

The Matriarch - Extract

Extract

In the hotel elevator whisking her up to the seventh floor a middle aged man in a creased and stained white shirt and over long grey trousers opened up a conversation. "You are in seven twenty-two aren't you?" She looked him over, loathed to answer; in this town he could be anyone. His eyes were brown, the whites dull and smoky, his dark hair lank, dirty, his trousers hanging below a soft round stomach. "It's alright, I know you are, and you have been to China haven't you?" Unsure she merely gazed at him, waiting for whatever comes next. "You know don't you? You know about the ancients. You know about solar cooking, the purpose of the pyramids and ziggurats. You know what I know, don't you?" She was staring open mouthed at him now. "It's alright," he smiled. "I've known a long time." Then he shouted, "I've known for fucking years." His eyes were reddening, tears beginning to brim over. The elevator had stopped.

"Are you staying at the hotel," she asked.

"Me? No. I don't stay in smart hotels anymore. When I go anywhere I stay in hospitals. I stay in psychiatric wards. I've become a chemical prisoner most of the time because I talk such drivel, offend so many people. I am an enigma, an historical pain-in-the-butt." He stepped from the lift. "Cummon' show me what you got. I gotta know what you got."

She was still assessing him. He seemed wasted, out of shape, there was little sign of strong muscles or any great strength. He probably wasn't dangerous, unless he was armed, but he didn't look like someone who carries a gun, or knife, or even a clean handkerchief judging by the white fleck in the corners of his mouth and food stains on his shirt. "What makes you think I have anything of interest to you?"

"Oh cummon', don't fuck about. I know you have drawings, and pictures from China. I've seen the ginger people in the tombs. My girl, my cleaning girl, she cleans your room. I know what to look for. Don't fuck about. It's too important."

"Better you show me what you have."

"I will. I will show you everything. I will prove to you that Egyptologists and historians, and all those nose-in-the-air sectarian departmental heads at the so called universities, the fucking dis-education centres of the fucking free world, are liars. They can't see shit on their own faces. But we are here. Your notes and photos are here. Let me see what you have. I wanna know."

"No."

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“No?”

“No.”

“Oh.” He paused, thought for a moment or two. “Okay. Yeah, yeah, okay. I understand. Okay you come with me. I’ll show you, then you’ll know it’s safe to talk.”

“You know about Ogam?” He said the moment she settled in the cab.

“Yes.”

“Knew you would. Just knew you would. Fucking Ogam everywhere in America. Place is dripping in fucking Ogam steles and monoliths. The Christians didn’t purge through North America see? Fucking Christians didn’t get chance to obliterate a the sun people’s writing in North America. Fucking Indians still use some Ogam. All integrated by the time the fucking Vikings got here. Columbus, what fucking crock that Columbus crap.”

The cab had started to move slowly from the curb, the driver peering in the mirror for instructions. “Hey buddy. Where you wanna go?”

“Woodside, twelve eleven ninety-two, pink building, can’t miss it.” He turned back to Myra. “Maybe not, maybe I should take you to church.” He called back to the driver, “Forget that. You know Santa Pedro church on Alameda Los Angeles?”

“Sure. In Burbank right?”

“Right. Let’s go there.” He settled back in the rear seat. “They got Ogam on the fucking altar stone there. You know why?”

“Because the church was built over an older site.”

“Too fucking right it was. Same all over. All over this country you find churches on old Celtic sites. The Celts were here three thousand years ago. Maybe more. They could write. They could write Ogam, before the fucking Persians were scratching Cuneiform over everything they touched, the Celts were writing on stones. When the archaeologists started turning up Ogam all over New England the historians said it was scratches made by ploughshares. Fucking ploughshares. Later they put it down to scratches made by sharpening spears and arrows. They can’t think outside the box these pricks. Anything to protect their precious concepts. Heavens, if something new is to be learned, they might have to change their tiny minds, and put their stupid fucking dignity at risk. Assholes.”

“Are you always so expressive, or is this for my benefit?”

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“Your fucking benefit lady? It ain't just for your benefit. It's for every fuckers' benefit. History is for everybody. Science is for everybody. No fucking political horseshit. No posing, no standing on dignity. *'There's no such thing as patriotic art, or patriotic science.'* Goethe, I think.

“No, you misunderstand me. I meant are you always so forceful in presenting you're findings?”

“What's not to be forceful about? When you learn that the Celts were in North America building solar heated houses and writing on the rocks to tell us about it three thousand fucking years ago, of course you're forceful. It's fucking exciting.”

“Where did you study archaeology?”

“Study archaeology? I studied archaeology all over the fucking world. I studied physics and chemistry all over the world. I studied psychology and astronomy, and mathematics. I never stopped studying mathematics. I'm still working on a theorem. Why stop? What's to stop for? Learning is what we're here for. Don't you want to learn?”

She was still unsure of this guy. Was he a fraud, or a dreamer? Did he have any formal education? “Yes, of course, but where did you earn your degree. Which university did you attend?”

“Oh that shit. Edinburgh gave me a bachelors, and Cambridge awarded me a masters, but I didn't collect it.”

“Why not?”

“They wanted fifty quid at the time and I didn't have it. Or I did have it, but I wanted it for something else. Cheapskates.”

The cab pulled up outside a small Spanish church barely noticeable between a large, double fronted Citibank, and an external escalator heading into a cine complex. “Here it is. Cummin' here. I'll show you some stuff in here.” He was off across the sidewalk. Myra paused, paid the cab, and hurried after him.

Inside he was already in the apse, on the floor lifting the altar cloth. “Here,” he called. “Cummin' here and see this.” He showed no reverence for where he was, or for the people seated in the rear pews. “Over here. Look at this.”

She decided to attend to him quickly, trying to limit the disturbance. The altar stone was much bigger than she expected, it was deeper, about a metre or more, and a metre high, and at least two metres long. He was sitting on the floor with the altar cloth over his head. “Here, see? Here, here, and here. Fucking Ogam.”

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It was clear. There were lines, deeply etched into the corners and were as close to Ogam markings as she had ever seen. Even more impressive was the fact that the stone itself was obsidian. Solid, black obsidian, and older than anything else in the church. She found herself on her hands and knees crawling around the altar, when there was a new voice. "Hello Peter. I see you have a new student."

She looked up to see a slim man of slightly under average height in a grey suit with a blue vest and white dog collar. He looked freshly scrubbed with bright clear eyes narrowed in amusement. "Oh, excuse us father. Uh, Peter, here, was showing me some interesting engravings."

"Yes. If only he could do it with less enthusiasm. He disturbs what few parishioners I have."

Peter by now had moved around the altar stone, oblivious to the conversation. "And here. Look here at this lot. Can you read Ogam? If you could read Ogam, we would know when this stone was laid."

She stood, straightened her clothes, and was about to tender further apologies when the priest motioned her aside to a small office behind the apse. "Are you a friend of Peter's?"

"Not really. I didn't know his name was Peter until you mentioned it. I just met him. In fact he rather ambushed me. He learned of my interest in the ancients and whisked me up here to see some old writing."

"Yes, well as you are no doubt aware, he is a little enthusiastic about his ideas. I'm afraid he's got himself into trouble on more than one occasion, and is on parole, as it were, from a corrective psychiatric unit. If he gets into trouble again, I fear they might lock him up for good."

"Oh, he's not dangerous, is he?"

"Not physically, no. But he is very forceful with some extremely radical ideas. I'd hate you to become involved. College professors are not supposed to throw whole sections of books out of expensive libraries."

"He did that?"

"That, and much more. He has disrupted ecclesiastical gatherings all over the country, and has been arrested on many occasions for literally throwing books out of public libraries. His academic career is over, and if he continues, his freedom too, will be a thing of the past."

"Thank you father, for the warning. I'll see he goes home okay."

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“Have you been to Machu Picchu?” Pete just tossed it in the air as if testing the wind. “No need to go to Machu Picchu. Go to Tiahuanaco instead. Tiahuanaco is around seventeen thousand years old. Machu Picchu? Around five hundred. Gotta be a copy. Got the same stuff. 'Course the archaeologists label everything temples and sacrifice stones, or astrological observation sites or calendars. Anything but what they were. Fucking solar devices is what they were. Sun gods featured strongly. 'Course they did. The fucking sun was everything - still is. Fucking still is.”

“Do you have to keep shouting? Can't you converse in a level tone.” Myra was enjoying his observations, but his hysterical outbursts were an embarrassment - especially inside a cab. They were nearing his home in Brentwood.

“Cummon, we're here. I'll show you some stuff. Boy can I show you some fucking stuff.”

Chapter Twenty-Four

Inside his modest single bedroom apartment there was the all pervasive smell of cat food and litter boxes. A sleek black cat greeted them with an instant demand for attention. "That's BC. Needs a lot of maintenance does BC. Give his tummy a rub and you're his friend for life. More like a dog is BC." Another cat emerged from the kitchen, again black, but with a white vest and a white patch on her back that spilled down one side. "That's Fat Emma. She keeps a bit more to herself. She'll let you know if she wants you to touch her." He focused on Fat Emma. "Hey baby, how's my fat girl?"

"She doesn't look fat to me."

"She ain't. Cummon inside." She followed him to the living room where the walls were literally lined with bookshelves with not one inch of space upon them. In the centre of the room was a large kitchen table with a generous seventeen inch plasma computer panel, a keyboard, and countless files and sheets of paper. Three upright computers stood on the floor below the table, two of which were alive with green and red lights, and a small printer balanced on top of the third. Overhead a long fluorescent light burned brilliant white, while darkened standard lamps stood either side of the table. The curtains were drawn on two sides. Daylight was excluded.

He settled at his table, his fingers instantly busy on the keyboard. "You ever go to the pyramid in Memphis? Tennessee Memphis. Fucking Egyptians were here long before the Spaniards." The screen went charcoal grey, then burst into blue and white. "Let's go to the stone circle in the Santa Cruz mountains," he said without taking his eyes from the screen. "We got one. 'Course we got fucking thousands, only we ain't uncovered them. Fucking thousands, just like Europe. Just like Scanda-fucking-navia. Stone circles every fucking where. Why? Why? Because that's where people lived, that's fucking why. Temples! Such crap. Observatories! Horseshit! Calendars - how many fucking calendars did they need? Fucking houses, that's what. Solar efficient fucking houses and meeting rooms - maybe palaces. Maybe. Fucking Stonehenge is a stone circle. A big stone circle, so big it needed lintel stones to support the roof. Makes sense. Big spans need support. All lined up with solstices and equinoxes. Of course. They trapped the sunlight. They caught the sun's energy by opening the right doors at the right time all day long, and they kept a fucking great black stone in the middle to soak up the rays and keep them warm all night."

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He turned. "See this prick?" On the screen was picture of a Saudi Prince she recognised. "Know what this prick said only yesterday. Fucking yesterday. He said, 'We will never let the price of oil become so high as to encourage the use of alternate energy sources.' He fucking said that in a press conference. Asshole. Prince of fucking darkness is what he is. Fucking evil incarnate."

Myra moved to the shelf containing a row of black binder files, with neatly handwritten labels on the spines stating, 'Ancient North American,' 'Pre-Historic Egypt,' 'New England Finds,' 'Phoenician Puzzles,' 'Book of Ballymote,' her heart skipped a beat. Next to it was 'Burning Mirrors - Cambria - Calder - Others.' He really had been where she and her father had been, and he had so much more. She was about to lift the last from the shelf when he stopped her. "Recognise it don't you. You fucking know, don't you. Well you ain't gonna see my stuff, till I see yours." He sat back at his computer screen, his fingers flashing over the keys, menus popping up and disappearing just as quickly, the screen trying to keep up with his electric mind. A series of thumbnail pictures appeared. "Look at these. Look at these pricks in these buildings in Vermont, in Woodstock would you believe. They just uncovered them, called them temples 'cause they line up with the morning sun during winter solstice. And these look," he indicated a lower group. "These are in Mystery Hill, New Hampshire, and these. Look at these in Danbury Connecticut, all line up with the solstice. 'Course they do. Hey," he turned to her. "Notice something else?" Myra stared. Many questions came to mind, but she just raised her eyebrows, let him tell her. "In all the pictures these pricks aren't wearing shirts. Why's that? Ay? Why the fuck is that? Because it's fucking hot in there, that's why. It's meant to be!" He continued flicking through his pictures, bringing the odd one up to full size occasionally.

"What's that?" She stopped him. "Go back." He flicked back, one, two. . . "There. Pull that up." It took a few seconds to fill the screen. He stared at it, then turned to study her expression. There it was, clear as the sunlight it represented. She could not hold back a smile. He saw it, saw the depth of it, understood the gravity of it. "Where did you see that?"

"That's the Pontotoc Stele. Found in Oklahoma. Got Ogam Punic symbols. Supposed to be an extract from the *Hymn to Aton*, by some ancient pharaoh."

She leaned closer, studied the writing on either side of the central triangle. "How old?"

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He scanned his notes at the side of the screen. "About 800 BC according to the local oracles."

"Bollocks."

He smiled happily for the first time since she met him. "Bollocks?"

She weighed carefully what she was about to tell him. How much could she tell him without revealing the nature of her identity? It was dangerous ground; he was known. She could not be associated with him. Well she was here, and she had been seen with him. Tomorrow she would leave, but today . . . today she would learn a little more and give a little. He had a right to know. "That, Peter, is the fucking Sothic Triangle, and those symbols represent the temperatures along the line of concentration, and the melting point of the various materials. This is a solar smelter's temperature gauge. The Iberian Celts, this is Iberian Punic Ogam, were melting metals with sunlight here much more than three thousand years ago. There is nothing new about the United States except perhaps the ignorance of its current occupants."

"Yee-haaa!" He leapt up, grabbed her hands and swung her around in a dance. "Yeeeeee-haaaaa! You fucking betcha lady. You fucking betcha. I knew, and I knew you knew. Right on. Early civilizations thrived here. Fucking 'course they did. What's different about here to Mexico, Central America, all of South American." He stopped spinning her, and grabbed her in a huge bear hug. "You fucking beauty. God how I needed to hear that you fucking beauty." He put her down, spun on his heels with his arms out. "They got stone circles in fucking Canada. 'Course they fucking have. People lived here without fucking oil. Without fucking electricity. 'Course they fucking did."

He stopped, stood still, scratching his head through the mass of lank hair. "I got some wine somewhere. Let's have a drink. Time for a fucking drink." He started to search the room.

"How about the kitchen? Fridge maybe?"

"Good thinking bat-woman. I forgot. Been a long time. Can't drink when you're on the drugs."

Alarm bells rang. "You on drugs now?"

"No, no. I check into the clinic once a week. If I'm okay, say all the right things, and there's no alcohol, or any other junk they check for, I don't get a shot. Fuck up, one way or another, and they whip me in and fill me with shit for a month at a time."

"When are you due again?"

"Went yesterday. I got six days to wash a drop of wine through. Just gotta find it is all."

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They found his bottle of Merlot, and toasted their genius, then settled into more modest conversation along with some surprisingly good bread, a sharp cheddar, and to add the edge that American cheese must lack, assorted mustards from country stores and alcoholic sorties into the northern wine territories. She noted how he calmed with each glass, as if by the simple virtue of being able to share his findings he became a more rational being. She did not even have to probe. "Once you have an idea, it's a bastard to shake it off, especially when it's re-enforced every time you test it," he started. "Once I locked on to the concept of simply storing the heat in the great lumps of obsidian, everything just fell into place. The reflectors on the sanctuary didn't have to be parabolic, they just had to reflect most of the sunlight. Once you had that concept, then the discs, the weapon discs, and the discs for furnaces and cutting tools didn't have to be super engineered. A spherical mirror was good enough, and a pendulum will carve that out for you no trouble. No, no like all good science it was simple, and nothing new; it all fitted fine once the basics were accepted. Trouble was they were not accepted. My colleagues at Edinburgh didn't much like the idea of throwing away two thousand years of religious indoctrination, any more than the folks at UCLA when I moved over here. I was telling them that the sun people, the so called pagans and heathens, were actually the more sophisticated. Their religion was science, pure science that could be witnessed by daily miracles, and could be taught with ritual. Once you agree on that, then you have to cast the religious leaders of the last two thousand years as the bad guys, as the purveyors of darkness, the people who actually steered mankind away from the light. It stood the whole Christian, Jewish, Muslim business on it's head. You can't do that sort of thing - not in a university funded by Jews and Christians. I realised how Galileo must have felt. As a simple scientist he demonstrated how the Earth orbited the Sun, and not, as the thinking at the time dictated, the other way around. Sure as hell upset the religious boys - the foundation of their teachings was that man was unique, that the Earth was the centre of the universe. If Galileo Galilei had his way their empire would crumble. Well they fixed his wagon, let the Inquisitors loose on him. And I sure as hell am having my wagon fixed because I not only fly in the face of the religions, but I undermine the whole oil industry."

He refilled their glasses, emptying the dregs into his own glass. "Funny thing is, they are hanging themselves now.

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Notice how manufacturing is moving not to where the raw materials are found, but to where the cheapest labour can be found lolling around under the palm trees. Won't be long before they realize that factories in the sun belt can not only be operated by uneducated labour happy to work for a bowl of rice and a couple of bananas, but can also be powered by the constant sunshine. And the oil boys won't be able to hide the technology much longer because the wonder boy in The White House is planning to inhabit the moon. Guess what? They will make their own fuel using sunlight and water. Wow! What a give away. Have you seen my water battery? You only need water and sunshine to make electricity."

She wandered over to his display of tiny machines. "Are these to demonstrate the principles?"

"Exec toys. Help the simple minds get the idea. Leave 'em on their desks and let them see sun powered motion every day."

"What's this complicated arrangement with the stack pipes." She was looking at a vertical stainless steel tube with small bean cans attached at even intervals.

"That's the mocha generator. Water heated by the mirror at the bottom rises to the next level like a mocha machine for coffee. Heat it again and it goes to another level. You can do that all day until you have enough water high enough to power a generator on the way down to start over. Every house should have one. Sterile fresh water under pressure to every household. How can we live without that?" He was smiling softly now, a different character from the scruffy aggressor in the hotel elevator. He needed only to be heard.

Everything in her being wanted to share with him the experiences of these last weeks since she left Australia, but she knew she could not. He had learned the secrets of the ancients through his own researches over a long period, and of course had a far greater depth of knowledge than her own. Oh to sit with him, and the stone, and her father's notes, drawing on his findings, and showing him the synthetic gems, the pictures from inside the Chinese pyramids, the evidence from the Afghan mountains . . . such a temptation. Instead she could only take from him. She could only soak up all he was prepared to offer, and give little in exchange. "How do you explain the engineering feats? How did the ancients build those pyramids? How did they cut the stones so accurately?"

"I dunno. No way for me to know. I'm thinking we can't know. It's outside the range of our precepts. We're already all fucked up with our concept of time. We need a breakthrough.

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We need another Galileo to show us we're looking from the wrong direction."

She let that one go, and tried for another. "Why religions? Why do we have to have a god, or gods? Why can we not keep our minds open and be ready to receive all the information that's out there?"

"Ever since we had laws, and a justice system we've had gods. Seems we need an ultimate, all seeing, you-just-can't-hide-from god to cover the crimes that go unpunished by our frail machinery. Almost as if we realise we can't manage by ourselves."

"Confession is good for the soul?"

"Only if you're fucking stupid. I prefer to settle for getting away with crime myself. Seems much cosier." After a brief pause he said, "You will go tonight then?"

Shocked at first that he had anticipated her departure, it was a few seconds before she realised he had put it all together. He had the whole picture, including her own. 'Of course he fucking did. He's fucking brilliant.' He must be very sad, and very lonely, she reflected, being the only one to really understand. Then having found a kindred soul after god knows how long, to have to give it up so quickly. She simply nodded in agreement. "Best walk up to the Greyhound Station, only half a mile or so. Pick up a cab there." She did.
