

EYE OF THE CHINOOK

SERIALIZED

A NOVEL

By

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December 2, 1978

ALASKAN LANDS PROTECTED

Associated Press—

Washington D.C. — President Carter today protected an additional 56 million acres of pristine Alaskan wilderness. Using the 1907 Antiquities Act, President Carter increased the size of the National Park and Monument systems by an area larger than the State of Idaho...

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December 2, 1978. Anchorage's *Alaskan News Miner*

LAND LOCKUP ENLARGED

Staff.

Anchorage —

In Washington D.C. today, President Carter used his office to lockup an additional 56,000,000 (million) acres of potentially rich oil and mineral lands in Alaska. The fifty-six million acres— an area larger than thirty-nine of the Lower 48 states— is only the latest addition to Federal land withdrawals that now total nearly 175,000,000 (million) acres, an area that if it were a separate state would slightly exceed the acreage of the great State of Texas. The land was withdrawn under Section D-2 of the Native Land Claims Act which only allows up to 80,000 acres to be withdrawn for study of inclusion into protected categories. But by using the 1907 Antiquities Act, an Act intended to protect buildings and other small historical sites, President Carter has again thwarted the will of the Alaskan people...

Chapter One

Into the Eye

1.

The earth was ten percent smaller in diameter and atmospheric pressure was twice what it is today before Pangea was divided in the days of Peleg— at the very beginning of the historical record. But cultural amnesia caused the loss of stories about this expansion of surface without increase in mass...

Reading without necessarily accepting the author's claims, Itzak Salmon pauses. He lifts his eyes to watch circling storks migrating north towards the industrialized cities of Europe, north towards the jutting peninsula where he was born, towards a midnight sun, towards a God he still wants to believe, towards where he is sure to die if he accepts this assignment. Instead of symbolizing birth and life, the circling storks seem to create an emotional vortex that sucks fatalism from deep wells within him. This fatalism bubbles as if it were a witch's brew in an iron cauldron, heated by flames of political idealism. How can the American president be so naive? Surely he intends to take seriously the threats of these patriots or terrorists. He can't really ignore them, can he?

The assignment he has been asked to accept, like the academic paper he reads, defies comprehension. Would the earth have begun a period of expansion when the "fountains of the deep" erupted in the days of Noah? Can the flood story be believed? Could all of the geological strata used to date the various ages have been deposited in one year? Can these Alaskan patriots secure enough enriched uranium to make a bomb? Can he steal that raw ore and ship it to Israel without American officials knowing, without *the Cousins* becoming suspicious, without *the Uncles* trying to intercept that shipment, without these Alaskan patriots killing him first? The improbability of this last question simmers among potato peelings and turnip tops in a watery mental broth like that served nightly in the labor camp from which American GIs rescued him a lifetime ago. Escape from the camp wasn't possible. So he drew— his eyesight was then very sharp— one British Sterling ten-pound note after another while his stomach ached. Fear of the ovens caused all but his fingers to tremble. Yes, he feared for his life. The fate of the dead wasn't heaven, but a pile of corpses that were pushed into a trench and burned until the ovens were completed. Living until tomorrow was the lure that kept him and the other boys forging Allied currency. Death, though familiar, was still unknown. It was only later, after he had killed, that he came to know death as true enemy it is.

But the War ended before he was scheduled to be baked in the ovens. Soldiers came with rifles and chocolate bars and orange marmalade— there is nothing like orange marmalade on a chocolate candy bar. It is a sweetest taste a person can experience. It is freedom, liberation from hell itself.

How is he to repay his gratitude to the Americans? By helping terrorists intent upon threatening Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, maybe, while he awaits an opportunity to divert the coveted ore? That opportunity might never arise. Will he then have assisted these terrorists in their recklessness? He will have aided nuclear proliferation, the smallest of his concerns.

Therein lies his dilemma: it is really a simple problem. Is America part of the House of Joseph? When the Messiah comes, Joseph will be allied against the House of Judah— against him. Judah will be without friends or help. She can only rely upon herself. Even the loyalty

of the Messiah cannot be counted upon. She must be prepared to stand against the world. She must sharpen her nails and be ready to scratch out eyes already too blind to see the likeness of their fathers in their sons.

Can he be certain of who Joseph is? Enough so to believe the Prophets?

When the Blitzkrieg came, local rabbis urged his father to surrender his pistol after Nazis nailed that metre-long poster titled, *Verordnung über Waffenbesitz im besetzten Gebiet*, to the synagogue door. The double-column poster, written in German on the left, with an eagle and swastika in the middle, ordered good citizens to surrender all firearms to the German commander within 24 hours, but there was no time given for when the 24 hours began. So when his father went to turn in his pistol, his father was arrested, then shot the next day. When asked why, the Nazi officer, who later came to arrest his mother, answered in the very unGerman fashion of asking a question, "Can there be anything more dangerous than a Jew with a gun?"

Even now, more than two calendar cycles later, that question haunts him. Its answer is, *Yes, a Jew with a bomb. A big bomb. A big dirty bomb. A thermonuclear device large enough to kill a million. Maybe a second million from radiation.* And who will this Jew be? The avenger of blood? There will be no city of refuge, no elders judging the matter, no escape.

He has no business even considering this assignment. His loyalty is to Israel, not to the world community that will seek to drive all Jews back into the sea from where its scientists believe Jews evolved as a mutant form of humanity. It isn't even to the Americans who rescued him, or to the professors who taught him physics and the dynamic potential of converging force vectors. It isn't to global peace, or world harmony. It is to Jerusalem and the House of Israel, whom the Eternal divorced and now as a single woman must make her way among nations bent upon destroying her... his only choice is to refuse this assignment. Let someone else die among irradiated polar bears on wind-polished ice floes. If he accepts, he could be convinced to help the terrorists if he cannot divert their raw ore to Israel.

He understands the difficulty with him refusing: there is no one else who can go, no one else who has bomb-making experience or credentials, no one else who has a better chance of success, or for that matter, any chance of success. His chances are numbers with large negative exponents, but he has become expendable now that Syrian intelligence has identified him. His days as a field agent in the region are over. All that awaits him is a desk in a stuffy underground office, then tending a too-small garden on a too-small rooftop until either the Messiah comes or he is planted among his flowers, the latter his only real expectation.

According to Israeli agents inside the Soviet Union, the Kremlin believes these Alaskan patriots can obtain large quantities of unrefined ore, or already have possession of enough ore for several bombs. But *the Cousins* dismiss the potential threat as nothing more than *minor right-wing unrest* about newly signed Executive Orders that protect Alaska's natural resources from commercial exploitation. They insist that even if some ore is possessed by these terrorists, all that can happen is the terrorists will die from cancer. They are certain that the terrorists cannot obtain enriched ore. They believe that the terrorists lack the technological expertise to manufacture a thermonuclear device. *Well, we also lacked that expertise not long ago. But the French were most generous with their facilities, and now, we will not be thrown into the sea by anyone, even by the armies of peacekeepers that will attempt to surround Jerusalem.*

The telephone rings. Setting the paper about Pangea aside, he rises and steps inside to answer the secure line.

"Itzak, your son— "

Interrupting, he says, "Minister, stop... my son knew the risks— accepted them— I accepted them— and God will avenge. So it isn't my grief that makes me reluctant to take this assignment." He listens to condolences, then to arguments he would make if he were in the minister's place, and he can't disagree with any of them. He is the right person for this assignment, and this assignment has to be accepted. Israeli national interests presently need a strong America, not one weakened by the loss of a state with the resource potential of Alaska. Yes, the successful secession of Alaska, unlikely as that possibility is, might cause pent-up regionalism to divide America into a European-like union. More likely, Alaskan secession would cause America to look inward and enter another period of political isolation. And yes, Israel needs the uranium if that ore can be recovered. So when he again speaks, Itzak begs for more time: "Minister, there are a few issues I must resolve for myself before I can be effective— "

"Itzak, you are like a brother to me. How may I help?"

"I don't know that you can... I will not go in any official capacity. I will only go as a citizen to do what I can as a citizen."

"I understand... what support will you need?"

"None... other than the return of the Danish passport, with stamps showing that I have come from Copenhagen to celebrate the spring holy days in Jerusalem."

"Your cover as a Dane has been compromised— "

"It has been in Syria. Not in America."

"What else will you need?"

"A clear field. No agents. No shadow. No references to this assignment in official records."

"No money? weapons? technical support?"

"No. All of those things leave sticky trails like spider threads that might some day be unraveled. Besides, if those Alaskan patriots are to accept me, they will only do so if I bring nothing but what I know... let them spend their money. They have gold."

"Is there nothing else that I can do? that I can arrange?"

"There is one thing. When you next see my wife, tell her I am dead, that she is free to marry."

"Itzak, are you certain?"

"Yes, certain, very certain." He has never been more certain about anything. They have been separated since the second year he entered Syria undercover. She couldn't take the pressure of knowing he might be exposed any day. She had sought a divorce, but one had been refused in Israel. So she lives with an American writer, and she campaigns for women's rights and she seems to genuinely hate all men.

Even if he is lucky enough to escape from the cold of Alaska, he will not return to Jerusalem. His daughter-in-law left for France this morning; she will be returning to her family's estate. Maybe he should return to Danmark, become a baker like his father and grandfather if he's lucky.

"The passport will be delivered this evening... when will you leave?"

"As far as everyone is concerned, I am already gone. I didn't return from Syria." He looks for the storks, but from inside his apartment, he can't see enough of the overhead sky to locate them. What he sees are vultures on the western horizon, their characteristic silhouettes tiny and dark and more numerous than even the gulls.

Hanging up, he wonders if he should have returned from Syria. Maybe he should have missed his contact. Maybe he shouldn't have fought his way into Turkey. Maybe he should have looped around to Iraq, where he could have helped them with their nuclear reactor.

Just a little. Enough that a design-failure accident would have been sure to occur. The accident might not stop Iraq's development of the bomb, but it would slow them down for twenty years or more.

The academic paper lies open to that unbelievable claim of the earth having expanded in size at the very beginning of this historic era. *Well, it might have, but the globe shrank with the return of the remnant of Israel to Jerusalem.* He suspects, though, that the prophesied remnant is of the House of Joseph and not of the House of Judah. The setting for the return is after the Messiah comes, meaning that there will be another return of Israel from Northern Europe.

Why does he know these things? Why does he know that those northern tribes of Joseph took to themselves the identifier of being called the men of Isaac, or written, Sacs, the vowel pointing varying with their travels? Why cannot he be as ignorant as those Saxons who are his brothers, a question that prevented him from sleeping the nights he laid sweating in Damascus, nights when even he expected to be exposed the next day. But the next day would pass without mishap, would pass without that dreaded tap on his shoulder, without his world shrinking to the dimensions of a prison cell.

His world in Syria, as if a human head to the belt of a jungle warrior, shrank until it fit in his hand—the globe, itself, continues to shrink, thanks to airline schedules and satellite television and thin wafers of silicon, the unleavened bread of Armageddon. But the question that most interests him concerning this now-smaller world is can it be fractured into forming another asteroid belt orbiting the sun, reducing promise to cold stone. How many 100-megaton devices strategically placed on the Ring of Fire would it take? As few as three? As many as fifteen? The answer is the speculation of physics students who worry about the cessation of all life when not running calculations for building even larger thermal-nuclear devices, with delivery systems of balanced harmonics, each missile guided by a human brain in a jar.

The storks circle northward, their migration causing the earth to tilt a little more, causing northern days to lengthen.

He will leave in the morning, leave as a Danish tourist who came to spend this Passover in Jerusalem, the promise made with bitter herbs and burnt bones. He has a little money, enough to fly as far as London where he will meet an Alaskan Patriot.

What sort of a person will this patriot be? Who is so foolish as to think a resource-rich bridge like Alaska can juggle three superpowers, two of them economic, two military, while being utterly dependent upon two of them. The state wants to become a 20th-Century version of 12th-Century Iceland. But the globe is much smaller now than it was. Pangea has been knitted together by Boeing and Hughes and AirBus, their flights being the darning threads mending the rents of God. Only this new Pangea remains at single atmospheric pressure rather than double, thereby retaining its quota of brain-damaged patriots whose mothers starved them for oxygen while they were still in the womb.

2.

The Alaskan patriot is a grandmother, frumpy and gray and appearing lost in the confusion of international arrivals and departures. She hands him a blank ticket for an SAS flight to Fairbanks, due to leave within the hour. He is to fill in the name. He will become whomever he names on the ticket. Identity has within itself a plasticity that reduces a person to a name on a card, any name.

“The flight is open seating. I'll join you once we're in the air.”

The authority with which she speaks defies her mannerisms. He is instantly suspicious: she seems professional, which causes him to wonder if this Alaskan patriot organization hasn't been penetrated by the F.B.I. That was the case with every one of the American war-protest groups earlier this decade. The person in charge in every group was an F.B.I. agent, a level of efficiency that Israeli agents have tried to emulate.

The SAS flight is over-the-pole, and will take him farther north than he has been. But as the 747 levels out at its cruising altitude, he feels no closer to God than when he was watching yesterday's storks... how far north does a person have to travel before approaching the throne of God? Certainly farther than Scotland, beyond which clouds obscure land and sea, ice floes and life below him as he stares into the orbiting darkness, the shadow-line of the earth less knife-edged than he expected.

The woman doesn't join him, but remains seated across the second aisle and four rows behind him. She reads a paperback, an English mystery as far as he can tell, a story with rules and clues and few real surprises, one in which economy of action limits landscapes to drawing rooms and drafty country houses. *Well, this story in which I am now a part doesn't have rules or clues.* It is part of a post-modern age that began when the world shrank with the exploding of a bomb over Hiroshima August 6, 1945, exactly forty days after he was freed by GIs, forty days of wandering German country sides, invisible to both Russians and Americans. No one noticed another shabby little kid in search of a promised land; no one noticed the manna he gathered like dew from dandelion blossoms, or the P-38 he carried along with a Coke bottle of water. But Dr. Nichols did notice his interest in how weak forces and strong forces held the world together, an interest that was to be nurtured in first Oregon, then Israel. It blossomed into a joint project and radiated fury in the South Pacific before Israeli scientists left their French counterparts to return to Judea. Now, because of his birth in Copenhagen, he isn't allowed to be part of Israel's nuclear program. He has again become invisible.

There is, he's certain, a reason why the grandmother doesn't join him. He suspects that reason is the presence of a third person on this flight. *An agent of an interested party?* And his instincts war with experience. He wants to look around to see who that agent might be, but experience has taught him to not be that curious.

Below him in the shadows of the earth there is nothing to see. Brightness lies over there, beyond where this flight is headed. A seemingly unbridgeable defile separates him from that light, the defile widening into a curved abyss that wraps around *sheol* and tucks into itself where tomorrow awaits.

He feels invisible, feels as if no description of him exists, feels as if his mirror image could be anyone. A Coke bottle and a P-38, the best of America and Germany, carried in a Russian rucksack— what is it that he knows, but cannot remember. A vision. Something about the decay of dark matter, provable by the constant temperature of expanding space. Something that came to him when he was too hungry to remember his thoughts.

The SAS flight begins its descent. Through darkness and clouds, the pilot flies the plane downward towards an unseen destination. It's as if the pilot has locked onto a beacon broadcast from the edge of Faery, where trolls forge jiggling spoons from the blue eyes of Christians... the big Boeing levels out, then banks over an ice labyrinth on the southwest side of the city.

Why has he suddenly remembered trolls? Christian kids would mock his father, would play jokes on him, would drop slices of bacon in their well. And his father would offer to sell them silver jiggling spoons for fishing through the ice. Each spoon had a blue stripe painted along its edge— and when asked where a baker got such beautiful spoons, his father would

say that they were forged by trolls living under the bridge near the Christian school. It was all said in good fun until the Christians believed his father.

Fairbanks, from what he can see of it, retains a frontier flavor despite the pipeline construction that has flooded Alaska's Interior with money and men.

Snow is still piled high along the edges of the runway on which the flight lands. Dirty snow. Streaked with gravel. Berms cut by the lengthening sun. He shivers just looking at the mounded snow. But those mounds, he knows, are already smaller from sublimation. And he wonders if Alaska is cold enough to cause uranium bonds to collapse, letting neutrons and protons separate, letting the energy of those bonds free without the mass first being enriched. The thought is crazy, but so is the idea of the earth having been ten percent smaller and Pangea separating at the beginning of the historical record.

The plane rolls and rolls and rolls. Finally, it turns and slowly taxis toward a white jetway, tinged orange by the mercury vapor lights.

If there is another agent on the plane, now is when he can identify him or her... he sees him, his shadow. Three rows behind him, the child with the battle-hardened eyes pretends to not notice him standing up even though he bumps into a passenger, nearly knocking the fellow down. The young agent seems a reflection of his own youth, of when he spent his days working with French physicists on the bomb, then spent his night tailing these same physicists who slept in two and more beds. Grandma must have spotted him when they boarded in London. And he wonders who employs the child, probably the Prime Minister for he feels as if an umbilical cord attaches his shadow to himself.

He had once been as young as this child.

Without doubt he has grown old. He feels his enthusiasm for the job before him being drained by the demands of that invisible umbilical cord. He knows what he must do; yet loyalty to Jerusalem makes him reluctant to cut the cord, thereby aborting the life it supports. Perhaps there is another way.

Yes, he is old: technology is passing him by. He can no longer keep abreast of each new development in subatomic research, and he feels more the historian than the engineer.

The engineering field is for the young, for men and women whose minds aren't cluttered with the difficulty of learning how to split atoms and enrich uranium, or cluttered with stories of trolls. If he could, he would flush from his mind the trivia he spent his lifetime collecting. He would compost his years' worth of designs for square wheels that roll with a thump. He would reinvent himself rather than Armageddon.

The engineering field belongs to young men like his son.

But there are times when he would like to tell these brilliant young scientists that their knowledge is lopsided like his square wheels. He would tell them that their genius is only for a season, that the earth was once smaller than it is even now, that they too will fade like lilies in desert winds. He would tell them that if the Messiah doesn't come they will build the bomb that turns the earth into gravel... maybe he'll build that bomb so they won't have to.

As he enters the jetway, he checks to see what the child, his reflection, is doing. He told the Minister no agents for a reason; yet somehow he knew he would be tailed. He'll have to lose his shadow if he is to accomplish anything more than Jerusalem's will. These Alaskans, if they are to secede, need to be suspicious of everyone. They shouldn't even trust themselves; so he wonders what sort of an organization they have conceived.

As he waits for Customs to check Grandma's purchases, he wonders how his shadow acquired his hard eyes. His own eyes have that same hardness, his acquired at the hands of Nazis who would toss one bread crust in among a dozen boys his age or a little older. The winner would get to eat that night. The others would disappear within a day or two.

He is still remembering the viciousness with which he fought when two men touch his elbows, one on either side. Both men wear gray suits and have about them the aura of government agents.

“Mr. Salmon, please come with us.”

For a moment, he hesitates. Being removed from the line might be routine, but he doubts it. More likely *the Cousins* have tipped domestic security. He will very likely be refused entrance into the country despite having a tourist visa. He’ll be turned around and sent back to London or wherever, and in that moment of hesitation, he thinks about taking out both agents. But what would that gain him? This is not Syria. He can, he believes, trust in the rule of Law even if it is for a return flight over the top of the world.

In a small, all-white room behind Security, two more agents await him, one a woman whose eyes invite confiding to her a person’s darkest secrets. The woman, he suspects, has some degree of clairvoyant power. He feels an essence radiate from her, an essence that isn’t physical, but similar to the aura Benjamin Levi, the telepath, projects, an aura that has been much debated among intelligence agents, especially by those agents he identified when he first met them. Every agent who has met Levi, including himself, has an opinion about Levi’s mental abilities. He suspects Levi has a familiar spirit like a shaman’s demon helper. If this woman also has a spirit with her, he will have to focus his thoughts to mask his intentions.

“Why, Mr. Salmon, are you entering our country?”

“Alaska is some place I have always wanted to see, especially Mount McKinley.” He looks directly into the eyes of the woman, perhaps a few years younger than himself and better dressed than he first noticed. She wears a watch with a band made from pale yellow gold, diamond earrings and a green silk suit. Her shoes appear Italian and expensive. “I believe my visa is in order. I am a tourist in the fullest sense of the word. I want to see a wolf.”

“Who,” asks the fellow who was waiting with the woman, “do you intend to meet here?”

“I’m traveling alone, not as part of a tour. No one awaits me that I know of.”

“Your passport identifies you as Danish. You aren’t Danish, are you?”

“I am, but I have lived in other countries, including Oregon. I was born in Copenhagen, on Canal Street— and I have maintained my legal residence there for many years.”

“But you don’t live there and you really haven’t ever lived there, have you?”

“As I said, I spent some time in Oregon right after the War, took a degree from Willamette University, then returned.”

“But not to Denmark.”

“Yes, to Danmark.”

“Then why do we have you in our files as an Israeli agent?”

The all-white room is very sterile and suddenly very quiet. It seems terribly hot and stuffy and shrunken, like the globe. He feels like he can’t breathe, and he wonders if this is what it will be like when he appears before the Messiah to explain his sins.

“Your files are not accurate.”

“I think they are.” The fellow sees that the woman wants to speak to him. In whispered voices they discuss her notes before the fellow says to Itzak, “Tourism isn’t your real reason for being here, is it? You’re here to meet with political radicals.”

“Why not say I’m here to invent square wheels. That would have more sense.” So she can read his mind. He will have to focus his thoughts much more carefully.

The woman interjects: “Mr. Salmon, please. This is not the time to be testy. We know that you grieve for your son, but you must understand our concerns about what you are doing here.”

No report of his son's murder has officially been made in Israel or outside the country. These Americans either have access to Syrian intelligence, or as he fears, she has a spirit who tells her what she can't know otherwise. If that's the case, the longer he is in her presence, the harder it will be for him to conceal anything as he remembers about Pangea dividing into continents during the days of Peleg, those memories now being forefronted in his mind. With Levi, the only defense an agent has is to speak another reality into existence, not something he can explain here where she will hear his silent words. "I have come to seek God in His creation. I am an old man who travels now that I can." And he concentrates on the unlikeliness of Alaska being the western edge of Pangea when the written historical record opens with the spread of wars among the walled cities of the Plains of Shinar.

"Well, *old* Mr. Salmon, we don't believe you have come to seek God, but rather, we believe you're an Israeli agent here to met with domestic terrorists so let's drop the pretenses."

"Do agents carry guns?"

"Why do you ask?"

"The young man who sat behind me on the plane— three seats— has a pistol in the lining of the bag he carried aboard. I saw it." A weapon in an agent's bag is standard for Special Services, that weapon and bag manufactured to slip through usually lax x-ray security, that weapon also being a State secret he shouldn't reveal. But the Minister has broken a trust, his promised of no other agents.

All four agents quickly confer, then the three men leave the room, leaving him with the woman, who says, "You are a very determined man— and terribly sad."

"You know my grief."

"Can you talk about it? I sense that you carry guilt about what happened."

"Guilt? Maybe... maybe so. My son was murdered. Maybe I could have prevented what happened if I had known about it earlier." He risks confirming their data if he says much more: "He was, like I was before I retired, an engineer working for Larsen. Only he was building a power plant in Syria. The secret police there accused him of spying for the Israelis. Imagine, a Dane spying for the Jews. That makes no sense." He says this last statement with the mental force necessary for her to perceive it as absolutely true. His voice now very heavy, he adds, "Executed him without a trial."

"Then you're a decoy?"

"Decoy? like a duck?... What is being hunted?"

"I don't know. I was hoping you could tell me."

Needing to move this interrogation in a different direction, he asks, "Your name? You never introduced yourself."

"My name isn't important— "

"An attractive woman like you. Let me decide importance."

"I'm married."

"But not happily?" His inflection changes the statement into a question.

"Yes, happily."

One of the three men pokes his head through the all-white doorway, indicates that the woman should go with him. The woman sees the signal, then to Itzak says, "It looks like you're free to enjoy Alaska. I'm sorry about your son." Then from the doorway, she adds as if an afterthought, "Maybe we'll met again."

Now alone in the sterile room, he wonders if she believed him. With Levi, agents are trapped when they let down their guard for even a minute: one microsecond of mental laxity is all it takes for Levi to know the agent's history.

When he was younger, he didn't believe in spirits or gremlins or even God. He believed in science. Oral tradition wasn't reliable. Stories were fairy tales told to pacify humanity's need for knowledge. But as a scientist, he proved the existence of multiple dimensions, and the presence of co-existing life in these dimensions. But he hasn't been able to prove the existence of God. That he has to accept on faith, or reject because of a lack of faith. He stands, like most of humanity, wavering between acceptance and rejection. He wants to believe and does some days, but all of his training has been in how to measure the quantifiable.

When he has been around Levi— or even this woman— his reluctance to truly believe intensifies as he wrestles to retain the privacy of his thoughts. He doesn't like knowing that he stands before them mentally naked, and he suspects the repugnance of feeling his nakedness is what truly prevents him from admitting faith, for who wants to stand naked before a one-way mirror, not knowing for certain how many are on the other side.

If humanity is just another life form within the complexity of the universe, a little more advanced than some, a little simpler than others, he doesn't have to believe in a single Creator; doesn't have to acknowledge being little more than a lab mouse, free to roam a round cage. If humanity is merely another life form, then there remains the hope of eventual equality.

What he desires is the power of equality, the plea of Enob to come before his Creator as a prince. But how can he obtain that equality? Or what would he do with it if he obtained it?

Equality is the basis of freedom.

For the moment he is free to leave, but he isn't really free. He can be stopped and returned at anytime. And the reality he would like to speak into existence is that of absolute freedom— he'd like to be free from those limiting memories that shackle him to his past.

Since it is standard procedure for agents to be armed— undoubtedly, his shadow was— it wasn't difficult to confuse the Americans, but now he has no idea of where or how to get into touch with Grandma. These Alaskan patriots will be less trusting of him. He can only guess what they suspect. And since he has no way to contact any of them, they will have to seek him.

The American officials knew too much about him not to be equally well informed about who the patriots are and what they are doing. Again, he suspects the woman has penetrated their privacy. If that's the case, there won't be any uranium to divert to Israel. He might as well turn around and go home.

He now passes through Customs without a question being asked.

A dilemma: as a still-cold landscape lingers beyond the warmth of the terminal, he wishes he would've accepted additional monies from the minister. The airport is ten kilometres or so outside of Fairbanks— he needs a ride into town. All he can do is ask. He can't afford a taxi today when he might need one tomorrow; he must hoard his remaining few dollars. His hope is that the patriots will again contact him.

"Sure, I have room," says a young dogmusher who mistakes him for a fisherman. "And you're really not related to Les Jones? You look just like him... could be his twin."

He has only his carry-on bag, a Pan-Am bag with an old tag for a flight from Stockholm to Paris still attached to its strap handles, which he swings as he follows the musher through the terminal's front entryway, across three lanes of slick asphalt and to the fellow's pickup, an older red Ford, four-wheel-drive, with a dogbox in its bed.

As he gets in, the musher again asks, "You sure you're not related to Les? You really could be his twin."

"No. I have no relatives here."

"I don't believe that." The musher checks for traffic behind him. Then pulling out, he asks, "You weren't adopted or anything like that 'cause you don't just look like Les, you could be him. And if I hadn't just been with him and Osmar down there at Clam Gulch this morning, I'd swear you are him and you're pulling my leg."

He wonders who this Les Jones is. *A fisherman who looks like him. A coincidence?* Or is this how he is supposed to contact these patriots who must know that Federal authorities are onto them? He asks, "Does this fisherman have relatives in Danmark?"

"His family might be from there. Most of the fishermen on the Peninsula are Norskis. I would've thought he was, too."

This dogmusher hasn't yet given him enough clues for him to seek out this Les Jones. "Is this fisherman— Jewish?"

"Naa, he's Baptist if he's anything." The dogmusher is quiet for a minute before asking, "Are you a Jew?"

"My parents were killed in the Holocaust."

"Read about that in school. Saw some pictures... were you a prisoner?"

"I was small enough they had me cleaning chimneys," which is true, but only for a week. Being a forger isn't how he wishes to identify himself, so he adds no details to him having cleaned chimneys, those years of salvation and toil being still too near in time for him to remember them aloud.

Turning onto 2nd Street, the dogmusher stops: "Here you are. I'm goin' on out to Fox. Live out there. But I think you oughta get a hold of Les.... He's one helleva salmon fisherman. I'll bet you're related."

As he steps from the dogmusher's pickup, he doesn't yet know if he is supposed to contact this fisherman, if the musher's mention of salmon is a reference to him, who has become used to his name being pronounced Saul-man. However, when he was in college in Oregon, his name was continually mispronounced, and he bore the brunt of every fish joke that has been remembered by humanity. Many of the jokes shouldn't have been remembered.

He was told that he should contact this fisherman. Maybe he should. He has no other plan, and he doesn't know what happened to Grandma; he didn't see her anywhere in the terminal after he went through Customs.

Still, his best course of action is to loiter where he can be seen by these patriots, not to blindly seek them by pursuing what wasn't a very good clue. As such, he will find a public place where he's visible. He will act the part of a tourist in case the Americans are watching him; he knows they are watching.

Here in a cold wind, with snow where it slid off roofs remaining waist deep between buildings, it still feels like winter even though it is after Passover. He doesn't know if any best course is available to him. Cold wind cuts through his wool pants, dress slacks he purchased a decade and a half ago when, on an assignment in London, he quarreled with his wife about him learning Arabic. She knew without him telling her that he would be going undercover into Islamic countries, going as a Danish engineer. It was as if she knew that he would eventually take their son with him on these assignments. A child, he couldn't have had better cover. Only hormones undid everything. Their son, his son, fell for Delilah.

He hasn't been just a citizen since he immigrated to Israel with his degree in tow, the weight of his degree squashing French resistance to him being part of the joint project. He went as a junior member of the Israeli team; he went as a government agent, his expenses fully paid. But even then, he had to be concerned about money and about how he would

travel. In France and later in Syria, he had to carefully count his change for he couldn't afford to be shorted. In both countries, though, distance wasn't the problem it is here in Alaska where he is more than five hundred kilometres from Anchorage.

Remembering the maps of Alaska he studied before he left Hafia, he believes, if remembers correctly what he heard the dogmusher say, the fisherman, Les Jones lives another three hundred kilometres south of Anchorage. What he faces is a war between distance and creativity, a chess match between creation and creature. He will win even if he has to bend rules.

Where are the Americans, and the woman with her familiar spirit? His senses, damaged by the flight over the Pole, aren't able to locate them, something he has been able to do since the second year he went undercover. He feels blind, mostly naked, and vulnerable as he stands on this street corner, unsure of which bar or cafe he should enter. All seem to equally extrude gloom.

Maybe he doesn't sense the Americans because they aren't close. Maybe they attached a tracker to him or to his bag, leaving him to run as free as a dog on a long leash, leaving them able to reel him in whenever they choose.

Is that it? He wears a license and rabies tag? The license identifying his owner and the rabies tag telling everyone that they don't have to fear his bite.

The wind causes him to shiver, thereby making the goosebumps on his shoulders and thighs grind together, each bump hard as flint. He would enter one of the bars if one were different from her sisters. But the bars are collectively indistinguishable.

Come, Patriots. Show yourselves. Tell me how you intend to hold this shrunken world hostage. But you need to hurry before I freeze. As an ice cube, I can't help you.

Two blocks away, he sees a Native emerge from a bar. The fellow turns to face the door he just exited, and in a loud voice hollers, "I'm leavin without yuh, Bitch." An instant later the fellow's wife or girlfriend bursts onto the street and screams obscenities as she hurls sidearm a handful of paper that sails and flutters like money across the sidewalk and into the street. The fellow grabs the woman's arm, and the two of them do a sparring dance in a semicircle before they reenter the bar they had just left.

The incident ends as quickly as it began. The street is again very still, except for a raven on a light pole that caws twice, then turns its back to wind, launches, and sails over and onto a building's roof.

Not seeing anyone else on the street, not knowing what else to do, Itzak, his hands in front pants pocket, drifts as if pushed by the cold wind towards the paper bills that creep along the curb and concrete and edges of the building. He suspects the couple will reemerge from the bar at any moment to claim their dollars. He suspects a confrontation will occur if he touches any of the money. But for the moment the dollars lay on the street and he needs them.

As he bends over to pickup a twenty, he feels a sense of guilt unlike any he has ever experienced. He isn't taking the money of a government or of a corporation or of rich men, but of someone who has had too much to drink, someone he has seen, someone who has already been exploited. He feels like he is stealing; feels worse than if he had begged the money. Nevertheless, he picks up a second twenty and a third. He hurries. Thirteen bills altogether. All but one a twenty. That one a five. And he continues southward along the sidewalk, soon putting a block between him and the bar in which the couple has apparently returned to drinking together somewhat peacefully.

When he is three blocks away, the character of the town changes— and he wonders what happened to his intention to find a public place and await contact. He left it back there on

2nd Street, and now he has no plan. He has only the name of the salmon fisherman Les Jones.

He walks, warmed a little by the exercise. And as he walks with no particular destination in mind, he walks thinking about what the dogmusher said. He knows Americans, at least a little. Some are subtle, most are not. They are a mixed people, like Carthaginians, like Parthians, historically significant, a people designed to oppose Israel if they are the House of Joseph. And he wonders about dollars being thrown into the street. How is he supposed to understand this incident? Has coincidence been given a work to do on this assignment? When he went after David Bergt, no friend of Israel's, he encountered what then seemed like another force at work, an outside force. At the time, he dismissed the coincidences as just that. But the money now? What are the odds of someone throwing dollars in the street just when he needs them?

If he isn't careful, he'll become as superstitious as those who are *Practicing*. He will see coincidences as signs from God, as proofs of divine will being present. But he also understands that men assign meaning to even the sounds they utter. How much easier is it to assign meaning to providence, divine or otherwise?

If divine will is present, yes, if you, Most High, are listening, get me in touch with these patriots. Have them show themselves. Have someone offer me a ride to Clam Gulch, or wherever this Les Jones is. Have the weather warm up, the snow melt, and the guilt go away. Make something happen. Don't just keep me walking, not knowing where I'm headed other than through an area of log houses, many of which have been covered with board siding painted white or yellow and with motorhomes in their driveways, the motorhomes nearly as large as the houses.

He feels silly. This isn't what he expects from himself, a scientist, engineer, skeptic. He just happened to be present when the squabbling of a couple spilled out into the street. Evidently the couple was fighting about money, with the woman having it. She showed him that she was willing to share, and the two of them returned to the serious business of pickling their minds. He is merely benefiting from her generosity.

But why today? This morning? While he was watching? Surely they've had other squabbles. Why throw a handful of bills just when he needs money?

That is like asking why does a tree fall at *this* particular time or at *that* particular time. If there is a feller with a chainsaw, then a person knows why. Or if the wind is strong, the reason is apparent. Otherwise, all a person can do is accept the fact that the tree falls where and when it does. Reasons can be found for why, but not for when.

In the yard of the house he approaches he sees a red Ford Pinto with a *For Sale* sign taped to its passenger-side window. Written in small letters along the bottom edge of the sign is, *\$500.— Runs but Needs Work.*

He has need of a car. This one might be it. However, he doesn't have five hundred dollars.

How much work will this car require? More than he can do without tools or parts? Enough that its price is negotiable? He can only stop and ask.

"My husband isn't home right now, but if you want to listen to it run, I can give you the keys.... The battery might need charged."

It does.

The woman produces a small, 10-Amp trickle charger, and plugs it in, using one of the extension cords intended for block and tank heaters. She then hooks leads together. "It usually takes about twenty minutes before we can start it using the charger as a boost. ... Coffee's on inside."

He was in Syria too long: he can't comprehend a woman inviting a man into her home when her husband is away. Let alone a man she doesn't know, a vagrant walking along the street. Yet he appreciates getting inside, out of the wind that doesn't seem to warm any despite the sun melting the mounded snow.

"Where are you from?" she asks as she hands him a full coffee mug.

"Danmark. I came to see mountains."

"Oh... usually tourists don't start showing up for another couple of months although this is the time of year when the Northern Lights are most spectacular so I don't know why we don't see more earlier. Probably just too cold."

"What does your husband do?"

"He works on the Pipeline, pumps shitters, makes sure everyone has a place to go that doesn't stink. Pay's good although I wouldn't want his job." She glances outside before she adds, "He used to teach at the college, but he makes a lot more cleaning toilets for Texans."

What is he to say about that? All he can do is ask, "Are you from Alaska?"

"No— almost nobody is... I was born outside of Jackson, Michigan. My parents came up as '59ers. They still live in Palmer." She again glances at the Pinto, its hood open and the charger sitting next to its battery. A raven circles and lands in the street, hops once, then as if frightened by its shadow, launches and lands on the power pole two houses away.

"Your husband?"

"He came up from Seattle in '73, came up ABD. Had to go back to Washington to defend his dissertation. We got together right after he returned... we haven't been together too long." She checks her kitchen clocks, then says, "I think it'll start."

It does, almost. Blue smoke billows from the tailpipe, a cloud of smoke large enough to, after a minute of running, completely engulf three houses. Still, the cloud of smoke grows as the engine, first slobbering, then racing, refuses to respond to its throttle, behaving instead as a self-willed son bent upon bringing grief to his mother.

Itzak listens to the engine as it sucks air. And just as the cloud of exhaust smoke begins to clear, he says, "I'll give you two hundred for it if I can borrow some tools."

"I'll have to check with Bob." Then seeming to reconsider what she just said, she says, "Okay, but can you have it gone by four this afternoon?"

"I believe so."

"Bob's toolbox is in the garage. Just make sure everything gets back where it was."

"Thank you. And here is the two hundred." He counts off ten bills, the twenties rolled together with the five that he picked up not an hour ago.

"I'll get you the title."

The smoke is, he believes, from oil that seeped down from the valve lifters while the engine sat without being run over the winter, making the smoke more nuisance than a problem that will prevent him from traveling. Likewise, he thinks he heard the carburetor sucking air around its base, making the engine unregulateable. Hopefully, the problem is nothing more than carburetor bolts having loosened. So having heard no knocking in the engine, he believes he can live with the car until he has the uranium. Maybe he can then trade it for a truck.

The Pinto has a nearly full tank of fuel. With a little luck, its heater will work and he can escape the cold wind—

His luck runs out when it comes to the heater, which works all right but which spews antifreeze onto the windshield and throughout the interior of the car, gagging him. He will have to drive with his window rolled down whenever he needs to blow warm air onto the

windshield. The heater-core has a hole, a problem he doesn't have the time or tools to repair.

Because he has no other lead, because he doesn't know where to wait to be contacted, because either the Most High or coincidence is involved, once he has the carburetor tightened down enough that the throttle controls RPMs, he sets out for Clam Gulch. The engine of the Pinto also doesn't have much power: climbing the hill past *Skinny Dick's Halfway Inn*, the Pinto slows to thirty miles per hour. Fifty kilometres. Better than walking, but not much as he drives with his head half out his side window. And all he can do is hope the car doesn't breakdown in the long stretches between here and anywhere.

Nenana. Clear. Healey. The Park. Kilometres pass into kilometres as he rolls the tired engine south. Cantwell. Then a long stretch before crossing the Susitna River. Houston. Wallisa. A junction with more traffic and Anchorage near. Thirty more miles. Then the long drive around Turnagain Arm and over Silvertip, past Cooper Landing, Sterling, Soldotna. Still the Pinto, as a lame horse, limps southward, its headlights dim against the vastness of a mostly snow covered landscape. His face, arms, shoulders feel frozen from driving with the window down. Yet, he has farther to go as the moon begins to set beyond western mountains, white and sawtooth sharp, dividing the darkness from the darkness as if what is being created is the undoing of that long-ago First Day.

Finally, Clam Gulch. But where is this Les Jones, his look-alike? All he can do is wait until daybreak, then ask until he locates the fisherman.

The winter watchman at the cannery tells him that Les sailed from Homer yesterday afternoon, that the watchman would try to raise him by radio but not to expect much—

He doesn't know what to expect; he certainly doesn't expect much. He doesn't know this fisherman, doesn't know even why he wants to see him other than they supposedly look like each other. And this fisherman doesn't know him, probably couldn't care less about similar appearances.

He saw no wolves on this drive south; he saw many moose. As large as horses, they eat bare tree limbs. They lumber awkwardly off the highway and into the snow berms, plowing through the packed snow, dark from the dirt of winter. But he saw no wolves, as he saw no Patriots.

"Les said he'd like to meet you seeing how you could be him— and you do look like him. I've seen brothers who look a lot like each other, but I've never seen anybody who looks so much like another person as you do Les. It's uncanny, that's what it is." The watchman pauses as if reflecting on their similar appearances before continuing, "Said he'd meet you in Kodiak tomorrow, tomorrow night. East Point cannery. You'll have to fly over."

"I'm short on money— "

"That your car?"

"Yes, why?"

"It get decent gas mileage?"

"Yes. I filled it up once coming down from Fairbanks."

"Then it runs all right?"

"You're wanting to buy it?"

"I'm thinking about it... wife needs something smaller than she has."

"I need transportation— "

"Tell you what I'll do. See that Ford stationwagon over there. I think it's a couple years newer than your Pinto. Trade you title for title, throw in a hundred bucks."

Itzak stares at the blue stationwagon, both sides of which are wrinkled. The vehicle appears to have been driven between two trees that were thirty centimetres closer together than the car was wide. "I don't know—"

"Two hundred bucks then. That wagon runs good, just looks a little rough. Will pass everything but gas stations."

Still, he hesitates. *When should a person quit a gift?* He ponders the question, one that might not have a single, simple answer. "Why trade? Gas mileage?"

"Mostly... plus, wife ain't very big, and she's got a lousy sense of space. She's always hitting somethin'."

"The sides?"

"Yeah. Left side was a power pole in Carr's parkin' lot there in Kenai. Right side took her a couple of times to screw it up. Once against a dumpster there at Green's Kenai River Lodge. The other time was the last straw. She rubbed up against Connor's *Blue Ox*. Did the boat a little damage."

So the watchman's wife cannot drive. Maybe the Pinto will be what she needs. He says, "Okay, but I should tell you. The heater core has a small leak."

"It couldn't be too bad, or you would've froze driving down from Fairbanks."

"Don't think I didn't."

The watchman's mention of fish, innocent as it was, causes him to wonder if, somehow, he is missing the signals of these Alaskan patriots; if their communication is more subtle than any he has previously experienced. He can't know how much they say to each other by using obscure referents.

"I just bought the Pinto and haven't changed its title. So I'll give you what I have for paperwork, and its keys."

The heater of the Grand Torino wagon works very well. On his drive to Homer, he is warm to the point of almost falling asleep a dozen or more times while driving.

He flies a Twin Otter commuter flight from Homer to Kodiak. The Otter's cabin is not pressurized, so the flight is low over the water. Low and slow. And the Otter flies as if it were a gull, scouting for surfacing schools of baitfish. It seems to walk through the air, its gait curious, as if it were trying to see everything that can be seen, meandering here, then there. Finally, though, it steadies itself as islands appear tall ahead.

After landing, he realizes that he has enough money for the taxi ride from the airport to the Kodiak Star Motel, and enough money for one night in the Star, and enough money for a large cheese pizza and a stein of draft beer. He has enough money he could call someone if there were anyone to call, if there were anyone who cared that he has traveled so far that he can see the ends of the earth from here. But there isn't anyone. So he shares part of the pizza with a middle-aged cannery worker who can't stop talking about her now-grown kids.

He leaves the upstairs pizza parlor alone. The cannery worker had friends she needed to see. So not even wind accompanies him as he slips into his room where he lies on stale smelling bedding, staring at the cigarette stained ceiling, his shoes still on his feet.

Morning comes.

He can't remember getting undressed, but he must have. So as he showers, he can't decide how far he has journeyed in the wrong direction. Would anyone seriously believe that a few discontented Alaskans might engage the American government for sovereignty of this cold land? They must all be related to Zionists who engaged the world in their attempt to reclaim a portion of a promised land. And as was the case with Zionists, war is inevitable. Blackmail won't be enough. These Alaskan patriots will, if they ever possess one, have to use a thermal-nuclear device against their own families, may God forgive them.

He feels like he is in the way as he waits on East Point's dock. By radio, the cannery raised the *M/V Freedom*, the name of Les Jones' crab boat (really a whaleback, 58-foot limit seiner that has been tanked), shortly after he arrived. The call confirms that the crabber is headed into town with a small load of tanners.

The waiting comes to an end at 3:47 A.S.T.

He doesn't look that much like Les Jones. There are similarities: height, color of hair, the same hard gray eyes. But they aren't the same build. The fisherman has heavier shoulders, a larger chest and waist. However, judging just their facial features they might have had the same father. Different mothers, though.

Their differences show in their hands. He has longer fingers than the fisherman. And longer legs. Shorter torso.

Once they are alone, Les says, "I didn't think you'd ever get here, not after what happened at the airport. You were supposed to wait there. Mollie said you just up and disappeared."

"Then you know who I am?"

"Mollie said you looked a lot like me. Guess she was more correct than I thought... that's how come I knew you'd made it to the cannery, but how did you know to go there?"

"A dogmusher said I looked like you, that you're a salmon fisherman. I took that for a coded message by someone who didn't know how to pronounce my name."

"Who was this musher?"

"Don't know. He said he was with you and Osmar day before yesterday."

"Oh, John Bierman. He came down to get a dog from Dean, but talk about fluky luck. That's eerie that you'd run into him of all people. He doesn't know what's going on." Standing, the fisherman looks at the crew off-loading the crabs: two cannery employees are in the hold, tossing crabs as fast as they can into web bags a metre and a half across and two metres high. The dock crane replaces one bag with another as fast as they are filled. "I think we'd better get outta town right now. I don't believe in things just happening. I've seen too many of those happenstances that weren't."

"How long before you can leave?"

"Seeing how far down in the hold they are," Les nods towards the two cannery workers, "it looks like we can go in another ten minutes. We'll take on fuel in Chignik. Do you have everything aboard?"

"I only have this one bag."

"Good." Then leaving Itzak alone on the bridge, Les steps onto the deck and barks orders to his crew, who work alongside the cannery's employees: "Bring that fish ticket down here so I can sign it. We'll be casting off as soon as we're empty."

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