“This is the most amazing development we have had in years. Not only do we have an opportunity to claim the largest find in history of one of the most valuable ores known to man, we have an opportunity to learn from these Cultists to see if we can capture and develop the mind control they possess. There must be some device that they use to control those creatures. I just can't believe that it's a natural ability. We also must find out what their technology is for creating those caves as completely as they have, and convince them to help us.”

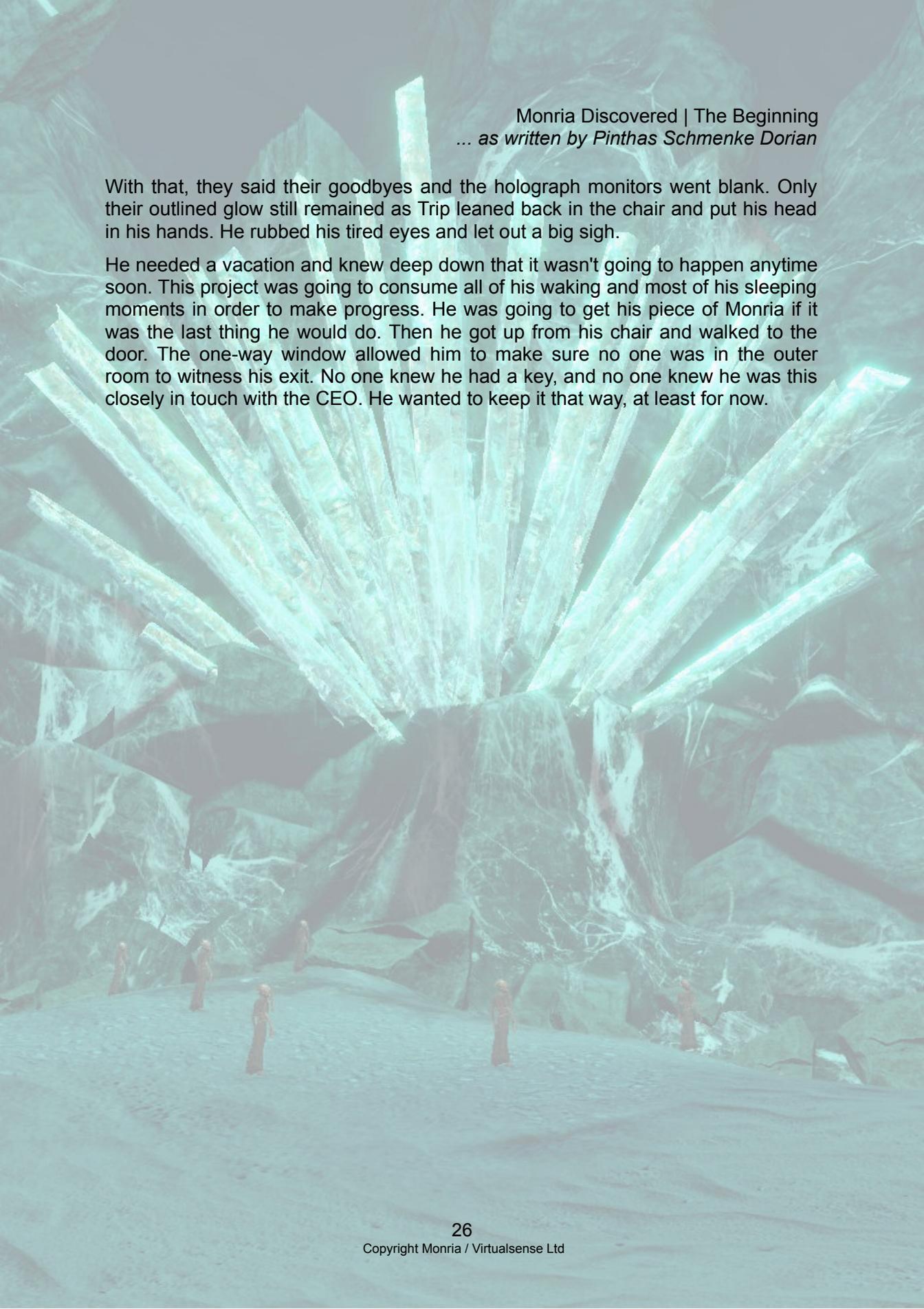
“Sir, I don't think you understand,” replied Trip. “They do not seem to even be interested in helping us; they seem to want to kill us. It's as if we have disturbed their sacred ground and we are being told in a gentle way to get the hell out of there or it will get worse. I am not saying that I am afraid to confront them but I think we better be ready to protect ourselves because we have no idea how many creatures are even down there.”

“Well, I hope you are wrong on that point,” Gabriel responded, “but I do agree that we need to find out how many there are down there, and definitely have a force of security to deal with them if we have to. I know that they think this moon is theirs, but this is Monria and I own it, and no one is going to take that from me; especially cheap trick charlatans who use mind tricks to scare people away. We have the most advanced weaponry known to mankind and I will use it all if I have to. They better get used to it because if they want to make trouble, I will deport them. As far as I am concerned, they are squatters living on my land for free up to now and I have been a humble landlord. Make sure they know that they will either move out of our way, help us in our mission, or get off my land.”

Gabriel's rant escalated in tone so much that Trip had to lower the volume on the intercom. If only he could openly express his opinion, that he thought Gabriel was an unreasonable son-of-a-bitch, and that it was easy for him to sit in his ivory tower giving commands when he was not in the thick of it trying to do something while not getting killed in the process. He doesn't understand what it takes to do this job, and never will. It took everything Trip had to contain himself.

All he could muster in his controlled anger was, “Yes sir, I would request to have that special security force here as soon as possible, and as many as you can spare up to one hundred total if available. It will take some time to get them here and the sooner they start on their way the better. We plan to get into the larger caves starting sometime tomorrow, or the latest the day after. I want to make sure we have a complement of personnel here to give the current team enough backup in case we need it, which I think we will.”

“Okay, I will get a group ready after this call and see if I can get them on the fastest transport possible to get them there within the week. It may take a few days to get the team together, but getting there is not as hard as it used to be since that wormhole was discovered. We can use that as a transport to reach you rather quickly. I just need time to find the personnel and organize the trip. It should only be a matter of a few calls. There are enough people who owe me favors and it's time to collect on them to assist in this effort.”



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With that, they said their goodbyes and the holograph monitors went blank. Only their outlined glow still remained as Trip leaned back in the chair and put his head in his hands. He rubbed his tired eyes and let out a big sigh.

He needed a vacation and knew deep down that it wasn't going to happen anytime soon. This project was going to consume all of his waking and most of his sleeping moments in order to make progress. He was going to get his piece of Monria if it was the last thing he would do. Then he got up from his chair and walked to the door. The one-way window allowed him to make sure no one was in the outer room to witness his exit. No one knew he had a key, and no one knew he was this closely in touch with the CEO. He wanted to keep it that way, at least for now.

Ch 9 / Who the Hell is Cthulhu | Second Miner Found

Trip went back to his room and rested for the night knowing that the morning would bring about another outing into the caves and most likely an encounter with more creatures. They would have to be careful as they would only have a limited team with them because the extra security would not be there for a week. It would make more sense to just not go into the caves until the extra help arrived but they needed to try to find and rescue the miners. Every hour they waited meant more chances those men were not going to make it out of there, and if they did, they may not be the same as they went in, not unlike Carl Beckman who seemed to be mad and out of his mind for now.

He closed his eyes and tried to rest but unsettling dreams were all he was able to muster. Within a few hours he was back up and contemplating their next move. He made his way to the kitchen and lounge area thinking he could rest there but saw Narissa sitting in a chair. She was relaxing, her knees bent, feet flat on the easy chair close to her and long night shirt pulled over her knees down to her feet. Her hands were wrapped around her legs holding them close to her. He thought it was a rather comfortable way to sit but he couldn't do that. Her eyes were closed until he started to approach from across the room. She opened her eyes and looked up at him.

"What are you doing up this late at night," she asked?

"I couldn't sleep at all," Trip responded, "how about you?"

"I keep having this feeling that there is more down there," Narissa said, "and we need to get back as soon as possible. The morning can't get here fast enough for me. I want to try to get the rest of the miners out of there."

"I know, and I agree," Trip replied, "but we all need some rest if we are going to be worth a damn in the morning. We are sure to run into more of those creatures; what are they called, Shoggoth?"

"Yes, they are called Shoggoth from what the miner told us," Narissa stated. "Trip, can I ask you a question about Monria? What is the history here, do we know anything that can help us regarding what we are facing?"

"The Cultists believe that this Cthulhu is an old creature dating back thousands of years," Trip began, "and it is rumored that the cult itself dates back to the beginning of humanity. I had read that Cthulhu is a Great Old One and lies in a deep sleep in a place called R'lyeh. At present, we don't know where this location is, but the Cultists are waiting for Cthulhu to awaken in order to infest the souls of mankind. There was a report from planet-side that spoke of more ancient information regarding different branches of the Cult. It appears that they have existed in distant dark places around the universe waiting patiently for the day when the stars are aligned and Cthulhu is ready to rise again."

"Apparently, it is the Cult's responsibility to summon Cthulhu," Trip continued. "We are not sure how many Cultists there are, nor how many planets they occupy. At least we know that some of them exist on Monria. We also learned however, that there are those called Deep Ones that not only serve Cthulhu, but also Dagon and Hydra. Dagon rules the Deep Ones and said to be able to keep them in check, but we have no further information with regard to this."

However, it was discovered that the Esoteric Order of Dagon established in the early 1800s in Innsmouth, Massachusetts on Earth was closely associated with the Cultists who fed the locals to them to not only keep them appeased, but to reap rewards of fish and gold for doing so. To date, we have found no existence of this order on Monria, but we are not being complacent in being alert.

We have asked some of our people to contact a few ancient religious historians in order to gather as much intel as we can on this Cult. We need to understand as much as possible about their religion and all aspects of Cthulhu that we can.

I remember bits and pieces from years ago having come in contact with a priest who had mentioned information about Cthulhu. He said that the creature had never been directly described by the few who had seen him who went stark raving mad. He told me about a statue found that apparently depicted Cthulhu. The priest went on to describe in such graphic detail what he saw that I never forgot his intense words of warning to me.

He described it as an anthropoid form, but with a cephalopod head covered in octopus-like tentacles. It had a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings on its back. It is described as being a combination of squid, dragon and man together in one body.

I have asked a few back on Earth to try and locate this priest, if he is still alive, in order to gather as much information as we can. I can't remember the exact area where I was when I saw him so many years ago but I have provided as much information as possible, even though I don't think it is enough. I can't even remember his name. In addition, others from the research team at DSEC on Earth are working on gathering as much information as they can relating to Cthulhu and these Cultists. I have asked them to relay the info to us as quickly as possible."

"I definitely would not want to come in contact with him," Narissa said.

"Nor would I," Trip responded, "I think we ought to get some sleep now because we have an early morning with only a few hours left to get some rest."

The morning came quickly and everyone was gathering in the kitchen area making their breakfast, as well as getting prepared for the day.

"Good morning everyone," greeted Trip. "Hopefully everyone slept well. We need to get into the caves and search for the missing miners. I was able to get on the com with our CEO and he is sending in a complement of security. However, they will not be here for approximately one week. We will have to continue to search for the miners as best we can with our current Monria geologists and scientists."

I realize that we are going to have to encounter more of the Cultists and probably more of the Shoggoth creatures, and who knows what else while we enter the caves and go deeper into our exploration. One thing is certain however, we need to find those miners, and we need to find them fast.

I have a medical team working with Mr. Beckman, the recovered miner, trying to see if he can help identify where they might have been taken. But as you know, his state of mind is not the best at this moment. I am hoping that he comes around and at least is able to give us some information, or even a clue as to how to find the other miners. While we are down there I will keep in touch with the medical team, and if they get any information whatsoever that can help us, I will certainly pass it along. With that, we will break up into teams of two once again and then stay together during our journeys within the cave. Are there any questions?"

There were small mumbles within the group. However, no one had a specific question to ask. They all knew that they were heading back into danger and needed to be on their guard at all times.

"Alright, let us all meet back here in 30 minutes," Trip said, "and be ready to head out with all gear and weapons."

The group gathered together and headed out. It was a quiet one hour journey back to the caves, and Narissa was glad that she was able to catch an extra few moments of well needed sleep.

The entrance of the first cave was familiar to the team and they had no trouble reaching the opposite end from the teleporter. Narissa kept looking around during their walk to see if she could notice any other writings on the wall that would lead her to creating a comparison between the notes on the log entry and similar engravings on the walls. She even searched for the small pillars that were in the ground where the last group of Cultists had been. However, they were gone. She found this interesting because they were not able to move the pillars themselves when they made the attempt. It seems as if the Cultists use these pillars for a specific ritual and can plant them at will where they choose.

Reaching the teleporter was an uneventful few minutes, but they arrived safely.

"Alright everyone, teams of two," Trip ordered. "We will use the teleporters as we did last time. Two at a time, send a message through and we will regroup behind the teleporter as a team."

This time when they entered the teleporter Narissa carefully looked at the sensor array where the buttons were and definitely recognized a common theme to many of the markings. She was confident that these markings in the log entry could definitely be a message that the miners were trying to interpret, but where and how she was not sure. They pushed the buttons and moved through the teleporter with ease, while the rest of the team followed.

They were in the second cave now and continued to watch to make sure there were no signs of the Cultists or Shoggoth creature. They made their way to the back end of the cave, and to their amazement, lying next to the teleporter was the second miner. He was on the ground unconscious, and was dressed in a Cultist robe. The team looked around before they ran over to the miner. The three security personnel kept watch as the other three attempted to arouse him to make sure he was unharmed. They recognized him as Howard Pittman. Howard slowly awakened and he was initially unsure of where he was, but they were all relieved that he appeared physically unharmed.

Trip was the first to speak. "Howard, are you okay? Can you hear me?"

"Huh," the miner said. "Where am I? What am I doing here? How did I get here?"

"Do you remember anything," Trip asked?

"I remember... I remember... we were putting our gear down in the beginning cave area," Howard said, "and we were astonished by what we saw."

With that, Howard paused, stared blankly into the distance and started to hold his head in his hands. He began to rock a bit from a seated position on the ground and started to moan.

"*Tekeli-Li Tekeli-Li*," he blurted as he continued to hold his head in his hands and rock as if trying to remember something. Suddenly, he stopped. Hands still on his head, he looked up and stared at the far end of the cave as if he was looking at someone, or remembering something. He then turned and faced one of the team members that was helping him. He lowered his hands from his head, opened his eyes and looked directly into the scientist's eyes.

"Where am I? Where am I? I know you, don't I? You seem familiar but I cannot remember your name."

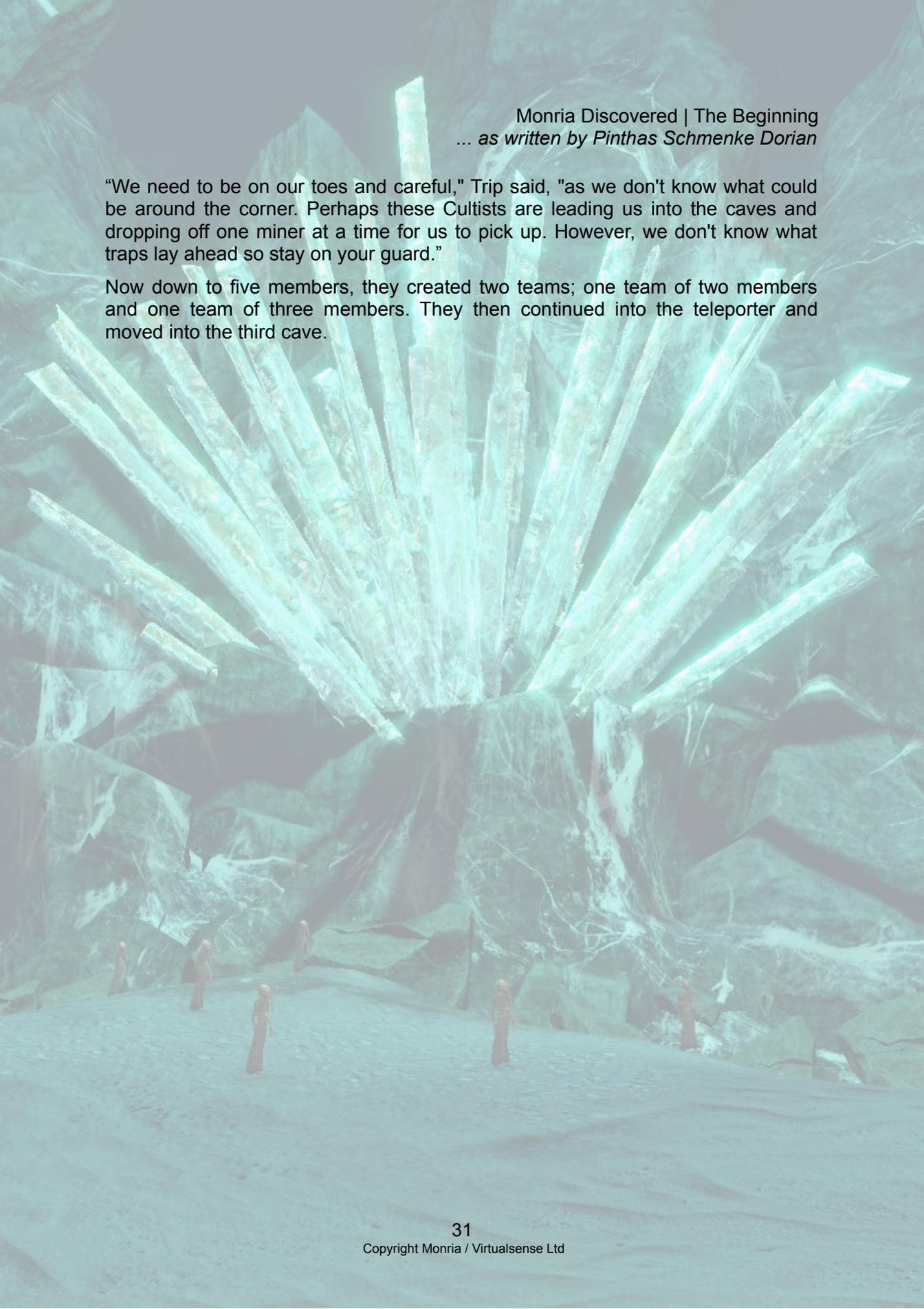
"I am Chuck Iverson. We are here to help you. We are going to take you back to the station and get you to sick bay."

In moments, two of the scientists were helping Howard get to his feet.

"We should get him back to the station," Dan replied, "or at least back to the first cave where it is much safer. Perhaps one of us can stay with him there and leave the five of you to move forward. I do not think we can leave him alone. It will take an hour to get back to the base."

"I agree," Trip replied. "Chuck, you take Howard back to the initial cave entrance and wait there for us. Keep in radio contact. I will update you with what we find. See if you can trigger Howard's memory, and if he can tell us any more information about the Cultists and what is going on down here."

With that, Chuck helped Howard up to the teleporter platform and in moments they were gone.

A large, glowing, crystalline structure in a cave, with several people standing in the foreground. The structure is composed of numerous long, thin, translucent crystals that radiate from a central point, creating a fan-like shape. The crystals have a bright, ethereal glow. The cave walls are dark and rocky, with some smaller crystals scattered around. In the foreground, several small figures of people are standing on a sandy or dusty floor, looking up at the massive structure. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and awe-inspiring.

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“We need to be on our toes and careful,” Trip said, “as we don't know what could be around the corner. Perhaps these Cultists are leading us into the caves and dropping off one miner at a time for us to pick up. However, we don't know what traps lay ahead so stay on your guard.”

Now down to five members, they created two teams; one team of two members and one team of three members. They then continued into the teleporter and moved into the third cave.

Ch 10 / In the Darkness We Will Come

Back at sick bay the team was working on their continued evaluation of Carl Beckman, the rescued miner. The team consisted of three highly trained medical personnel, Dr. Samuel Waters, Dr. Thomas Harris and Dr. Becky Ramirez. Dr. Waters was scanning Carl and saw something embedded beneath his skin.

"Thomas, come take a look at this scan. There seems to be something embedded beneath Carl's skin."

"Yes I see it," said Dr. Harris. "What do you make of it?"

"Actually, I'm not quite sure," Dr. Waters replied, "but based on the descriptions that were given to us from the team that explored the underground, it seems to be the same type of phosphorescence that they found in the caves."

"Yes, that's a possibility," Dr. Harris responded. "I wonder if the geologists working on the sample that was brought back could evaluate this as well."

"Perhaps we could get a sample removed from Carl's skin," said Dr. Waters, "and do a comparison to see if they match."

With that, Dr. Waters took a small sample of skin with residue embedded in it.

"I will get on the intercom and let Angela Grayson know the sample is on the way," said Dr. Waters, "and update her on what we think so she can evaluate it and make a comparison between the two samples."

Dr. Waters returned to the miner and continued his evaluation. He wanted to identify what happened in an effort to provide treatment that would help to restore Carl to a more stable state of health. Physically, he seemed not to have been harmed, but remained in a somewhat confused state. Dr. Waters gently woke Carl to engage in communication that hopefully would shed some light on what happened.

"Carl, I am Dr. Waters, do you understand me?"

He helped Carl to sit up so he could observe his facial reactions. He was still connected to the sensors that monitored his body functions, and had special attachments on his scalp that would register brainwave activity. Dr. Waters was looking for any altered brainwave functions.

Carl looked at Dr. Waters with a blank stare that seemed to look beyond him. He appeared disoriented at first, but then Carl began to speak.

"In the darkness we will come, bound together we are one," Carl uttered, and he repeated this over and over five or six times. *"In the darkness we will come, bound together we are one. In the darkness we will come, bound together we are one."*

Not knowing what was happening in sick bay with Carl and Dr. Waters, the scientist in cave one who was helping Howard Pittman, also experienced similar words being spoken by him.

"In the darkness we will come, bound together we are one. In the darkness we will come, bound together we are one."

The scientist in the cave, startled for a moment, grabbed a digital pad and started documenting what the miner was saying.

"In the darkness we will come, bound together we are one."

Neither doctor nor scientist in their respective places knew that both miners were uttering the same words at the same time.

In sick bay, the doctor continued to monitor Carl's physical condition in an attempt to evaluate his brainwave activity. He discovered that the pattern of brainwave activity changed while Carl was speaking those words. The pattern was of a higher level of organized brainwave activity and piqued interest.

The stare of Carl into the distance faded suddenly once the words he had spoken ended. He then tilted his head down, put his hands on his face and started mumbling and moaning again. No audible words were spoken, just a sense that the mumbling might be reflecting his confusion and pain. Dr. Waters did his best to respect the behavior as he had no idea what Carl was experiencing, nor what he had gone through while captive by the Cultists. However, he felt obligated to at least determine how he could further help Carl without causing more distress.

He wasn't sure how he was going to accomplish that, but he knew that if something in the underground could cause this amount of pain and madness, there must be a way to reverse it, or make it more bearable. He gave Carl another sedative injection and laid him back down in hopes that it would calm him and provide some relief that would reduce his relentless turmoil. However, he felt a bit helpless and feared that he wouldn't be able to help Carl much unless the team in the caves could find more answers.

Samuel got on the intercom to the members in the cave and spoke directly to Trip.

"Trip, are you there?"

"Yes, I'm here Sam, What have you found?"

"I just wanted to inform you that I was trying to get some information from our miner Carl Beckman. I woke him from his sedated state and he spoke, but he wasn't himself. He seemed to be in a trance of some sort, and uttered the same words over and over again."

"What did he say," asked Trip?

"He only said, *"In the darkness we will come, bound together we are on,"* replied Sam, "and he kept repeating it over and over again until he suddenly stopped. He then reverted into his madness and I re-sedated him. What do you make of it?"

"I'm not sure," replied Trip. "Were those the only words he spoke?"

"Yes, that is all he said several times before it suddenly stopped," Sam said.

"I want to let you know," Trip responded, "that we found a second miner. He seemed to be in the same state of madness. He tried to remember what happened to him, and seemed a little more lucid than Carl. He is back with Chuck waiting in the first cave for us until we finish exploring another cave. We will bring him back and maybe you'll have better luck getting more information out of him. I think it's key to find out what caused this strange behavior by both men."

"Will do," said Sam. "That was a good find. We have now recovered two of the miners with four more to go. I hope we can get them in time before madness sets in with them as well. However, it's also important to find out what the Cultists are doing to them, and what methods are being used."

"Thanks for the update," Trip replied. "Keep me informed if there's anything else."

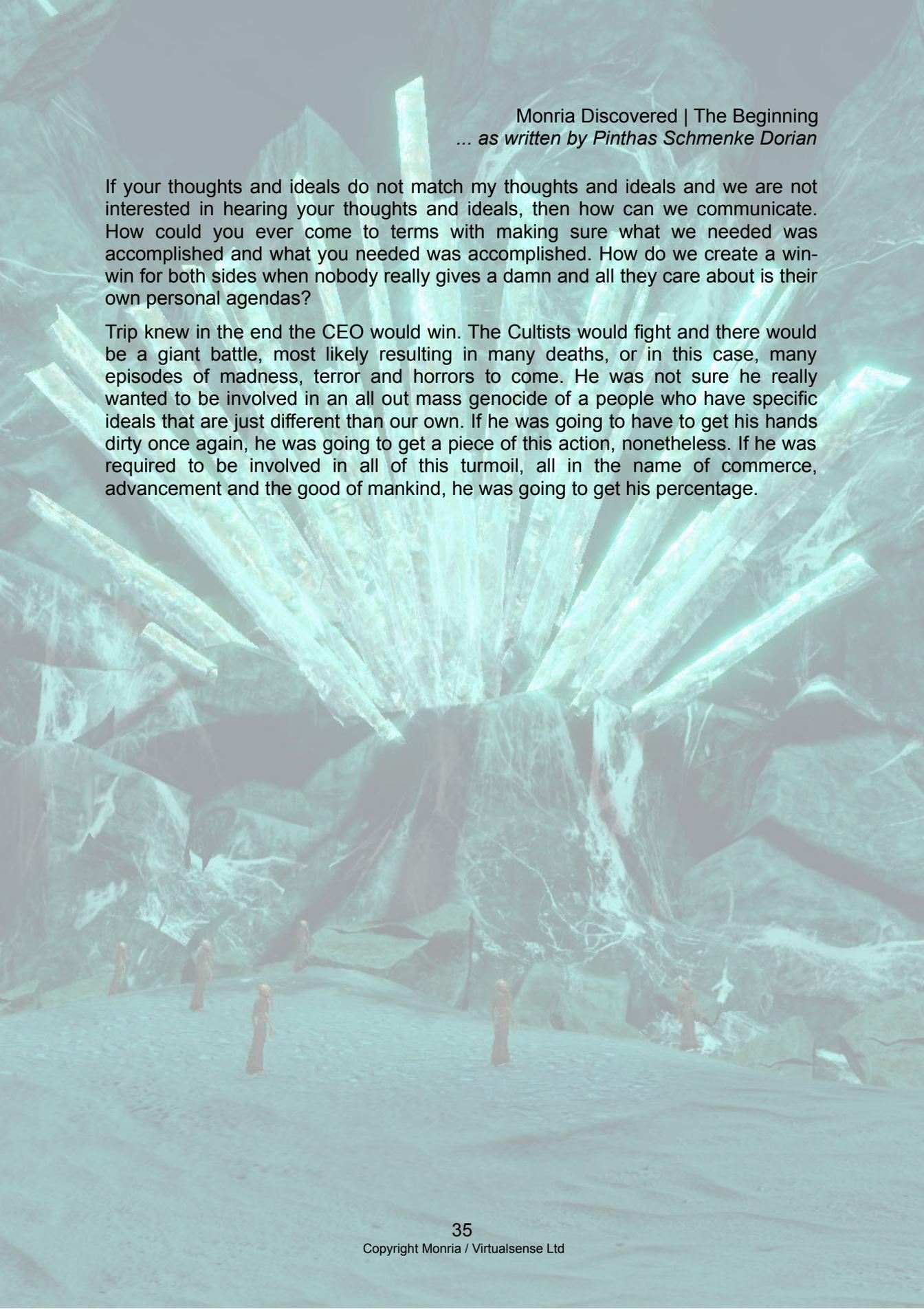
"Affirmative," Sam responded, "I will continue with evaluations of Carl here, to see if I can gain any further information. If you find anything during your explorations that you think might benefit us, let me know. I think it would also be helpful if a Cultist could be captured alive and unharmed. I'm not sure whether that would be possible or not, nor am I sure that we would be successful learning anything further. They seem to be using some sort of advanced technology based on findings so far, but I fear that we will not be able to find a solution otherwise if we aren't able to tap into their abilities."

"Understood," Trip said, "over and out."

The conversation ended and they both went back to the tasks at hand. The doctor still working on his patient and Trip still trying to find his way into the third cave, not knowing what would be found. Meeting the Cultists, the Shoggoth, or even a new, unknown enemy is always a possibility. If they were able to communicate with the Cultists it would make it easier. Knowing what they wanted and how we could help would simplify things, but it seems a daunting effort at best.

Although the CEO is claiming Monria as his moon, there's no mistake that the Cultists, the Shoggoth, and who knows who else, have been here for eons. The Cultists seem to be waiting for the stars to align in order to perform some ritual to raise Cthulhu from a place called R'lyeh, wherever that is, and all we want to do is mine some ore so that we can advance our own technology.

Communication is a challenge these days. It appears that Gabriel is more interested in his wealth than advancing this mission to be of more benefit to all. I don't think he understand the complexity and depth of what it is we are faced with. Communication is key, but bringing everyone to the table to come to a meeting of the minds seems to be somewhat futile. When there is difficulty getting your own team members and boss on the same page, it lowers morale and causes stress.



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If your thoughts and ideals do not match my thoughts and ideals and we are not interested in hearing your thoughts and ideals, then how can we communicate. How could you ever come to terms with making sure what we needed was accomplished and what you needed was accomplished. How do we create a win-win for both sides when nobody really gives a damn and all they care about is their own personal agendas?

Trip knew in the end the CEO would win. The Cultists would fight and there would be a giant battle, most likely resulting in many deaths, or in this case, many episodes of madness, terror and horrors to come. He was not sure he really wanted to be involved in an all out mass genocide of a people who have specific ideals that are just different than our own. If he was going to have to get his hands dirty once again, he was going to get a piece of this action, nonetheless. If he was required to be involved in all of this turmoil, all in the name of commerce, advancement and the good of mankind, he was going to get his percentage.

Ch 11 / Narissa Thompson Captured by Cultists

The team, now down to five members, regrouped in the deeper cave behind the teleporter. Trip was the first to speak.

"As mentioned, we are going to break into two teams; a team of three and a team of two. Narissa, Andy, and Dan will be together in a team. Ben and I will make up the other team. We will separated with each team taking a side of the cave and observe our surroundings to look for items, objects and of course, more of those creatures and Cultists."

With that, the group separated into their respective teams, and started to move further into the cave. Trip was the first to raise his hand to halt and motion that he noticed something up ahead.

It was a group of Shoggoth creatures but he also saw another creature they had not seen yet. It resembled a big arachnid but with a deformed human-shaped head. It appeared as if it had been bioengineered.

It seemed that the creatures were working in tandem with each other, and looked as though they were in the process of excavating another section of the cave. They were doing this with very little effort, and moved rock as if it were sand or dirt. This was quite a feat Trip thought, because no tools the team had at their disposal could move rock that easily. If they were to encounter them face-to-face, surely the battle would be even more difficult than any they experienced so far.

He signaled for everyone to ready their weapons and be on the alert. He knew once they moved closer that there would be a potential firefight, and he wanted to be as best prepared as possible.

The team had advanced approximately halfway through the cave to their best determination, and as they continued to move forward, Narissa started to lag behind. Initially, her team thought that she was taking up the rear to make sure that nothing was coming from behind. However, they realized all but too late that Narissa was really in a different state of mind. The team had been separated in a place they did not want to be caught. They were focused on watching the two creatures excavating the cave and now realized that Narissa had fallen so far behind that she was out of sight.

The team froze as they saw a single hooded figure that appeared to be guiding the creatures. They looked in amazement as the Cultist focused movement of his arms in different directions while beams of a greenish hue emanated from his hands. The beams were extending to each of the creatures as if guiding them in their excavation. The team looked on in astonishment at the ease at which these creatures were able to perform their tasks so efficiently.

Unexpectedly, the dark hooded Cultist wavered and stopped. He turned in the direction of the group and once more motioned with his hands. This time, a more explosive aura of greenish hue circled around the creatures and then disappeared.

The creatures stopped working and moved away. The Cultist turned towards the group with a more intense focus where they could see him more clearly. Although they couldn't make out the face underneath the hood, they could see a form of a smile. They heard the sound of a voice, but couldn't make out any of the words.

Finally, they heard "He He" in a seeming snicker as the Cultist raised his hands bringing forth the greenish hue once again. This time, however, he was not pointing his hands in any one direction. He was merely moving them close to his body in a circular motion. His fingers were entwined, and he kept wrapping his hands around each other like he was gently squeezing something. It only took moments before for this motion completed and he opened them again. In front of him floated a small circular object that was similar to the green hue that they had seen before. However, this object seemed to be the size of a small ball and was hovering in front of the Cultist. Suddenly it moved away from the Cultist and past the team toward the area where Narissa disappeared. Simultaneously, the group had a sickening feeling in the pit their stomachs and sensed that the green ball was not for them but was headed toward Narissa.

Trip motioned to the team to start heading back. They started slowly stepping backwards from where they were but the Cultist seemed to know what the team had been planning and started to walk towards them, matching their every step and then started to speak.

"Oh, I see you have come here to say hello," began the Cultist. "Perhaps you are here to speak to me; perhaps you are here to find out information. Do not leave just yet, I have things I would like to say and share with you."

The team froze in their tracks not knowing what to do in that moment. They knew they needed to go back to Narissa and find out what was going on between her, the green sphere and this Cultist. Now they faced this Cultist speaking out to them at the same time, and purposely delaying their returning to her.

"My name is Trip, we mean you no harm." Trip spoke as he continued to walk backward slowly, still facing the Cultist. The team watched Trip continue to move and they mimicked his backward pace while continuing to maintain eye contact with the Cultist. They were doing their best to reach Narissa as well.

"You gentlemen should not leave me so quickly," said the Cultist, "Narissa will be fine. I will be taking good care of her for a while. You have no need to be concerned about her welfare. She will be coming with me and I will show her things she has never seen before, things that she has forgotten, things that the prophecies have told us she will need to know. You will be leaving here one way or another. It is up to you whether you do so peacefully, or whether we have a confrontation. I do not believe that she would want you to have a confrontation, as my Shoggoth and my Yog would tear you apart."

With this, the Cultist chuckled a most horrible and evil laugh which sent shivers down everyone's spine.

Trip's mind was moving at lightening speed. What could he possibly do? If they went back to help Narissa, this Cultist would surely unleash his creatures upon them, and as warned, they would certainly be torn apart. He did not want to leave her down here and he did not really know what options he had.

"What is so important about Narissa," Trip asked, "what is she to you?"

"Well, that is none of your business," the Cultist replied, "and when it becomes your business I will let you know. For now, I will offer you a trade. I know that you have lost some of your people down here. I know where they are located. I will trade you one of your lost miners, and in return, you will give me Narissa. What do you say to that, Trip?"

There was a tone in the Cultist's voice that Trip sensed was more of mockery and sarcasm than in any way a form of assistance or a form of trade. Trip also sensed that this Cultist would do what he pleased, when he pleased, and how he pleased. He got the feeling that this Cultist did not seem to think that there was anything that he was incapable of accomplishing and did not mind the costs in which he was to accomplish it. He appeared to Trip to be severely narcissistic mixed with evil, and would accomplish his mission at any cost.

This Cultist was enjoying the moment a little too much, and that this game he was playing with Trip and Narissa was just that, a game. A sense of wills, a test of ego. This Cultist seemed not to have one particle of concern over any of the group, or what happened to them. Trip sensed that he would unleash these creatures upon them at any moment just to see and experience the events.

No, Trip knew that he had to make this trade, and he did not like being put in that kind of a position. The best case scenario he could see was getting one of the miners back in trade for Narissa without a firefight. He did not want to fight these creatures, as he knew their chances for survival were slim, and there would be casualties if they had to fight these creatures. Regardless, Trip did not want to give up Narissa at all, but he was not sure what his options would be and how they could make a better trade, or if he could even negotiate more out of this Cultist.

"If Narissa is so important to you, and you are willing to trade me back one miner," responded Trip, "why not just give me the rest of the miners since you know where they are, and help us put an end to this search? Why put us through all of this, when you could have easily just killed them, as well as take Narissa without any of our interference? And what do we call you?"

"Me, you can call me K'Tan Partathus," replied the Cultist. "Now take your miner and I will release the other three when I feel like releasing the other three. You can also consider yourselves lucky to get the ones that you have."

With that, there was a flash of green and the Cultist disappeared. In the distance, one of the lost miners was seen suspended in the air. Also, true to form in his narcissistic and sadistic way, K'Tan Partathus gave them creatures to fight that were blocking the team from reaching the miner.

Bastard, thought Trip. I will kill him myself the next time I see him.

“On your guard!” Trip called out. The group of four started to engage the creatures, two Shoggoth and the others Yogs that the Cultist had called them. They had been able to take out the Shoggoth recently with minor difficulty, thankfully. However, they did not know what it would take to defend themselves against the Yogs. They focused their fire on the Shoggoth as they knew they should be able to work together and take them out quickly. The Yogs however were a different story, they were faster, more ferocious, and came at the team with a vengeance.

They continued to back up in separate areas across the cave hoping the creatures would separate as well. The Shoggoth came after each team and were taken down with minimal difficulty. They continued to back away while firing their laser weapons but the approaching Yogs kept up the pressure.

Laser blast after laser blast the team kept shooting, but the Yogs seemed to be impenetrable, and none of their weapons were affecting them. The Yog struck at one of the security and knocked him back 8 feet. Andy landed on the ground near the wall conscious and a little stunned but unharmed. Trip had brought with him another weapon that he thought might come in handy in preparation for a different type of firefight. Instead of a traditional laser weapon, this was a melee weapon, a sword that discharged a higher and more intense energy grid with each strike.

Trip had been specifically trained in hand-to-hand combat, as well as other more traditional fighting styles. He became a scientist later in life making a career change as his age was starting to slow his reflexes. He kept his skills up as much as possible while in his current capacity in spite of his advanced age. It was for this reason that the CEO had kept him on all these years as one of the team leaders. He was skilled in many weapons, all types of security, covert operations and his current specific scientific acumen.

Trip took out his melee weapon and started defending himself against the Yog that was attacking. He yelled out to the others to keep the other one distracted. Trip came at the creature with an intensity even he was uncertain he still maintained, and thought to himself that this was not going to be the day he died. As Trip swung his sword the creature backed up almost as if it was afraid of the weapon. It didn't seem that Trip was doing any major harm to the creature, yet it continually backed up as if confused. Trip thought perhaps that the creature possessed a bit of intellect, and in the process of determining what maneuvers would be needed to defend itself. Maybe these creatures did have minds of their own when Cultists weren't present, and could also sense when their own death was close at hand.

Using a skill from his martial arts training, Trip screamed at the top of his lungs trying to scare the creature knowing that the loud sounds he made could sometimes startle other creatures, or even make them run away in fear and hide. The creature, taken by surprise, did start to falter and waver just enough that its hind legs buckled slightly and it almost tripped over itself while its front legs seemed to rise in the air.

Trip saw an opening underneath where he could penetrate and run his sword through the belly of the creature. With all his might and energy, Trip lunged himself toward the belly of the creature hoping its front limbs would not come down and pound the life out of him. With his lunge, the blade entered the underbelly of the Yog who then cried out with an enormous squeal.

The Yog raised Trip into the air. Trip, still holding on to his sword, was lifted over four feet, and as the Yog was coming back down, Trip sensing his feet approaching the ground used the motion and the pressure of the creature's own weight against it. He pushed upward and thrust the rest of the sword into the belly of the Yog. The sword was long enough to pierce deeply into the creature causing multiple fluids to be released upon the ground.

There was an intense aroma of decay, and it was all that Trip could do to hold himself steady and firm and not pass out from the malodorous fumes and vapors. There seemed to be a noxious gas or poison coming out of this creature. Trip finally pulled the sword from its belly and an even larger amount of fluid continued to ooze from this creature. There was nothing Trip could do to avoid being sprayed with this fluid and his whole body armor ended up covered in slime.

Trip tried to avoid the noxious fumes coming off his armor while also avoiding being crushed by the Yog who seemed to be positioning itself on top of Trip as a final attempt to kill him before death. Trip moved as far and as fast as he could to the left trying to avoid the Yog completely but to no avail. One side of the creature's body fell and knocked Trip to the ground pinning him underneath. It was all Trip could do to attempt to move to get his legs out from underneath the creature. He suddenly heard screams in the distant and surmised that the others were being challenged by the other Yog. There was nothing he could do, because he was pinned underneath this now dead Yog.

Trip yelled out to his companions Ben and Dan. "I am throwing you my weapon, take it and penetrate the underbelly of the Yog. Use the laser weapons and shoot the underbelly and legs; perhaps you can penetrate a soft spot."

"On our way," Ben responded, "and understood."

"Do not get too close," Trip urged, "I am pinned underneath the other Yog and am trying to get myself out. Do not let that other creature head this way. Keep him busy, take the weapon and surround him on opposite sides. Make him rear up by shooting him from behind. Get his front legs to rise then penetrate his belly from underneath.

Trip took his weapon and flung it as far as he could in the direction of the voices. He heard the weapon fall to the ground and for a moment, there was only silence, but then heard a familiar voice.

Dan positioned himself behind the creature in an attempt to distract it. Ben took the sword and managed to maneuver to the front of the Yog. Andy was able to join the battle and help distract the creature.

Trip was still trying to move out from under the Yog that was crushing his leg. With his melee weapon, he could try to slice through the creature and free his leg, but without it, he was trapped. He knew that there was not much more he could do other than wait to see if the others were successful in taking down the other Yog. However, he still continued to break himself loose but to no avail.

Up until now, thoughts of Narissa had not even come to mind. While he had a moment to think about all the events that had recently happened, he began to wonder how she was doing, and reflecting on the words of K'Tan Partathus. He was concerned and saddened, and felt responsible. Whatever happened to Narissa, it was his fault. He knew it was his fault and had put her in this situation. He felt he put her in danger far beyond what she should have been exposed to, and always felt it was his responsibility to take care of the team. Now, he was pinned and helpless underneath this dead Yog.

With the inability to move, he was stuck waiting for someone to rescue him. His teammates were in peril fighting for their lives and there was absolutely nothing he could do. For the first time in his life, Trip could not remember when he felt this completely helpless. He could not remember a time when he had no option but to rely on someone else for help, someone else to save him, and for the first time, felt completely at peace with this feeling. For over one hundred years, he was the one who always helped others, and now he had no options, no choices. There was nothing he could do but wait to see what happens. Would he be saved by the team that he brought down here, the team that he helped to train, the team that he worked with so hard to teach? Would they be the ones to save his life?

Moments later there was silence, bringing Trip back to the reality of the situation. He thought that perhaps his security team lost the battle, and that the other Yog would seek him out to finish the job. He then heard footsteps and motion. He never heard the scream of the other Yog, but then he had been preoccupied with thoughts of Narissa and whether he would be saved or not. He knew his team had been successful killing the other Yog because in their approach, he could smell yet again the obnoxious fumes of death coming from the security team. They too had just been drenched with the unmistakable fluids from the Yog, but it was a scent that Trip welcomed in that moment because he knew he would now be rescued.

“Hello,” Dan said.

Trip looked at them with a smile on his face and said, “Get this thing off me!”

With that, the two men helped to lift the creature off of Trip while he slid himself out from underneath the dead Yog, checking his leg to make sure it was not broken. They then helped to lift Trip to his feet. He knew he had sprained his ankle, and felt fortunate he didn't fracture his leg, but he would still have to have it looked at in sick bay. The four of them walked over to the miner who was still suspended in the air. He had been watching everything, but didn't seem to understand what was going on. Trip thought the miner was confused and perhaps still under the control of the Cultist, exhibiting similar behavior to the other two rescued miners.

As they attempted to lower the miner, whatever force was holding him up gave way and was caught before landing on the ground.

"Can you hear me? How are you doing?" Asked Trip

"I am here. I do not... I am here. I cannot remember where I am," said Jimmy Crawford, the third of the rescued miners.

"We have you," responded Trip, "you are safe now in one of the caves. We are going to get you out of here and back to sick bay for an evaluation."

"I cannot remember," said Jimmy, all I felt was pain and madness. The madness, it was here. The madness was in me. It was in my head. This creature, I was forced to look into the face of this hideous beast. The madness that Cultist made me endure. The madness, it is still here, invading my mind."

With that, the miner put his hands on his head and started speaking the words "Tekeli-Li, Tekeli-Li" while rocking his head back and forth. He also kept repeating, "Get out of my head. Get out of my head."

The group walked back to where Narissa was in order to discover possible remnants of what happened to her, hoping to determine if there were any clues to where she had been taken. When they reached the area, they saw nothing. There was no sign of Narissa, no sign of K'Tan Partathus. However, there was another recorder on the floor. It was one of the log entries of the miners. It appears they put them on the ground in hopes that someone would find them, or perhaps they were traps put in place not by miners.

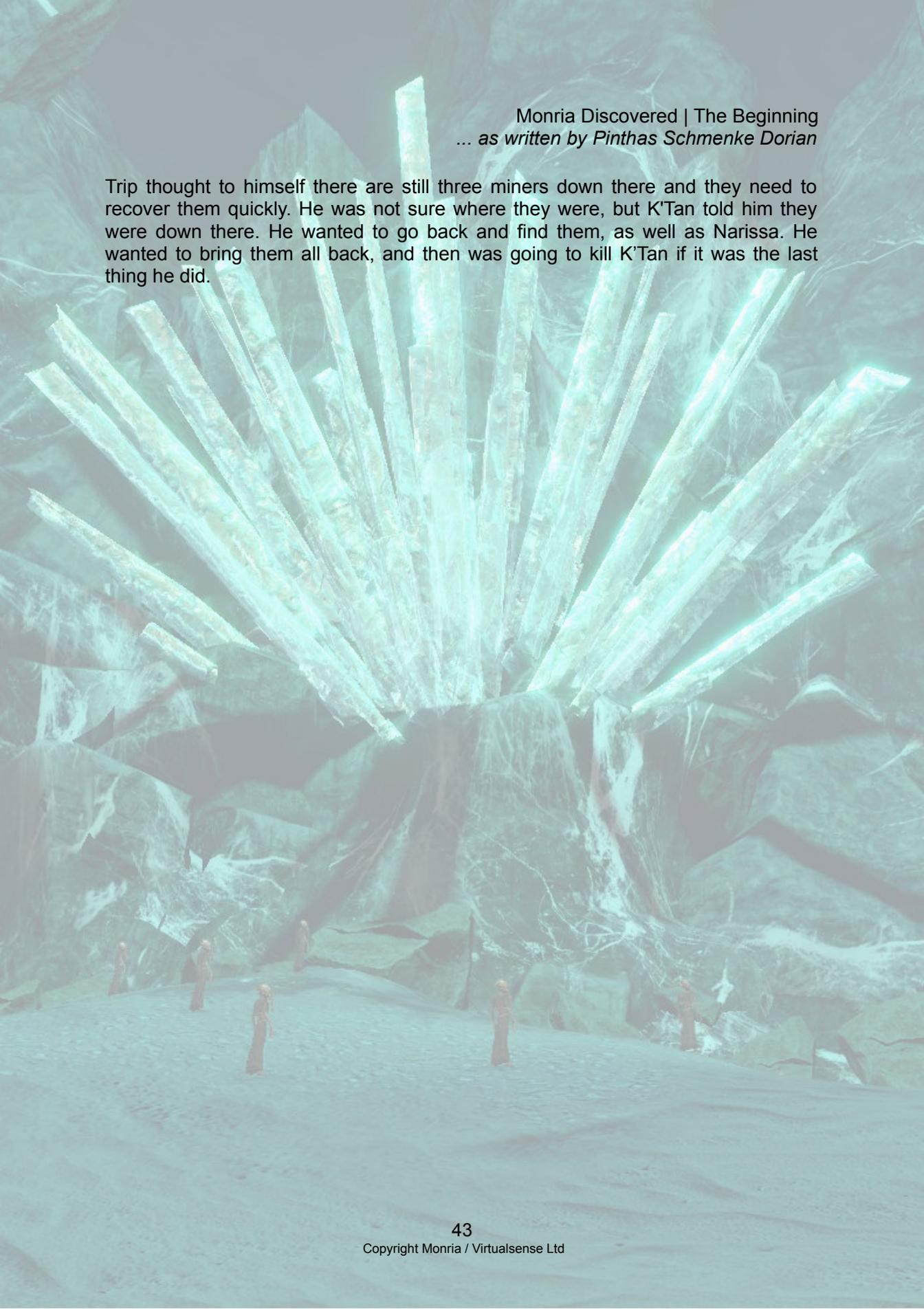
Trip picked up the recorder and listened to the log entry.

"*Journal entry #2:* The first cave looks amazing. Hard to believe such lush vegetation is so deep underground. There is running water along some of the walls, with what seemed to be ancient writing. Not able to decipher it just yet, but am keeping a journal to see if I can figure it out. I will copy some of the writings here in the log."

Trip saw the writing on the hologram, which seemed to be similar in design and shape to the other symbols that were on the first journal entry. He was not sure exactly what it meant but he knew he had to find out. They needed to spend more time in the lab trying to decipher this writing.

They headed back toward the end of the cave where the teleporter device was located and teleported to the entrance of the cave where they rendezvoused with the second miner and their teammate.

Within the hour they were back at the space station. They reached sick bay where everyone was being treated. The miners had been temporarily sedated. The doctor said they needed rest before any further evaluation was done. Trip's ankle was attended to and the team was getting ready for a debriefing. The doctor gave them a mild stimulant to help fight off the fatigue for a short period of time so that they would be able to participate in the debriefing.



Monria Discovered | The Beginning
... as written by Pinthas Schmenke Dorian

Trip thought to himself there are still three miners down there and they need to recover them quickly. He was not sure where they were, but K'Tan told him they were down there. He wanted to go back and find them, as well as Narissa. He wanted to bring them all back, and then was going to kill K'Tan if it was the last thing he did.

Ch 12 / K'Tan Partathus Reveals Narissa's Role

Narissa found herself lying on a bed in a comfortable room. She woke slowly at first. Then startled, sat up in bed quickly to evaluate her surroundings. Where was she? As she looked around, she noticed the room was relatively plain. The bed was of normal size, shape and contour. There was a door on the far end of the room, and a desk on the left side against the wall. There was a closet, a dresser and a mirror on the wall opposite the desk. Another door on the opposite side of the bed must be the bathroom she thought.

There were no windows in the room that she could see. Her eyes caught notice of a bookshelf to the left of the desk. The room was relatively clean and kept in decent shape but not to her standard. She got up and walked over to the bookcase. There was a familiarity to it, but she couldn't place it.

On the shelves were about 20 books, but only one drew her attention. She took it from the shelf to have a look. All the books were dusty, and a dust cloud formed as she pulled the book from the shelf. She coughed slightly and proceeded to gently dust off the book to keep the particles from floating in the air. The book was an ancient leather-bound edition, and one she had only read about but never saw. She realized it could be hundreds of years old, but she was more intrigued with what she saw on the cover.

The title was accompanied by an etched photo.

The book was entitled *Church of Cthulhu*, and on the front cover the etched picture was that of a hideous beast, a creature of unknown origin. In the etching was a group of people bowing down to this creature in prayer. At some level, there was a familiarity about this creature. She was drawn to it, and as much as she wanted to take her eyes from it, she could not stop looking. She had a sense of fear and terror, yet at the same time, an understanding and respect. She was curious to know who the Cultists were, and what was the *Church of Cthulhu*?

She took a seat at the desk and began thumbing through the pages of the book. It continued to reveal numerous pictures of beings and Cultists. Some of them were individual photos of beings and Cultists, and some were of Cultists bowing down to these creatures in different parts of the universe

One photo in particular captured her attention more than others. It was not dissimilar to the creature on the cover but a rendition of a more horrendous and hideous beast whose face was a mass of tentacles. Its body looked scaly and rubbery. Narrow rudimentary wings were attached to its back. This creature had an appearance not unlike that of a giant octopus with a body similar to a gargoyle.

Narissa found different depictions of this creature in various shapes but with similar features. Some had extended limbs, while others were shorter, and she felt that each of these creatures was a representation of Cthulhu.

Narissa quickly closed the book, not sure of what she thought of it all, and redirected her thoughts to finding out where she was and how she got there. The last thing she remembered was being in the cave with the others and watching a green glowing light approach her. She thought she had seen a dark hooded figure coming towards her, but her vision was disrupted with a blinding flash and she was separated from the team.

She pushed the chair back and stood up. She took a deep breath and walked towards the door. She couldn't help but think that she was there for a reason. She was alive and unharmed, and therefore it would only make sense that someone was expecting her to eventually come out of the room and meet them. She was always prone to explore her surroundings, so why wait. She opened the door and walked out into the hallway.

What she saw was nothing more than a large open chamber area. It was perhaps 1000 feet in diameter. There was a sitting area in the distance that she could barely see comprised of a couch and chairs. There were no other doors that she could see. The chamber had no ceiling, but was completely open to the dark sky and she realized that she was looking at stars. They were not normal looking stars; these were stars that were brighter than any she had ever seen before from Earth.

She took a glance around and then walked towards the chairs. She saw no one and heard no one. There were no other sounds of footsteps or conversations going on and she wondered again where she was and what she was doing there. When she finally made it to the area where the chairs and couch were, she realized that the chamber seemed to be an enclosed room that may be in space.

She walked to the farthest edge at the front of the chamber, reaching her hand out and touching a see-through wall. As her hand moved up the clear wall, she detected a curvature giving her the impression that she was in a dome of some sort. She continued to walk towards the front end of the room with her hand outstretched to see how far this dome reached. She stopped and looked upwards again towards the sky. Her 360° view revealed to her an area in space that she was not familiar with.

She had been on many space explorations, knew a large part of the known galaxy and was familiar with star formations and constellations. She had a passion for stars, and took extra classes to learn everything she could about the known universes. She took pride in knowing that she was one of the most knowledgeable in the area of space, constellations and space travel.

However, these stars and constellations were completely foreign to her. There was a small sense of excitement knowing that this was a different area of space that no one had charted before, and interested in knowing exactly where this was in the universe. Her thoughts did not come without a sense of fear. She realized that she was far away from friends and family, but also questions not only how she got to where she was, but how she was going to get home.

She couldn't help but wonder what plans her captors had in store for her, and whether she would suffer the same experiences the miners did. She was not sure of much in that moment, but what she did know was that she would eventually meet with whomever transported her to his dome in space. The only consolation for now was that she was safe, unharmed and felt that she was brought here for a reason. She was uncertain of the reason, but she was certainly going to find out.

She decided to take a chance and called out.

"Is anybody here?"

There was no reply, just an echo in the distance.

Again she repeated, "Is anybody out there, can anybody hear me?"

Still no reply, just a distant echo. She didn't really know what to do at this point, but she also didn't believe that she was alone. Eventually, the person who brought her here would at least want to talk with her.

Narissa started to walk around and explore the dome. Although it seemed to be empty at first, she noticed in the far corner there was another set of chairs and a couch. The distance of the dome was larger than she imagined and when she reached the second seating area she realized that she could not see the first from where she had just come. The view from this angle was completely different than the first, and although she was trying to identify the stars and constellations, she still did not see any that were familiar to her.

She was standing behind the couch staring outward toward the stars when to her right she noticed a platform near the side of the chair. The platform was a disc-like shape connected to the floor about 4 feet in diameter. Next to it was a console which had a series of buttons written in that odd rune-type of writing but she could not interpret it. However, she realized that the symbols on the console were similar to those she saw on the teleporter. She decided to take a chance and stepped up onto the platform. A small hum started and the console lit up. At this point she was not sure what to do. Should she start pushing buttons similar to the ones on the teleporter? Would this take her back to the cave, or would this put her out into space? She gave herself a minute to think about it.

Before she had a chance to push any buttons, she heard footsteps. She quickly stepped off the platform and slowly turned around in an attempt to see who was approaching her. At first she thought it would be the dark hooded figure that brought her here. To her surprise, it was someone other than her captor. The hooded robe was a slightly different color to the one that the other had worn.

The color of this robe was more of a rust color, not quite brown and not quite red. It seemed to have been worn with age, but clean nonetheless and not ragged. The robe covered this person in such a way that she could not see his face. He walked with both hands covered by the sleeves, and as he approached her, he held out one of his hands and motioned for her to follow him.

Without speaking a word he turned around and as quietly as he walked towards her, started walking in the other direction. Narissa followed, believing that he would most likely be taking her to the Cultist who kidnapped her.

They walked across the dome where she realized that there was more furniture, and another disc-like console on a platform. The figure waved and motioned for her to stop. He walked a bit further towards a door and knocked gently before slowly opening it and motioning for her to enter. Narissa was trying to get a glimpse of the hooded figure but at no time was she able to see his face beneath the hood. She wondered whether these were men or creatures. She was not able to tell completely but she did know that the hand of this Cultist seemed human.

Narissa entered the room and the door closed slowly behind her. She could see and hear no one else. The room was plain and simple, similar to the room where she had originally found herself. There was a desk at the far end of the room and a chair where she saw the dark hooded figure sitting. She looked around and noticed there were other similar and very basic furnishings. She also noticed another disc in the floor similar to the one at the far end of the dome with a console attached to it. She assumed they were some sort of transportation devices but was not sure. She desperately wanted to know how to operate it because maybe it was a way back, and a way of escaping from here.

The dark hooded figure motioned for her to come closer. There was a chair in front of the desk where the Cultist sat and he gestured for her to sit down. He seemed to want to make her as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. She felt her sweaty palms and was trying to hide her apprehension, yet at the same time, she had a specific curiosity. For a moment, she thought of this remarkable place in the universe covered by a dome and most likely unknown to her people.

The dark hooded figure began to speak.

"Narissa," he began, "my name is K'Tan Partathus. You can call me K'Tan. I am the leader of the Cultists, not only on the moon you call Monria, but of all the Cultists in the known universe who are part of our sect. We are an age old race of worshipers who await the coming of our blessed Cthulhu. He has been asleep for eons, but when everything is perfectly aligned, he will then reawaken and the prophecies will come true."

Narissa thought she should be feeling fear at this point, but she wasn't.

"You, Narissa," K'Tan continued, "are part of the prophecy. It is my task to reawaken your mind and show you the marvels that you need to know and understand once again. You see, you have been around for a long time, and somewhere along the way you lost your bearings. You are older than you realize and need to remember where you have been and who you are. One way or another you will remember, and you will take us to the awakening."

Narissa's mind was reeling. Who is this *K'Tan Partathus* and could the story that he was telling be true? Was she some older and wiser creature? She knew that the human race had extended their lifeline and could live to 200 years or more, but what if what he was saying was true, and she has literally lived hundreds of years already. How is that possible. No, she couldn't fathom that, he was telling stories to try to convince her to do something against her will. No, what he is saying is impossible. She is Narissa Thompson, a common and ordinary human who remembers her youth, her parents, and her life. How could it even be possible that she would be someone else?

"K'Tan," replied Narissa, "how is what you are saying even possible. I remember my life, my childhood, my schooling, and everything up to this point. How can you even expect me to begin to believe that you have brought me here to fulfill your prophecy; that I have some higher purpose in the awakening of your blessed Cthulhu. I'm sure you have me confused with someone else."

"Whether you believe it or not Narissa," K'Tan responded, "you are who I say you are. You have lived for thousands of years, and you have a deeper wisdom than you are aware of at this time. Somewhere along the way your memory was damaged. I don't know how that happened, but I come from a long line of people who have been tracking you for eons. We were waiting for the right timing, and that timing is now. The stars and the universe have properly aligned and the awakening of our blessed Cthulhu is near. It will be you who plays a central role in making that happen. As I have mentioned, it is my mission to help you remember, and to bring about the fulfillment of our prophecy and your destiny."

Narissa struggled to take all of this in, and tried desperately to recall anything in her memory that would give some truth to what K'Tan was telling her. There was nothing, nothing that she could apply to any reality of this bizarre circumstance. How was it possible that she was hundreds, or even thousands of years old, and that she was to play some major role in the awakening of this Cthulhu?

"You must be tired and hungry," K'Tan said. "I realize it is a lot for you to take in, but in time, you will come to understand and be comfortable with the knowledge that you are special. I am going to give you access to knowledge that few in the known universe are privileged to see. You will have a new sense of being, and even perhaps a rebirth when you finally come to understand who you are. For now go back to your room and rest. There will be food waiting for you. All the comforts of home have been brought here. You may change, freshen up and walk around freely. I would advise you not to use the televator just yet until you have full understanding of how it works. I would not want to accidentally have you enter an area that would not be healthy for you. This station is more than one level. It is rather huge. We created this for you and your training toward a new beginning."

"What about my people, my friends," Narissa asked? "What about the lost miners? Are you going to return them unharmed? The two that we have recovered are practically mad men, you did that to them. What are your plans for them, and why are you not returning the rest of the miners to us?"

"For your information, I gave your friends a trade," responded K'Tan. "I traded one of the miners for you. So now they have three of the six. I can give them back the other three, but I prefer to keep them as a kind of security. That way we have an understanding. Although I have been instructed to train you and teach you, I also need to make sure that you will go through with your training and teachings. I think the best way to accomplish that is to make sure that there is a reason for you to do this even before you understand why you need to do this."

Narissa was challenged to wrap her mind around what was happening. It just didn't make any sense, because she had absolutely no memory recall of such.

"In the end, however," continued K'Tan, "I know deep down you will want to do this. I know how curious you are, and the information I am going to share with you is quite informative. So, when it is time, I will release the miners if they have not already been found by your friends. Most likely by then, all of your training will have been accomplished, and you will awaken our beloved Cthulhu. Now, go back to your room and rest. Prepare yourself because we have a lot of work to do with a very short period of time in which to accomplish it. I will wake you in a few hours, and then we will begin. Do not worry my dear Narissa. In time, I expect that you will come to like me."

K'Tan motioned to Narissa and she knew that it meant it was time for her to leave. She knew that there was no sense in putting up a fight. Where would she go anyway? How would she get out of where she was? No, for now her best strategy would be to comply with her captor's demands and hope that she does not fall subject to some devious and malicious brainwashing. She was going to learn all she could, and hopefully, K'Tan would give her enough trust and information to enable her to escape. No, for now her best approach was to make her enemy her friend and learn all that she could. That way she could get back to her friends and her universe and somehow prevent the awakening of this Cthulhu.

Ch 13 / Debriefing the CEO and Formulating a Plan

DSEC personnel arrived at the meeting room for a debriefing. The CEO, Gabriel Donovan, was on the view screen waiting as the team was taking their seats. Members in the room included Trip Kaminsky, Dan Francis, Chuck Iverson, Andy Greenfield, Hank Powers, and Karl Benson. Representing the medical team was Dr. Samuel Waters, as well as geologist Angela Grayson. Everyone took their seats and waited for the CEO to start. There was, however, one seat that was obviously vacant, and that seat was normally occupied by Narissa. As everyone sat ready and waiting for Mr. Donovan to begin the meeting, there was a momentary silence in all members present sensing the emptiness in the room due to Narissa's absence.

"Alright everyone," said Mr. Donovan, "let's get started. What can you tell me about our current state of affairs?"

Dan was the first to speak. He gave a complete summary of the events leading up to and through their experiences in the caves, including details regarding their encounter with the Shoggoth, Yog and dark hooded figure. He then explained in detail their encounter regarding the disappearance of Narissa, who was taken by the dark hooded figure named K'Tan Partathus.

During the discussion and explanation from Dan, there were momentary pauses and questions from the CEO. A few other comments were interjected by some of the other members to fill in the gaps based on their personal experiences. When everyone was finished speaking, Mr. Donovan began to speak again.

"That is quite an amazing story, and I'm sure the intensity was overwhelming at times. I have already begun to organize additional manpower, and will arrive at the DSEC Command Center soon. We need to keep all of this under wraps as much as possible, and do our best to maintain our access to the caves. We need to get our drilling operations functional. I realize that the encounter with the Cultists, as well as the Shoggoths, Yogs and K'Tan are definitely complicated matters. We will do our best to work out an arrangement in order to perform our mining without interrupting their rituals. I'm not confident, however, that this is something that they're going to allow us to accomplish without putting up a fight. Does anyone know why K'Tan would want to take Narissa? What is so special about her? Does anyone know where he was taking her?"

There was some mumbling in the room until Trip spoke up.

"Sir," began Trip, "regarding our encounter with K'Tan, it was certain that he was not interested in working with us. He seemed to have his eyes set specifically on Narissa as his main focus. Taking the miners and eventually returning them seems to be part of his agenda, and may be more of a smokescreen to keep us occupied while he prepared his attack. However, his true plans are unknown to us, and his intense narcissistic personality appears to be focused on only his objectives."

"We will locate the other three missing miners, as well as Narissa," continued Trip, and the sooner you can get the extra security here the better. We're going to need their help in order to explore the caves more thoroughly, and I expect that we will be encountering more of these creatures."

With that, Mr. Donovan agreed and reassured the group that help is on the way. "What is your plan until help arrives," he asked ?

"Sir," Hank spoke up, "we're going to do our best to search the caves and look for clues that will hopefully help to recover the missing miners and Narissa as quickly as possible. K'Tan assured us that they were down there, and suspect that he had planted the miners we already recovered as traps. We will begin the process of mining ore in some of the more secure locations."

Geologist Angela Grayson then raised her hand.

"Yes Angela," Hank said. "Please fill us in from your perspective."

"I've continued to analyze the ore, as well as the particle matter that was found on the hover bike. We've come to the conclusion that the substance is a form of refined ore that can be converted into a semi-liquid state. It can be used in many applications. One of the applications was used in the writing on the bike. However, we are just starting to experiment with its properties. It has the ability to store certain energies that can be transformed and utilized in other applications."

"We just began to work on the ore samples," continued Angela, "and our ability to create a fluid state by modifying both the temperature and pressure. This creates a semi-stable liquefaction for this ore which ultimately can be used as a type of paint, or even a unique coating. It has different uses and properties that we have yet to explore completely. What I'm saying Mr. Donovan, is that there are aspects to the ore that we have yet to take full advantage of, and we will be performing more experiments. I expect that there will be more discoveries that we will be able to utilize in some fashion."

"That sounds exciting and promising Angela," replied Gabriel. "I'll be heading out there in a few days with the extra security personnel. I would like you all to keep up the good work. Your accomplishments thus far are impressive. And of course, make it a priority to find the missing miners and locate Narissa."

The CEO adjourned the meeting, but there was a momentary pause as they all looked at the empty chair where Narissa would have sat during this debriefing. There was a renewed energy to locate her and bring her home, along with the rest of the miners.

As everyone was leaving to head back to their respective departments, Trip called to Hank and asked if he could speak to him privately for a moment. They remained seated at the table until everyone had left.

"Hank," said Trip, "we need to get a handle on this situation in the caves as quickly as possible. I know they want to set up a mining operation in the upper cave, which appears to be the most secure location. If we were attacked by any of these creatures on a much larger scale, we would not have the manpower to withstand them. At least not until the extra security teams arrive which will make it safer. Do you think it's wise to start operations before we have enough manpower to protect our assets? I realize that our mission is to start mining the ore, but wouldn't waiting for one or two more days make more sense? I understand the pressure that Mr. Donovan is putting on this project, but still, we must be sensible about this."

"I hear your concerns Trip," replied Hank, "but I have orders from Mr. Donovan. I'm going to do everything in my power to keep the area protected, even with the small complement of manpower that we currently have. I plan on setting up a small contingency around the area that we choose for the initial mining operation. We will employ 24 hour surveillance and work teams in three shifts. We'll add enough firepower to protect everyone. I realize that we may be up against creatures that we don't quite understand, but you were able to overtake them. We have the experience and should be better able to defend ourselves."

Trip wasn't happy with what he was hearing, but he understood.

"I'm sorry Trip," Hank continued, "but this operation will begin immediately. I am sure I don't need to tell you that we are all in this together. We are going to get a team down there today to begin the mining, and you and another team will focus on finding the lost miners and Narissa as quickly as possible. The medical team is going to do what they can to find out what's happened to the three miners that you recovered. That way we can be better prepared for when you recover the last three miners, assuming that they are in the same state of madness. That's the best I can do for now, but I do understand where you're coming from. I hope that you in turn can understand where I'm coming from, and what expectations I have to fill."

Trip nodded his head with complete understanding of the pressure involved in this type of undertaking. After all, he had worked with Gabriel for many years, and felt he understood that pressure better than anyone else on the project.

Trip put an understanding hand on Hank's shoulder and said, "I fully understand, and I'm here to support the effort."

Trip left the conference room and headed back to his personal room to get some desperately needed rest.

Hank stayed behind and took a momentary pause, knowing that this would probably be the last time in a long time that he would be able to experience any degree of peace and quiet. Once he went into the caves and started the mining operation he knew that there was going to be resistance in some way or another. Whether there were issues with mining the ore, or with the Cultists, he knew that this easy tour of duty on Monria had turned into nothing less than a complicated situation. There was nothing easy about it. He got up and went back to his duty station in the Command Center.

Ch 14 / The Indoctrination of Narissa

There was a knock at Narissa's door, and upon opening it, another Cultist was standing in front of her. He motioned for her to follow him toward the right and the set of chairs and televisor that she had encountered when first exploring the area. He instructed her to stand on the platform, and upon her doing so, he proceeded to push buttons. Narissa did her best to see what combinations of numbers he was pushing but he blocked her vision with his body. In seconds, she was transported to a lower level that looked quite different from the one she left.

The level she left was wide open with a clear view of the stars and universe. This level only had a few areas where you could see into the universe. Individual rooms were partitioned off like cubicles, although there were very few Cultists present. She wasn't sure if this Cultist was the same one that initially took her to meet K'Tan, but nonetheless, she would take in as much information as possible in an attempt to help facilitate her escape.

"Is this where I start my training," Narissa asked?

There was no answer from the Cultist. He just continued to walk her down a corridor to the end of the room and motioned for her to sit in a specific cubicle. The cubicle was a simple 10 x 10 space and open at the top where she could see the ceiling. There was a small entryway into the cubicle and the other 3½ sides completely enclosed to allow for more privacy. The Cultist pushed a button on the desk area and a console appeared, along with the heads-up display. He continued to push a few more buttons and information appeared on the screen. Without speaking a word, he gestured for her to read the information. He showed her how to use the display, which was similar to what she was used to. He then turned and left her alone to read the information, which she assumed meant now.

As she started to read, she realized that the information was actually a treatise on the *Church of Cthulhu*. It appeared to be similar to the leather-bound edition that was in her room but more of an updated version with 3D holographic pictures. She started to read aloud quietly.

"The limited consciousness of man is unable to fully fathom the true understanding of the cosmic universe. Keep in mind that what you read here today, can only come through to you in this form and represents only a minute portion of its true limitless boundaries. In this book, we will offer you only a glimpse of the beginnings of the universe, and try to explain where the *Great Old Ones* began."

As she continued to read, there were names that she did not recognize, such as *Azathoth*, *Ghatanothoa*, *Shub-Niggurath*, *Yog-Sothoth*, and *Nyarlatheotep*. The one that did come to mind that she had heard of was *Cthulhu*.

It was revealed that the *Great Old Ones* were currently imprisoned beneath the sea on Earth, and in distant planetary systems where they eagerly await the time of their release.

In addition to the *Great Old Ones*, there were numerous *Outer Gods*, *Great Ones* and *Elder Gods*.

Each of these sections had numerous names of different entities that were within each of their respective categories. Names that she could hardly pronounce, names that she didn't recognize, and apparently, was information she was expected to remember, or re-remember if she truly was who she was told she was.

As she continued reading, she came upon a section entitled *Elder Things*. The content of this section was an accounting of the history of the *Elder Things*, and their link to the *Shoggoth*.

The *Shoggoth* were created by the *Elder Things*. They were somewhat amorphous and could take on any shape needed. This made them very versatile within their original aquatic environment. Originally, they were able to understand the *Elder Things*' language. However, they had no real initial consciousness and were controlled through hypnotic suggestion. Over millions of years some of the *Shoggoth* mutated and gained independent minds. Eventually there was a rebellion but the *Elder Things* succeeded in quelling the insurrection.

The *Elder Things* had used the *Shoggoth* for so many millenniums that they were somewhat dependent on them for labor and were not able to replace them. Therefore, instead of exterminating the *Shoggoth* for their disobedience, they continued to use them in servitude. In the time following, all *Elder Things* were required to watch the *Shoggoth* more carefully for fear of another battle. During this time of transition, although the duration was for thousands of years, the *Shoggoth* were able to formally mutate and survive not only in water but transition to land. Their ability to transform their shapes successfully accomplished this transition.

It is believed that the *Shoggoth*, through their mutation and transformation to land-dwelling creatures, accidentally created *Ubbo-Sathla*, a god-like entity who may be responsible for the origin of all life on Earth. Others believe that it was the *Elder Things*, who having performed many early life experiments in bioengineering, discarded their incomplete experiments on Earth, thus giving the initial biochemical requirements to the primordial ooze providing the evolution resulting in the initial start of mankind.

Shoggoth, managing their ability to exist on land, began to imitate the art and voices of the *Elder Things*. They attempted to create a twisted imitation of the society of their masters. Many times throughout their culture they have performed as servitors to powerful cults and entities. They have been known to endlessly repeat the sound *Tekeli-Li*, a cry that their old masters used.

The *Cultists*, who revere *Cthulhu*, have used the *Shoggoth* for millenniums as servitors, and are waiting for the time of the awakening of *Cthulhu*.

Narissa's mind was spinning. She was starting to learn of the beginnings of the cosmos and where Cthulhu had come from, as well as the history of some of the entities and beings throughout the known universe that have been described in some of the writings that she had read throughout the years. Gaps in her memory were closing as she began to remember her encounters in the cave. It put her experiences with the Cultists and what they were doing on Monria with the creatures into more perspective.

It wasn't that she was remembering something from her past, because she still did not believe that she was this millennia old being who was going to be reunited with herself in order to awaken Cthulhu. No, what was happening was, that the pictures she was seeing in 3-D, along with reading the descriptions within the holographic manuscript, started to conjure up images of creatures that she thought she had read about in the past. There was one exception to her logic, and that was the fact that she started seeing images of creatures that were not in the book and that she had believed she had never experienced before in her life.

She pushed more buttons on the terminal trying to see if there were any more images that she could gather that would put her mind at ease. She looked for images portraying the other creatures that she seemed to be familiar with, but not currently on the view screen. She could not find any similar descriptions that would match her subconscious images, at least not yet.

She was not ready to give into the concept that she actually knew what these creatures looked like, either because she had experienced them in the past, or saw them in a photo somewhere that she cannot remember. She wasn't prepared to accept the fact that maybe she had encountered these creatures in the past but did not remember them. Deep down however, there was that small bit of angst that kept her wondering whether this was truly happening, and whether she was really going to remember something that she purposely forgot.

She continued her reading, but was suddenly interrupted by K'Tan.

"Hello my dear, how are your studies today?"

Trying to keep her composure and not reveal the multitude of thoughts and emotions that were running through her head she replied.

"Going very well, thank you. I find the reading very interesting. At times a little boring, yet nonetheless, the pictures help."

"Excellent, excellent, we shall be able to get on with your next set of studies very shortly then. I think it's important for you to hear some of the history and understand where it is you come from. However, now we need to take some time away from reading and get you into the physical learning phase, and the mental conditioning that you're going to need if you are to survive this experience."

Yet another surprise from K'Tan. What was this physical and mental conditioning he was talking about? Where was he taking her to perform this new study?

He motioned her to follow him and she eagerly obeyed. After all, she was going to make sure that he thought that she was excited about this proposition, both in learning about the culture and this newfound physical and mental conditioning that she was about to undertake.

He brought her to the televator and again pushed a few buttons. In seconds, they were down one more floor into an open area. This floor was designed in the form of a gymnasium. However, they kept walking toward the center of the room. She noticed a raised area that seem to be somewhat embedded in the floor but yet a step up in a circular shape that was completely enclosed like a small pool. As she approached, she realized that it was a small pool and that inside of it was a greenish solution or a liquid which she was not quite familiar with. She thought it had a similar resemblance to the colors of the rocks within the caves and was wondering what the relationship between the two were. He motioned to her to join him and sit on the edge of this pool containing the green-colored liquid.

“Now, my dear, is the beginning of your physical and mental training. First, I will leave you alone here and you will bathe within the solution completely submerging yourself within it from head to toe, so that you will be completely covered by this solution. You will stay within the pool for an hour each day. At times you may have to be in this pool two or three times a day depending on how your training is coming along. You see, this solution is part of what will help you open your mind and mentally be able to grasp the cosmic nature of what you’re about to learn.

Mankind does not have the capacity to see and understand things that you are about to understand. Even at first look, most men go mad and insane and never recover from what they see. However, with the solution it will help to free and expand your mind as well as protect your body. You will learn as this becomes part of you. As you start to expand concepts of things that I’m about to teach you, they will be easier for you to comprehend once your mind is open to receiving the knowledge. Although I suspect that you are capable of handling this already because of who you are, I can’t be certain that you’ve changed something within yourself in the interim in order to forget who you are and where you come from.

Therefore, I must prepare you once again just in case you’ve done something that would impede the process. You see, we can’t have any harm come to you, as we need you to perform the ritual and awaken our beloved Cthulhu. Now bathe within the solution, it won’t harm you, as a matter fact you may enjoy it and the wonderful experiences you gain while in the pool.”

Narissa became troubled and concerned. What was the solution in the pool that he says will help open her mind so that she can understand the continuing knowledge she would receive, and why wouldn't she be able to comprehend it without the pool ritual at the risk of going completely mad? She thought back to the miners in the caves and was wondering whether or not the Cultists were experimenting on them with the solution that caused them to go mad. If so, then perhaps she could find a way to reverse the madness and help the miners return to normal sanity.

"Is this what happened to the miners in the caves," she asked? Had they been exposed to the solution and went mad? Were you performing experiments on the miners to see whether or not they could be prepared to work with you, for you, or even for your Cthulhu? Did your experiments fail and that is why you let them go for us to find them?"

"We do experiments with whom we want and when we want," replied K'Tan, "and yes, we did expose the miners both topically and internally to the solution. We even embedded some of this solution in a different form under their skin. We know that we are able to expand our consciousness at times using this solution and some of us can use it better than others, myself for example. So there is no special magic here Narissa.

Ancient cultures used to believe things they didn't understand were due to magic or magical beings. They even tended to think of this magic as evil and demonic, and would kill people and beings. These things are truly nothing more than advanced technology. When an advanced civilization goes to a planet that has a less advanced civilization, and depending on where they are in their evolutionary process and their ability to comprehend, they either think we are Gods and fear us, or embrace us because we bring new technology that they don't have that can help them improve their society and enhance their evolutionary process.

So you can think of this solution as more of an advanced technology, and something that will enhance your abilities in many ways, and take what you have naturally been gifted with and make it better. Think of it as a form of accelerated evolution, a form of technology that is more of a bionutrient. We found that certain people can handle this and do quite well. However, there are some who just can't handle the transformation and understanding, and those people seem to go mad.

On a cellular level, they are not capable of incorporating this biomatrix solution into their cellular structure and hence, sometimes reject the solution. At times, the side effects are physical, and other times they are mental, such as with your miners who went mad after exposure to small quantities of the bioluminescence.

You however, are different. You come from a completely different stock. In time you will come to understand that this is essentially a part of you, and that bathing in the solution is nothing more than a fancy water product for you. Actually, you'll find the experience quite pleasant, I believe. As your body incorporates the solution, you will want more of it. It's not an addiction per se, but an enhancement that enables you to achieve more than you do now.

You have already experienced this in the past, but it has been so long that you need a refresher. It's not unlike riding a bike, your cells will remember, your mind will expand, your body will become stronger, and then you will have your wisdom return, and ultimately, the key to unlock and awaken Cthulhu.

I will leave you now so you do not become embarrassed as you will need to undress. I expect you to immerse yourself completely from head to toe. That means you need to go under the water and hold your breath at times.

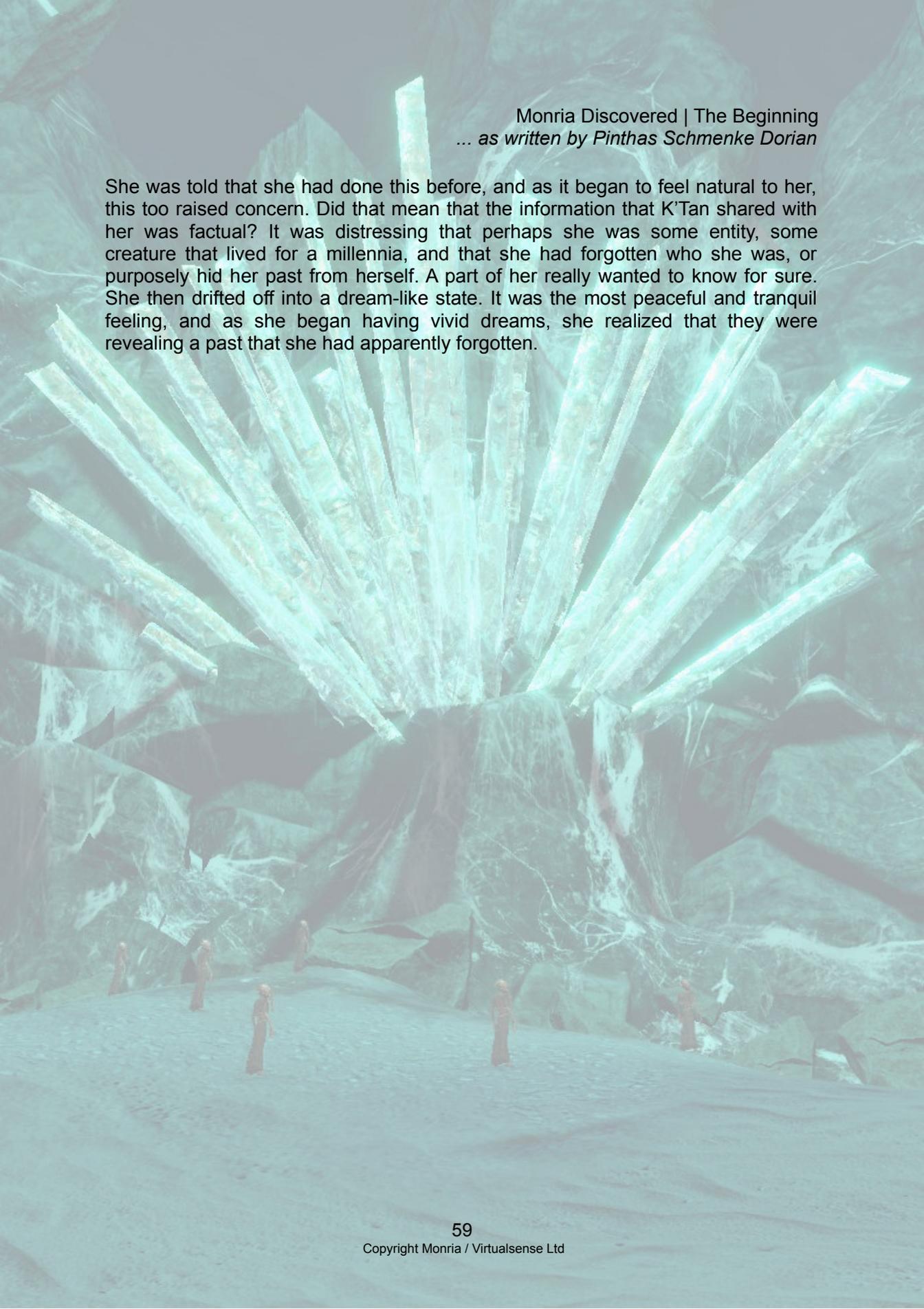
I will return in a while to continue your training. You may need to rest after this bath. My attendant will take you back to your room where you will relax and rest, falling asleep comfortably and calmly, and perhaps have the best sleep of your life. Don't be too stressed or too anxious, as I know initially you will have some apprehension, but over the next 30 or 40 minutes you will actually start to relax, and the solution will begin to heal you in many ways. I expect it also will help heal your memory and recover what you've lost or purposely forgotten. As it starts to incorporate itself into your cellular structure you will remember, you will recall, and I expect you may even dream. I will see you again soon, Narissa, and we will speak of your experiences. Now, I suggest you get in the pool."

K'Tan turned and started to walk away. Narissa, again utterly amazed at the things that were happening to her in the middle of nowhere did not want to get in that pool. She was concerned, if not afraid of the comments that K'Tan had made regarding the transformation that she would undergo. If she purposely chose to forget, there was a damn good reason for that. If he was forcing her to remember, she wasn't quite sure it was what she wanted. She was concerned that this was a form of brainwashing, and though the technology wasn't clear to her, transforming her cellular structure that would be modified by the solution, meant it had to be a form of brainwashing. What choice did she have now?

If she refused to enter the pool, she knew that the Cultist would just hold her down and submerge her body himself. That would not be any way to help make sure that he thought that she was on his side. No, she was going to have to take this bath herself, and she was going to have to stay within this bioluminescence for the whole hour. She was sure that she was being watched.

It took her a few minutes to muster up the courage to undress knowing that she may already be under surveillance by the Cultists. Naked, with her arms wrapped around her chest covering her breasts, she slowly turned and put her feet into the green bioluminescence. She was amazed that the solution was at the perfect temperature and did not startle her. In some way she felt comforted when she put her feet into the solution almost up to her knees. She did not know how deep the pool was but expected it to be 3 or 4 feet. She put her arms on the edge of the pool and began sliding the rest of her body into the liquid. To her surprise, the pool was only waist deep. She noticed that there was a sitting area. She lowered her body the rest of the way into the solution up to her shoulders leaving her head exposed so she could view her surroundings. She then sat on the built-in seat and did her best to relax. She was completely covered in the solution except her head.

It only took seconds before she began feeling a sensation of calmness, but a momentary fear startled her out of her almost tranquil state thinking that this was the beginning of her brainwashing. She felt that she needed to be careful and try to resist, but that thought passed quickly because she realized that resistance would be of no use, and that the solution was going to be incorporated into her cellular structure regardless. She relaxed again and the solution seemed to nurture her, almost reassuring her that it would be okay.



Monria Discovered | The Beginning
... as written by Pinthas Schmenke Dorian

She was told that she had done this before, and as it began to feel natural to her, this too raised concern. Did that mean that the information that K'Tan shared with her was factual? It was distressing that perhaps she was some entity, some creature that lived for a millennia, and that she had forgotten who she was, or purposely hid her past from herself. A part of her really wanted to know for sure. She then drifted off into a dream-like state. It was the most peaceful and tranquil feeling, and as she began having vivid dreams, she realized that they were revealing a past that she had apparently forgotten.

Ch 15 / Biomarkers Search, One Last Miner, and Narissa

The two teams assembled and made their way back to the caves. Replacing Narissa Thompson was Harris Router, a seasoned security agent and an expert in explosives and munitions.

“Alright everyone,” said Dan Frances “let’s coordinate our teams and head into the caves. Keep a lookout and make mention at the first sign of any creatures.”

The team began to move cautiously through the caves. There had been nothing new that they could see and were able to make their way to the teleporter without difficulty. Andy Greenfield worked the controls of the teleporter and in moments the entire group had made their way to the next cave.

As they walked toward the second half of the cave and the other teleporter at the far end, Trip began to feel a slight pulsing in his head. It was almost unnoticeable. However, as the team worked their way to the second teleporter and into the third cave, the pulsating grew in intensity. They were all now in the third cave, the cave where Narissa had vanished. Up to this point they had not encountered any Cultists or creatures. They were glad, but concerned that they were either being watched and would eventually be ambushed, or the creatures had been removed and in an area where they are controlled by the Cultists.

As they approached the area where Narissa had vanished, the pounding within Trip’s head became more intense. He stumbled and fell to his knees. Ben Connors was the first to see Trip fall and came rushing to his side. Moments later the rest of the team stopped and were heading over to see what had happened.

“Trip, are you alright,” asked Ben?

“I’m not sure,” he responded, “this pulsing in my head came on suddenly, and the intensity escalated to the point of dropping me to my knees. However, it’s gone now and I don’t feel that pain any longer. Just give me a moment to recover.”

In moments, Trip had a vision of Narissa trying to communicate with him.

“Trip,” she began, “I need your help. I have been taken by K’Tan and trapped in what appears to be a space station. I can’t identify the coordinates as I’m not familiar with the star formations that I have seen. I believe he has transported me to an otherwise unknown part of the universe. However, the greenish substance of modified Maladrite that we encountered has a variety of properties that can help find me. In order to transport me to this location, I discovered that he had to use six separate biomarkers to triangulate my position in the cave. You only need to find three of them and they will lock onto my location enabling you to transport to me through the teleporter and to that particular location. Andy should be able to use the biomarkers and enter the coordinates.

One of the biomarkers should still be at the location where I was taken. It should be on the wall or on the floor and look no different than a small biochip. Find it and use it to locate the other two biomarkers since it will be linked to them as well.”

The message ended but Trip’s head was still pulsing as sweat was pouring off of him while Ben was trying to get him to his feet.

“What just happened Trip,” Ben asked? You zoned out for a minute.”

“I believe I just had a vision from Narissa,” Trip replied.

Trip explained everything in the message to the team, and now they were tasked with finding the three biomarkers. Although they didn't know what they would look like, they knew they were in the direct vicinity so everyone began searching. Moments later, Chuck Iverson appeared to have found the first biomarker. It was a small triangular-shaped device no larger than a fingernail. It was however, wrapped in a gold-looking casing with a single rune on one side, and a modified sensor on the other. The biomarker was small and almost impossible to see, but the gold casing was in contrast to the ground so easier to detect. However, unless someone was actually looking for it, they more than likely would have missed it. The problem now was finding the next two biomarkers, and unless they were able to set up some sort of biomarker detecting device, it would be nearly impossible to find the others.

Narissa did say that with the first biomarker, they would be able to identify and locate the other two, but neglected to tell them how.

As Trip regained himself, Ben asked if anyone had any suggestions on how to find the other two biomarkers. He also reminded them that they were still in dangerous territory and needed to be cautious. Once they leave this cave and go to the next, not only would they be in uncharted territory, they still needed to focus on the primary mission of finding the lost miners and Narissa.

Andy spoke up and said, “I believe it might be possible to synchronize this chip with one of the teleporter frequencies and perhaps identify a beacon that is linked between all three of these biomarkers. If there is, and I believe there should be, I would be able to track the location and pinpoint where the next signal would be coming from.”

“Alright Andy,” replied Dan, “get on it immediately.”

They cautiously approached the next teleporter, and surprised that they had not encountered any creatures or Cultists up to this point. They didn’t mind it one bit as it gave them the needed time for Andy to set up the sensor array. Within minutes, he mentioned that he was able to lock onto a second beacon but would not be sure of the exact location until they went farther ahead. With that, the teams teleported into the next cave.

This cave was much larger than the last three caves had been. It was immensely wide and extremely high. They were unable to see much more than the soft natural green light that the ore was emanating. Cautiously, they began walking in an attempt to locate one of the walls to use it as a guide to the far end of the cave. They knew their exploration would include trying to find any of the lost miners, as well as picking up any sensor traces of the next biomarker.

They finally reached the far end of the cave when they thought they heard footsteps similar to that of a horse. The lighting in the cave was enough to see images of a few creatures that appeared to have a horned head, not unlike that of a ram. The body was that of a humanoid woman that had legs with cloven hoofs. They now understood where that sound was coming from. The intensity increased as they found themselves near a group of these creatures.

They also heard the sound of two men in the distance and they immediately knew that they were two more of the lost miners they had been searching for. They could see that the men were kneeling on the floor and appeared to have their hands tied behind their backs. The creatures were pulling their heads backward by their hair and forcing them to drink a fluid which they assumed was the Maladrite elixir.

They watched feeling completely helpless to come to their aid because they didn't know the extent of the enemy in both quantity and ferocity. Dan motioned to Ben and Harris to start making their way to the other side of the cave keeping out of the line of sight of these new creatures. Once they were positioned, they signaled back to Dan. Trip fell back approximately 50 yards towards the center of the cave so they could attempt to create a three-cornered attack which seemed to work for them in the past. Once positioned, Trip was given the go-ahead to send a single laser blast into the air in front of one of the creatures. The moment that happened, the creatures stopped forcing the green fluid into the miners. Two of the creatures turned and headed toward Trip. The team could hear the loudness of their hooves as they approached them.

In an attempt to communicate without causing any harm initially, Ben yelled out for them to stop and get on the ground or they would open fire. The only response they heard was a type of grunting, snarling, snorting and an acceleration of movement towards his voice. The team then opened fire on the two creatures that had begun their attack, and with little difficulty they were able to overcome the beasts who then let out a humanoid goat-like sound screeching as they fell to the ground. In seconds there were more pounding hooves heading their way, and six more of these creatures fell to the ground. The team was surprised that they were able to overcome them so easily, but glad nonetheless. They slowly approached the area where their friends were held.

They faced no other creatures in that area as they approached the two miners. They recognized them to be Steve Thornton and Dexter Axelman. The men appeared to be glowing a soft greenish hue as the team quickly unbound their wrists from behind their backs. They appeared to be dazed and confused.

The team recognized this to be most likely the result of having consumed the green fluid and needed to get them back to the command post as quickly as possible. In addition, they found two flasks on the ground that still contained some of the Maladrite solution that they would take with them for further study. It was decided it would be best for the team to get the men to the transport vehicle where Chuck Iverson could take them back while they returned to continue their search for the last miner. They also needed to recover the remaining biomarkers that would be used to locate Narissa.

With Chuck safely on his way back to the Command Center with the two miners, the team pressed on. Andy said that he thought he had picked up a signal while they were in the fourth cave that could be connected to the second biomarker.

As they continued to investigate the fourth cave, they saw large trees and a variety of vegetation that they had not seen before. There were small pools of water and what appeared to be green fluid running through small waterfalls along the rocks that were spread out throughout the cave. As Andy homed in on the signal, he saw a group of creatures in a semi-circle that appeared to have markings on the floor. He sensed that the biomarker was within this area, and now they had to face a group of approximately 20 of these creatures. The team stopped to formulate a plan and how to move forward.

"Andy," asked Ben, "are you sure that the biomarker is within that circular area on the floor?"

"Indeed," Andy replied, "we need to get in there and search that circle."

"Damn," Ben responded, "how are we going to get those creatures to move, because it's going to be difficult to take them all on at once. We are outnumbered by 20 to 5."

"I think I can create a diversion," Harris said. "I can go farther into the cave and rig up some minor explosions that will set off at different intervals and lead the creatures away from the area. I think I can get them tracking far enough so that three of us can get into that circular area and search for that biomarker while Trip and I distract the creatures. We should be able to get them far enough away from the circle, and then meet up with you further on in the cave past this area. It seems these creatures congregate here for a reason, and if we can get in and out fast enough before they can re-congregate, we should be able to make it to the teleporter at the far end of the cave. This way we can avoid any confrontation."

The plan was set in motion with Harris and Trip setting up small charges along a path towards the far end of the cave while keeping out of the line of sight. They were able to clear out a path so the other team members could search for the biomarker. Andy was able to lead them directly to the area and the team quickly found the biomarker. They then retreated towards the far end of the cave, and once at the teleporter, they waited for the rest of the team. Within minutes, they were all together and glad that they were able to avoid engagement.

At the base of the teleporter Andy noticed a device on the ground. He recognized it as another recorder similar to the first one they found in an earlier cave. Andy activated the device which revealed the third log entry of the miners.

"Journal Entry #3: We have entered another cave. There seems to be a glow inside the rocks illuminating the path. Not sure what the illumination is, but will see if a science team can investigate it in more detail once we come up to the surface again. I touched the wall where some of the glowing rocks were located, and as my hand touched them they seemed to change brightness. Even when I took my hand away from the rock, there was the outline of my hand glowing on the rock surface for a moment before fading away. We also found more writings on the wall. They seem to have a pattern, and now I am certain it is a form of glyph writing. I am copying the glyphs to hopefully piece together an alphabet of some sort."

Andy gave Trip the device who put it in his pack. They had found two of the biomarkers and five of the six miners. The team was relatively certain that K'Tan had purposely left the miners behind to be found, along with other traps in order to delay finding and rescuing Narissa. This would allow him time to finish whatever plans he had in store for them.

Although they knew they had not completely searched this cave, Andy related that there were no other sensor traces for the last biomarker in range. He believed that the marker should be in another cave, as the three-dimensional tracking would need to have some distance between each biomarker in order for them to be completely functional. In addition, he believed that K'Tan was leading them further into the cave environment for specific reasons, even if it was only to expose them to greater danger. It was his voting contention that they should move on to the fifth cave and see if they could find the last biomarker, and perhaps even the last miner. However, he did caution that he expected this to be much more difficult, and that they should be even more cautious. They agreed and transported to the fifth cave.

Ch 16 / Narissa's Fight for Survival

Laying in the pool in her trance Narissa focused her thoughts:

Surviving is just that; making sure that one survives. They tell us there's a rulebook and we should follow the rules. However, sometimes rules don't apply. We may refer back to the rulebook, look for the ground rules for the circumstances and situations that we find ourselves in, but they don't always exist. In the field, you never know if your opponent is more experienced with better skills. It is far more advantageous to be prepared as much as possible, and that includes teamwork.

A well-trained team becomes more in sync with their efforts the longer that they work together. Training, not the rulebook, enables a team to move through challenges and overcome hurdles. Coming out on top is basically coming out alive. You could be harmed, injured, or damaged in some way but ultimately, you survive to face another day.

Narissa knew that if she didn't focus her thoughts outside of the pool bath, that she might succumb to being completely brainwashed. She felt calm and peaceful, but at times also felt intense fear and anguish. Her only saving grace was focusing on her survival, and not on what this cellular modification was supposed to do to her. She wanted to maintain the basic foundation of what she understood, and not give way to thinking about what she was told that she had forgotten, or even hid from her memory. She made a conscious choice to survive as Narissa Thompson, and not as some being that may have been alive for hundreds, if not thousands of years. It was her survival she clung to, and not a role reversal to the past.

In her dream-like state, her mind wandered as she thought about when K'Tan captured her and brought her to the space station, and the training that had ensued. She thought about her connection to the creatures and other Cultists, but more importantly that she remembered reaching out to her team member Trip. She was sure a transference of thought took place and that she revealed to Trip the information about the biomarkers that K'Tan had used to transport her where she was being held captive. She hoped it would be of benefit to help rescue her.

Mixed with a sense of relaxation and tranquility was the unsettled feeling of anxiety and emotions, and of distrust and discord. In addition, her mind was laced with visions of horror and madness that she was reliving, seemingly from the past, riddled with chaos and insanity, although she was not sure if they were real or part of the brainwashing.

There was a blending of people and creatures, some unfamiliar and others frighteningly familiar. However, it was the vision of one creature with tentacles on his face, and penetrating eyes that connected with her most intensely. There was a telepathic link that initiated communication. She felt the creature had no concern or care for her, but rather attempted to give her instructions.

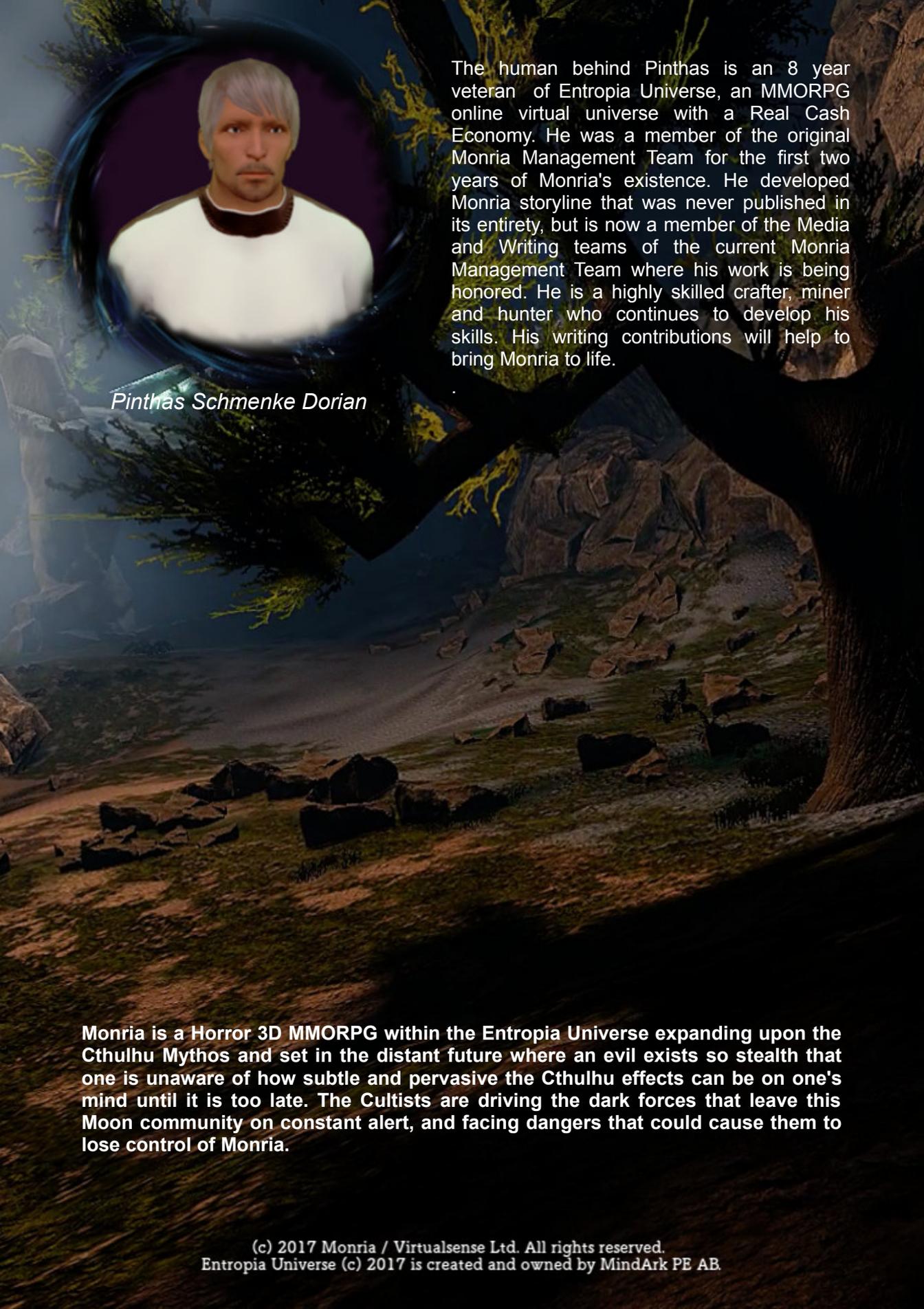
At the same time, she felt deeply disturbed that she was seeking some sort of approval from it. In her dream-like state, she saw thousands of people bowing down to her and this creature, but many seemed to be in a dazed madness of sorts. They followed her obediently while she could see the creature behind her, seemingly in a guiding posture. She felt that the followers feared both of them.

In some visuals, people were running in fear, while others seemed to be crouching down holding their heads, as if they were experiencing some torturous pain. The creature appeared and disappeared into the background. At times, she was alone with him, seemingly at a distant place within the universe. She felt the telepathic communication was attempting to consume her and bend her to yield to him and the instructions he was providing for some future ritual.

At the same time, she felt a sense of madness, confusion, and terror attempting to seep into her soul. However, something within her resisted, protecting her, something that she wasn't quite understanding, but she also sensed that no matter how much resistance there was, there was also a feeling present that she would one day fulfill the prophecy.

Narissa awoke in her bed not remembering how she got there. As her mind began to refocus, she remembered the dreams, and was curious as to how much time had transpired from the moment she entered the pool until now. She was still experiencing the feelings of tranquility and disturbance, but also remembers fighting to survive, not wanting to be converted into whomever and whatever she was supposed to be according to K'Tan.

Her first and foremost thoughts were on survival. The last thing she remembered that seemed real was lying down in the pool of green liquid, drifting off into a dream-like state. Now she was not sure that any of it was real. It was a feeling that was unsettling to her core, and was wondering if her team would get to her in time.



The human behind Pinthas is an 8 year veteran of Entropia Universe, an MMORPG online virtual universe with a Real Cash Economy. He was a member of the original Monria Management Team for the first two years of Monria's existence. He developed Monria storyline that was never published in its entirety, but is now a member of the Media and Writing teams of the current Monria Management Team where his work is being honored. He is a highly skilled crafter, miner and hunter who continues to develop his skills. His writing contributions will help to bring Monria to life.

Pinthas Schmenke Dorian

Monria is a Horror 3D MMORPG within the Entropia Universe expanding upon the Cthulhu Mythos and set in the distant future where an evil exists so stealth that one is unaware of how subtle and pervasive the Cthulhu effects can be on one's mind until it is too late. The Cultists are driving the dark forces that leave this Moon community on constant alert, and facing dangers that could cause them to lose control of Monria.