

SOME MYTHS NEVER DIE

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AN EVENT GROUP THRILLER

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AUTHOR OF *LEGEND*

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This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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For my father--who I lost this past year, I wish I had been as good to
~~you as you were to me. Twenty-twenty hindsight can be a horrible~~
and haunting thing. I can only hope and pray that you could see
beyond my youth, see the man, and know in your heart
I tried to be the best I could be.

For Roxie--a cousin, now a sister, for enduring the unendurable,
the loss of a child, it should happen to no one in the entire world.
My heart is broken for you.

For Maribeth--to the ghosts of youth, may we forever be haunted
and happier for it.

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PROLOGUE

THE FALL OF OLYMPUS

13,000 BCE

The council elder sat alone in the darkened chamber. His mind focused on the empire's dire situation and the harsh judgment that history would render upon his great civilization. The cruelty they had shown against the lesser peoples of the world was now coming back a thousandfold to haunt the ringed continent. This judgment, this disaster, had begun three years earlier, with the rebellion of the barbarian nations in the outer empire, north and south.

When the elder closed his eyes, he thought he could actually hear the far-off cries of citizens and soldiers alike as they prepared for the final defense of what the barbarians thought of as Olympus and the very gods they once worshiped. While he sat secure inside the Empirium Dome, safe behind the eight-foot-thick triangles of crystal that made up the geodesic bubble, the rest of his world stood unprotected against the onslaught of the allied barbarian nations assaulting the empire.

He opened his aged, half-blind eyes and looked at the order that the Empirium Council had written out only an hour before condemning not only the barbarians but *themselves* as well. Thinking this, his attention turned to one of the duplicate Keys for the weapon.

Androlicus reached out and with a shaking and age-spotted hand removed the silk wrap that covered the huge diamond before him. He stared deep into the immense blue gemstone for a moment and then allowed his fingers to touch the deep and swirling tone grooves etched into its surface by their finest scientists. There were two more Keys such as the one before him--precious stones that had taken fifty lifetimes to find and half as much to engineer, and were the secret at the heart of the Great Southern Wave.

One Key was being prepared even now, far below the earth. The second was hidden in the land of the hostile Nubians, many hundreds of kilometers to the south in the farthest reaches of the empire. The third sat before him, identical in shape and design and meant to control the uncontrollable.

The great doors of the Empirium Chamber swung open, bathing the room in bright sunlight, dispelling the long shadows that had so long held the elder prisoner. The old man closed his eyes against the brilliance of the day as he heard the general march quickly into the chamber and directly to the council table.

"By your leave, Great Androlicus."

The old man finally opened his eyes to give the general a sad, knowing look before throwing the silk over the three-foot-diameter blue diamond on the chamber table.

"General Talos, I have called you away from the empire's defenses for this." The old man tapped the document with his aged hand. "It is here with my mark upon it as the Empirium Council has demanded, thus completing my culpability in the extinction of our empire."

Talos's eyes darted to the marble tabletop. He slowly reached for the handwritten document, but Androlicus gently laid the full weight of his hand and arm down upon the scroll. He pulled it back as if to withhold it, stopping the general short.

"Our time is at its zenith, My Lord," Talos said. "Our forces on the western and northern peninsula are close to being overwhelmed, our defenses breached by the combined might of the Macedonians, Athenians, and Spartans. We must act soon or all will be lost. Even now, the Thracians and Athenians are loading the allied states' full invasion force on the Greek mainland. They have drained citizens from as far away as Mesopotamia."

"With my sign upon this order our demise has already come to pass even as we stand here" Androlicus replied. His eyes went from the general to the silk-covered diamond.

"My Lord?" asked Talos, confused.

Androlicus smiled sadly and nodded his head, his long white hair and thinning beard shimmering as the sunlight played on his face.

"We are set upon a course that is far more deadly than those hordes of barbarians we fear so."

"The Science Elders and Earth Council have assured--"

"Yes, yes, yes," the old man said, cutting short the general's response. "We have all been assured that this technology is foolproof." He pulled the document back to him and looked at it. "*Foolproof*. This word seems to have more meaning these days."

"My Lord, to delay--"

Androlicus suddenly stood, the action so fast that it belied his 107 years.

"To delay is to continue thinking! To delay is to devise another way of ending this! To delay is to stop fools who think more violence delivered from untested theory is the answer to our woes!"

General Talos straightened, standing at attention and staring straight ahead as if suddenly transported to the parade ground. His bronze helmet was crooked under his left arm and his right hand stayed at his ivory-handled sword.

"You have my apologies, old friend." The elder knew that with his words he had wounded the general, the very last of the great Titans.

The general blinked and then looked at Androlicus. He slowly placed his helmet with its long plume of blue feathers and trailing horsehair on the long, curved marble table before him, then allowed his bearded face to soften.

"You are tired. How long has it been since you slept?"

The old man turned and looked at the large tapestry on the council-chamber wall. The weaving threads showed the great plain and deserts surrounding their tiny inland sea. Their small continent was at its exact center situated between the four great landmasses to the north, south, west, and east. It also depicted the almost endless western sea beyond the Pillars of Heracles, named after the barbarian Greek hero to the north who was even now leading his monkey-people to the very gates of Androlicus's home city.

"My lack of sleep is but the least of what ails me. Besides, I foresee my long-needed rest is very close at hand."

"Don't say this thing. We will prevail. We must!"

Androlicus uncovered the third Key. "This will fail. The tone grooves mean nothing. The pitch is all wrong and the weapon will be uncontrollable. The Key and its tones will only enhance the Wave to a level that is far beyond the science to keep it caged."

He saw the look of confusion upon the face of this simple but brave Titan.

"The illusion has been perpetrated by testing on plates that are weak and old. Ah, but the crust beneath our own feet?" He wagged his finger at Talos. "Well, they are new, deep, and strong. It will surely end our world. This diamond has the ability to store and increase power; and coupled with the fact, the plate diagram is wrong and will assuredly destroy everything and everyone."

"You are a great scholar, but the sciences, they--"

"*They* are wrong. I have studied the Tone Key and the plate diagram and have discovered it will only work on the smallest of scales. Once the realignment of active plates begins, nothing in our science can control the result. If I am right and the diagram lies--if the fault lines and plates are all interconnected--this Key and her sisters will not control the earth's rage, but put a sword point to an already wounded beast. There is a reason why the gods have made the blue diamond so hard to find--it may generate more power to the Wave from the stored energy of light, heat, and the very electricity

generated by our very own bodies. As I said, it's uncontrollable."

"Then why do you sign the order for the weapons use, My Lord?"

The look on the old man's face told the general everything. He knew then that the fate of the civilization was sealed. This great man was going to allow the world to have its way. The barbarian freedom from their grip was at hand and Androlicus was going to allow it to happen because it was their time. From many nights of talk by warm fires, he knew Androlicus to be an advocate of the barbarians. He philosophized that they just needed a start to become as themselves, an advanced thinking people.

Talos saw the old man relax.

"Tell me, what of your defense, or should I say preemptive strike to the south?" Androlicus asked while turning once again to look at the tapestry map of the north of Africanus.

"The Gypos prepare their voyage across the inland sea, possibly on the morrow," he said and then lowered his head.

The old man caught his friend's awkward silence after the brief report and turned to look at him.

"Your armies were defeated in the Egyptian Delta?"

"They were slaughtered to a man. We were no match for the combined force sent against us. They were not only barbarians from the west; our former allies, the Nubians Africanus, allied with the Gypos."

"How many are dead?" Androlicus asked, closing his eyes before he heard the answer.

"Six thousand citizens we sent into Egypt will not be joining us for the final defense of the inner circle. That, coupled with the defeat of General Archimedes by the barbarian Heracles on the northern outer ring and that damnable Jason upon the sea ... five thousand more of our men will not be defending the second ring. The Gypos have also poisoned the Nile, so I have ordered the destruction of the great aqueduct; it has already fallen into the sea. There will be no more fresh water to our shores."

"We have lost eleven thousand soldiers in this one day alone?" The elder turned, as if by looking at the general in his eyes the statement would not--just could not--be true.

"It seems our ancient enemies have learned the ways of war well from us."

Talos's face betrayed his sadness as he told the rest of the story. "Arrayed against us are Heracles who is barely above the mentality of a cave dweller, and also Jason of Thessaly, who is but a thief of the ship and oar designs of our science. The allied armies still bear mostly stone axes, wooden swords and sharpened sticks, but they have defeated the greatest nation the world has ever known."

"I would say the gods have turned on us, wouldn't you, my great Titan?" murmured the old man in reply.

"The past will always find a way to punish the present." Talos smiled sadly. "The sins of the fathers will always curse the young."

Androlicus nodded in agreement.

"Our greatest treasures, they have been hidden well?" he asked.

Talos had the slightest trace of a smirk etching his hard mouth. "It was difficult, as we lost thirty-two screening ships to Jason in the Poseidon Sea, but yes, old friend, the greatest of treasures is saved along with the histories, our heritage, science, and the libraries. Shipped to the farthest reaches of the western empire, not even our followers will know where they are buried."

"Good, good. Now I am as weary as I have never been before."

"You are sure the weapon will fail?" Talos asked, wanting just a glimmer of hope, not for himself but for the very people he was sworn to protect.

"It is as uncontrollable as we are arrogant. Who are we to believe we can manipulate the very planet we walk upon? We can only hope that the secret of its use will never be found. The bronze maps, the plates, the disks, they are all destroyed?"

"Except for the single plate map and dimensional disk sent with the treasure ships."

"The plate map should have been destroyed," said Androlicus angrily.

"Lord Pythos loaded the plate map himself as a safeguard in case we needed the second Key."

Androlicus placed his hand on the cool surface of the large blue diamond. "No, he won't need second or third Key. It ends here. It ends today."

Androlicus slowly pushed the order forward without removing his eyes from the Titan.

"Give this to that madman below the earth and may the gods have mercy on us. I am sorry you will die by the side of that fool."

"I am also. What of you, My Lord?"

"I have my devices." He lowered his head, a move that made the general feel desperate for his old friend. "These old eyes have beheld too much. I have seen that which I was not meant to see. I choose not to witness our arrogance of science at work." His voice broke. "We could have been such a great people. We wanted to be, at one time ages ago."

The elder looked around the great chamber within the safety of the Crystal Dome; the wonder of the ages.

General Talos took the order and, with one last glance at the covered third diamond, turned away feeling as if he were leaving a dying father behind. He slowly walked through the great bronze doors of the chamber, closing them behind him, leaving the chamber once again in darkness, as well as the great Empire of Atlantis.

The great tectonic-plate chart was carved directly into the stone walls of the giant and ancient volcanic cavern one mile beneath the city of Lygos, the centermost island in the rings of Atlantis, a mountainous plateau the barbarians thought of as Olympus. To the ordinary citizen the wavy lines and circles of the chart were but a meaningless jumble of scribbles. The only recognizable feature on the strangest of maps were the three great circles of Atlantis.

The diagram was five thousand years in the making and was the great achievement of their time. The Great Poseidon Sea was mapped in intricate detail, but the lines did not stop there. They also coursed through the entire known world, even unto Europa. Hinduss and the vast, barbaric Asiatic nations of the Far East world of the Dragon Men, the Chi, were also depicted. The lines on the diagram diminished as they crossed the vast western Sea of Atlantia and west toward the two giant and mostly unexplored continents of the Far West. Their vast explorations for the past five thousand years were designed toward mapping the faults and continental plates of as much of the world as possible because only the gods knew from where their next enemies would arise.

The giant chart was engineered by the science of their time. The strange lines actually mapped the minute fault lines of most of the known world, active and extinct, discovered using divinatory apparatuses. The thicker lines were the actual plates that moved whole continents like slow-moving glaciers throughout the history of the planet.

"Are the warships fully aware of the extreme nature of their mission?"

General Talos glared at the old and slight man before him. The elder, Lord Pythos, had once been an Empirium Council member but had resigned over thirty years before to conclude his work on the science of the Wave. A maniacal passion had consumed the ancient earth scientist for the latter part of his eighty-five years of life.

"The admiral knows his duty and need not be reminded. His destruction is assured, so you may receive your signal, Pythos."

"Excellent," he said as he looked knowingly at the general. "Think not that I am fooled by you being here at this time. I am fully aware that the traitor Androlicus has sent you to dispatch me if the

plan fails. I am only surprised he has not chosen to do this foul deed himself."

"~~To that great man you are not that important, the lesser the task, the lesser the messenger.~~ Your station is far too low for him to be here. And if you once more refer to him as a traitor, that will be the last word you ever utter from your foul mouth."

Unfazed, the old man continued. "Shame; he would have seen the miracle our people so crave. Or that will destroy our enemies and shake their homelands with their mud-and-stick huts to dust."

Talos scowled at the crazy old man and then angrily raised his sword for the chain of flags to be readied for the signal. Five hundred of his more severely wounded soldiers had been pulled from the defense of the second circle of Atlantis against the probing invaders. Their duty here would be to relay the signal to the last two warships of the Grand Fleet.

Pythos walked over to a large bronze-and-iron box. He ruthlessly shoved a Nubian slave out of his way and gestured for two guards to lift it. Then Pythos became agitated as the men did his bidding almost crying out when one of the soldiers let his end slip his grasp. Once steadied, Pythos approached and lifted the wooden lid. His gaze locked on the object inside. He reverently reached in and brought out the Tone Key. He swallowed as he did so. He held the large, perfectly round diamond up to the flaming torch and laughed as he felt its heat rise as it absorbed the flames' light.

Talos could see deep etchings upon its surface. Strange lines like impressions or gouges that were not natural flaws spiraled around the entire round diamond. The general did not understand how the diamond produced the unheard sounds that activated the great bells on the seafloor, as its science was far beyond the mind of a soldier.

Pythos turned and walked over to a large cylinder. He ordered one of the guards to lift a large lid of what looked like a bronze barrel lying on its side. Once opened, Pythos laid the blue-tinted diamond inside with the care of a mother bedding a newborn child. Then he reached up and brought down a large spike tipped with a much smaller blue diamond, only ten centimeters in diameter. This strange spike had a thick copper wire running from its top. The other end disappeared into the large barrel-like device. He placed the spike into one of the diamond's deep grooves specially chosen for the target stratum of seabed, then he gently closed the lid.

Talos allowed his eyes to follow the copper line to a large wheel. The teeth on that wheel disappeared into the teeth of a larger one and that into an even larger cog. There looked to be three such wheels aligned side by side, reduction gearing for a device the general would never be able to fathom.

"Start the paddlewheel!" the old man shouted.

Sixteen hundred naked barbarian slaves, captured Greek, Egyptian, and Nubians, began pulling the thick ropes. As they strained as one mass of humanity, the giant floor gate began to slide back on its iron tracks. Steam and heat shot out like a caged animal and assaulted those in the great cavern. The slaves closest to the gate immediately burst into flame. Their very flesh caught fire as they screamed and ran, and archers who lined the upper tiers of the cavern quickly and mercifully brought them down.

As the gate slowly continued to slide open, whips cracked and men screamed. Muscles bunched and feet dug harshly into the grooved stone floor. More flame sprang from the lava well as the flowing river of magma passed by the opening at over sixty kilometers per hour. Still the gate to the volcanic vent needed to be wider and the taskmasters' whips sang their agonizing song.

"Yes, yes!" the old man moaned under his breath. "That is wide enough!"

The slaves, many burned through to the bone, fell to the floor as women ran to them with water and cooling salve.

Pythos watched and grinned as his plan of action began to take shape. He signaled for the next phase. Five thousand slaves, these bigger and far stronger than the gate slaves, stood as one. Women

threw water on their scarred backs in preparation for the great heat that would slam them like the ve Wave they would soon produce. Far above them, the great paddle-wheel hung motionless in its cradle. The words and hieroglyphs extolling the assistance of the gods etched deeply into the engineer metal made up of the new, hardened steel. The one million copper spikes placed in bundles of thousand prickled around the great machine. Above the wheel was a three-meter-thick copper plate held in place by a spun steel cable that bore its massive weight.

"Lower the lightning wheel to the midpoint marker."

The slaves moved in unison not by ordered word but by the crack and scream of the whip. They started pulling the six-hundred-foot-long ropes connected to the wheel. With feet slipping and trying to find purchase on the stone floor, the wheel at first refused to move. Old women threw sand beneath the feet of the slaves to soak up the water from the steam and pouring sweat of the thousands. No finding purchase with the help of the grooved stone beneath their feet as they strained against the ropes, the cavern echoed with the rumble and creak of the giant wheel as it started to move. With a loud roar, it became free of its iron cradle far above the straining mass of men.

A signal command echoed and the five thousand slaves dropped the ropes and ran to the far side of the open lava gate. Some overflow of the four-thousand-degree magma caught several hundred of the sweating and burned slaves as they ran by. It rendered their flesh and bone to ash so quickly that not one of their screams escaped their lips.

Taskmasters' whips cracked, and once again sand was thrown by the slave women for purchase. The slaves gained the opposite side of the running river of flame and melted stone. They picked up the identical ropes in a desperate hurry as far above their heads the great wheel had started to roll down its elongated track toward the open gate.

"Arrest the wheel before its momentum carries it too far. Hurry or all will be lost!" the old man screamed as he pulled a whip from one of the guards and pushed him aside. His eyes were aflame. He whipped the nearest slaves mercilessly.

The five thousand slaves worked as one as they pulled against the gathering momentum of the sliding wheel as gravity fought to push it down its track. The front ranks, seventy-five slaves in all, were pulled into the open magma gate by the momentum of the wheel. The giant paddlewheel finally started to slow as it reached the halfway point. It hit a twenty-foot-wide downward-angled notch and came to a grinding, ear-splitting halt as it finally arrested. The slaves fell to the floor as one just as a loud cheer went up from the armor-sheathed guards lining the walls.

Talos observed that the slaves still alive and nearest the old man were bloodied and burned. Many more were lying dead at the feet of Pythos. The old scientist slowly turned and looked at the general.

"Now, we wait for the signal from the sea."

Two massive warships waited at anchor four kilometers from the northern shores of Atlantis. Admiral Plius, cousin and trusted naval adviser to Talos, held hand to brow, shielding the blazing sun from his eyes as he scanned the green sea before him. He was beginning to think that the people of his nation had received a reprieve from the barbarians and the expected invasion and the bulk of the Greek alliance would not come. That brief thought and hope died in his mind as the first flash of metal against the rays of the sun twinkled in the distance, just above the horizon of the sea. The admiral removed his helmet, the long blue plume of dyed horsehair gathering at his feet as he stepped down from the prow of the ship.

"The Spartans, Thracians, and Macedonians have been sighted," he said as he took the shoulder of his sailing master.

As the rest of the gallant crew looked out over the gunwales, they saw ten thousand flashes

brightness, as many as the stars in the night sky starting to twinkle off the surface of the sea. The dreaded battle fleet of the alliance would soon be upon them.

As the admiral watched, the lead ship started to take a wavering, almost dreamlike shape in front of one thousand allied Greek ships of all shapes and design.

The lookout from above called out, "The lead ship has a black hull, black as death, and scarlet sails!"

The admiral knew the legend of the man on the lead ship with the black hull and scarlet sail.

"My Lord, should we signal the mainland?" his ship's captain asked. "The Thracian king Jason and his fleet will soon be upon us!"

"Loose the signal," he ordered with no enthusiasm.

"Loose the signal!" the captain called out.

At the stern of the massive warship was a catapult, its rear stocks removed and the front reinforced to give it the proper angle of trajectory. A sword severed the restraining rope and sent the flaming signal missile high into the blue, cloudless sky. The admiral watched it and prayed that it would be seen through the screening smoke of his burning homeland--the home soil, on which neither he nor his men would ever tread again.

Green signal flags were lowered quickly after the signal was seen from the sea. They coursed down the five-mile-long tunnel as a green wave roaring against stone. In all, the signal took only one minute from the time of the catapult signal to reach its goal.

The slaves again strained and pulled. Whips cracked and captured men from the northern and southern regions grimaced as leather slapped backs already bloody. Slowly the giant paddlewheel started to ease up out of the notch that held it.

More slaves were added as the wheel started down the last hundred meters of iron track. The great machine picked up speed and the slaves started to panic as the wheel gained momentum. The whips cracked, but this time the slaves cowered not from the pain of the lash but from fear of the great paddlewheel as it rolled down the tracks toward the flowing lava. Finally, the taskmasters lost control as the men dropped their ropes and arrows started to cut them down for their cowardice.

Pythos watched intently because he knew that there would be no stopping the giant apparatus now as it carried the full weight of its bulk down the guiding track. One and a half million tons taxed the bending and wrenching thirty-meter-thick iron rail. The great wheel finally slammed home at the bottom, again notching itself in a loop of iron that would hold it in place.

Thousands of tons of molten rock shot into the air as the wheel's massive weight struck the opening vent, incinerating slaves and their masters when lava splashed upon them.

"You fool, you'll kill us all," Talos said as he grabbed the arm of Pythos.

The old man looked at the general and laughed. "Yes, maybe, maybe, but look, my large friend!" he screamed, pointing upward.

Talos pushed the old earth scientist from him but froze as he saw the great paddlewheel start to turn from the force of flowing lava. Ever so slowly at first, it quickly started to gain momentum. As the wheel turned, its long steel spikes arrayed along the outer side of the paddles were dripping great drops of molten rock as it exited the lava flow. "Release the cooling water, now!"

Above the giant wheel, another gate opened and seawater came forth, striking the steel brushes and cooling them to prevent their melting. Steam shot into the air and soon the environment was nearing intolerable. The interior heat of the great cave had risen to 140 degrees. The paddlewheel moved faster and faster. The spikes were now connecting with the thick copper plate above and generating an electrical field.

No river or water flow in the world could equal the power of the flowing lava vent. As the great Titan watched, another gate opened and fresh water from the city cascaded onto the paddles and the water was trapped when a door sealed them shut. The live steam was shot through a pipe connected to the wheel's center and that pipe led to the tremendously spinning diamond in its case. Once the steam was released from the paddle, the door would spring free and start all over again as it was dipped in the fast-flowing lava.

The toned grooves whistled their result through the large conducting needle and out into the bronze wire, where not only the tone was carried but the electrical lightning that was needed to power the great bells on the seafloor.

"Red flags--strike!" Pythos ordered.

Talos swung his sword hand down and the long line of signalmen brought large red pendants down to strike the cavern floor.

At sea, the admiral saw three large catapult launches as the missiles streaked from the inner peninsula of the city of Lygos. He quickly nodded his bearded face, giving the signal to connect the line. As he turned away, he saw that Jason's lead ships were but three thousand yards from his lone vessel as the second ship in his line began connecting the thick line of copper.

Flaming catapults shot from the barbarian ships started striking the waters around the admiral's vessel as a mile to his rear the second Atlantean warship struggled with the giant grease-covered line of bending copper.

Onboard the second ship, the great cable had been pulled from drums of wood that had been brought to the shoreline and protected with the remaining soldiers of the army of Talos. Thousands were dying on shore so that this vessel could have the time to make the connection of the thick wire to the strange-looking stanchion protruding from the surface of the Poseidon Sea. The floating connection was held in place by a buoy through which another, even thicker copper wire ran to the bottom of the sea, where the great sound inducers had been placed against the sea bottom. They sat directly over the hidden fault line that the Ancients had mapped with their divining skills hundreds of years before.

Sailors struggled with the giant looped end of the line as the first of the Greek's catapult missiles started to strike the admiral's ship. Some were aware that the large warship had started to burn; others were fighting madly with the weight of the cable. As they fought, they started to feel the vibrations that signaled that the power of the giant machine was ramping up, that only seconds remained before the Wave that started belowground sent the killing force through the line.

"Hurry, loop the line over the buoy!" the captain called out.

Finally, as he watched, the giant copper ball on the tip of the floating marker accepted the wire, and just as a hundred men started to let go of the line the electrical charge coursed through, immediately killing sixty of his seamen as they started to shake and jump. The stench of burning hair and flesh drove the others back in fear and horror.

As the great paddlewheel moved faster far below the main city, the giant two-foot-thick brushes scraped against the copper plate at an ever-increasing rate of speed as the magma current hit its peak. The wire running from the city to the sea and up onto the deck of the second ship finally glowed red and softened as the wood railing and then the deck itself burst into flame. The flames lasted only seconds before the ship itself convulsed, and vanished in a great explosion.

On the sea bottom, arrayed along the mapped fault line above the very crust of the earth, were two hundred giant copper bells that had sound-inducing forks installed inside. Electrical current running through the mysterious blue diamond and the thick spike that was spinning around the grooved surface produced a high-pitched sound that could not be heard by the human ear, but could be felt by a

through their teeth and bones. The diamond created the invisible wave sent through the copper line the submerged bells, where its minute vibrations ran into the forks inside the submerged bells. Then the sound, the vibration, the wave grew and expanded outward into the seabed that covered the great fault line. As the sound wave from the great inductors slammed into the seafloor, some of it escaped a minuscule fraction of the din--and every fish in the sea for three hundred miles died. The now powerful sound wave was sent on its course through to the fault and through to the very tectonic plates that wedged against each other with over a trillion metric tons of force that held the great halves in place.

The sound wave struck and the edges started to crumble along a two-hundred-kilometer stretch of plating, the force of which would be felt on the surface of the sea as a directionless wave. The ships of Jason's fleet were tossed about like children's toys as the sound and the swells grew in size and violence. Finally, the two great halves could not withstand the attack and started to crumble in earnest. In addition, the cascading effect cracked the very surface of the great sea bottom. The two plate edges crumbled and collapsed and two miles of the restraining edges fell apart, and the two plates, having nothing to hold them back, whip-cracked and slammed into each other at over a hundred kilometers per hour, creating a ripple effect that was broadcast to the seabed the plates held above them.

The first devastating effect after the two halves collided created a great chasm in the seafloor, not the effect the Atlantean scientist had anticipated. Instead of the force being pushed up and out, it went down. The madman had been seeking a tidal wave of immense proportions that would swallow up the invading fleet of Greek warships, a wave that would eventually wash up on the northern coast of the barbarians' homeland. With Atlantis sitting high against the mainland to the north and south, the islanders themselves would be protected against the tidal surge. But instead the seabed lurched upward and the supporting volcanic lava lake beneath cascaded into a void of a great, widening chasm, taking the sandy bottom of the Mediterranean with it, and that was followed quickly by the sea itself.

Lookouts perched on the tallest structures and Crystal Dome of the main city of Lygos watched as a giant eruption of water rose into the northern sky. At first it rose a quarter of a kilometer into the air carrying Jason's armada toward the clouds as it went. The lookouts started cheering from every defensive wall of the land as they watched the complete and utter destruction of the barbarians. As the sea started its downward plunge, drowning and crushing twenty thousand Greeks as it did, the lookouts watched in awe as the waters started to spin in a whirlpool of enormous magnitude. It spread outward as the seafloor opened beneath, taking the remains of smashed ships and men down into a crazy spinning vortex of death.

The cheers stopped as the walls and parapets started to shake beneath their sandaled feet. An earthquake unlike anything they had ever felt before started to gain in intensity and the very air became a warbled wave of displacement.

The great invisible sound wave had ceased; its crushing effect had done its job as the great sound bells cascaded into the void where the seafloor had been. However, the sand and rock continued to slide into the immense fabricated cavern until it struck the lava that flowed beneath the two great plates two miles below the surface of the sea.

Talos knew that something had gone wrong as the look on the face of Pythos went from one of ecstasy to one of sheer terror when the floor beneath them began to tremble. In the giant chamber a mile beneath Atlantis, the general heard a great crack as if the earth's back had been shattered. It was the sound of the colliding plates sending their killing force back to the source.

The look on the old man's face was frightening as he turned and ran for the copper barrel. He hurriedly threw the top up and reached inside just as a tremendous shaking started in the subterranean cavern. He ripped out the copper line and spike even as flames erupted on his hands, melting the flesh upon them. He screamed in agony and then lifted the glowing-hot diamond from its cradle. His eyes were maniacal as he turned to Talos.

"We must get to the surface!" the old man screamed as the glowing diamond fell to the stone floor. He stared around him in shock at the failure of his life's dream, and then he slowly started to stumble forward toward the tunnel that led to the shelter far beneath the cavern.

Talos calmly reached out and grabbed the old man by the arm as he tried to run past the last of the great Titans.

"You will stay to see the end result of your witchery, old one!"

As he spoke, the floor beneath them opened and lava spewed forth to cover the running slaves and cowering guards. Then, a rush of seawater swallowed even the eruption as portions of the giant cavern disappeared into the void that had opened beneath them. The last to fall was the great paddlewheel.

A mile above the cavern, Androlicus watched as the great columns started to tumble inside the Empirium Chamber, but the immense crystals that made up the geodesic dome held firm against the natural forces arrayed against it.

As the old man watched the end of the world start to unfold around him, he quickly reached for the knife he had saved for the inevitable conclusion of his civilization. He raised the sharp blade high, but just as he started to strike his chest over his beating heart, the city started to slip and rise. His last thoughts as the ceiling of marble crushed the life from him: *The treasure is our salvation, and we will live on.*

As panicked citizens ran from the crumbling walls, they had no sense of the cataclysm that was literally sucking their great island from beneath their feet. At first it was just the outer edges that vanished in an eruption of lava and seawater, then more and more went as trees would in a strong wind; first a wave of earth rose thirty feet as it smashed toward the main city, then the very ground broke in and fell.

All at once, with nothing below the island to hold its weight, it simply folded up like a book closing and the great three rings of Atlantis, a thousand kilometers in diameter, slammed together, burying the intact Crystal Dome in its center as the main island slid beneath the waves. Atlantis vanished into fire and water. And as the earth settled and a terrifying silence grew, the two tectonic plates beneath the island started to settle into their new homes, fifteen kilometers from their original position.

Ten thousand years of civilization disappeared in less than three minutes, the seafloor swallowing it whole. The earthquake--the largest in the history of the planet--had other effects as the great shaking coursed along the fault lines that had been so meticulously and wrongly mapped for hundreds of centuries. The twig-and-mud huts of Egypt and Greece were vaporized as the earth jumped and settled. The sea emptied around the isles of Sparta, creating a large barren spot that would five thousand years later become the Sparta plain. The sea rushed from the shores of Africa and drained into the gaping maw of the wounded earth. The sea retreated as the coastline of modern northern Egypt saw the light of day for the first time, and then the earthquake swallowed whole the barbarian slaves that had come so near to freedom. A population of nearly a million souls was cut down to twenty thousand.

The wave of power continued through the large mountains to the north, crumbling and crushing the

barbarians beneath tons of rock, to set their own civilizations back four thousand years. The full length and breadth of Italy made its first appearance as its leading edges fell into the void, but would soon be covered by the retreating waters, until again it rose from the unsettled sea a month later.

The fault line continued to crumble all the way to the Pillars of Heracles. The wave of earth actually made the small mountain range of the pillars jump and then quickly collapse back, creating a difference in height of one-quarter mile in its features and separating the future land of Spain from its African neighbor. The great western ocean started its run into the Atlantean-Africanus Plain, washing away all the features of ten million years. The great sea filled the void left by the Atlantean science coming together with tidal force that sent water and earth a kilometer into the air, creating, through rain and smoke, a new ice age.

The waters vented their murderous rage into the lands of barbaric Troy and Mesopotamia, creating a great new sea where only a freshwater lake had been before, and would become the great Black Sea. Still the waters roared forth, creating their own weather system, which, on their march east, created the rains and the great flood that would eventually lead to the legends of Gilgamesh and Noah.

The sea took forty days to recede into the basin where the continent of Atlantis once sat. The rush of seawater crushed the lives of almost everything living north and south of the Mediterranean. In the south, the flood still followed the jagged line of the Nile River into Ethiopia, where the remains of the once-great civilization would be buried for thousands of years in a bleak landscape of desert.

The earth would rumble and shift for five years as the world of the West and Middle East settled into the vast area the modern world would come to be known as the Mediterranean Basin.

The Age of Enlightenment was over and the battle of man was just beginning. The last act of the surviving boat crew and citizens of Atlantis, the last of the great Greek gods as they were once thought of, was to bury, on behalf of a forward-thinking Androlicus, the great secrets of science and technology, the very history of a vanished world, and a dire warning of consequence of mind and arrogance. But most of all, the great treasure of Atlantis was safe, and the very means to end the world were hidden a thousand miles from where the Ancients had invented it, where Androlicus hoped that the great chart could never be matched with the weapon again.

However, the arrogance and the desire of some men to hold sway over their brothers would arise repeatedly, as sure as the sun had risen on that last day of the Ancients.

GREECE 46 BCE

The ancient temple lay in ruins. Built by the Greeks who had perished fighting the Atlanteans over thirteen thousand years before, it had seen the soldierly faces of Achilles, Agamemnon, and Odysseus and heard the scholarly voices and teachings of Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato, who had never known the Greek civilization before theirs. Now the trampled and time-worn marble floor was crossed by the leather-clad feet of Gaius Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus.

Pompey hugged his friend in a powerful embrace. The gold-embossed eagles on their chest armor came together with a soft sound, almost as comforting to the old soldiers as a mother's soothing voice had once been in their young ears.

"So, old friend, why have you asked to see me in this place where our ancient ancestors plotted and dreamed so much? I thought you would have been more comfortable meeting at one of the villas of your wife's family, and maybe a just a little closer to home."

Julius Caesar broke the embrace and smiled at his friend as he turned away and removed his scarlet cloak. He walked over to a fallen pillar and slowly sat, placing his cloak beside him. His hair was

askew, and Pompey could see that he was perplexed about some matter.

~~"I have news, brother. News that will astound even you, the down-to-earth Pompey, sensible Pompey, wise and wonderful--"~~

"Okay, old friend, you have my attention. No need to spread the olive oil on the bread further," Pompey said as he removed his helmet and sat next to Caesar.

Gaius looked at the older man and smiled. It was an honest look that Pompey had seen many times before in child and man. It foretold an idea, of which his old friend always had an abundance.

"The old stories told to us about the Ancients, our forefathers--remember listening to them as children?" He looked at Pompey and grinned. "Not that you ever were a child."

"True, true. I remember listening to the stories with you upon my knee, but please, continue," Pompey said, looking at the rising moon.

"One particular story from the Ancients intrigued us as boys more than most. You know of which story I speak?"

"Of course: we used to dream about the great power. You speak of the Wave?" He looked from the moon to his friend.

Caesar nodded and then slapped his friend on the leg.

"Your mind isn't as addled as rumor would have it. Yes, the wave." His gaze went from Pompey to the worn marble floor. "What would you say if I told you I have been searching for the forbidden hiding place of the library of our ancestors?"

Pompey stood so suddenly that his helmet fell from his grasp and hit the hard floor of the temple. The noise was so loud in that revered place that both sets of personal bodyguards turned their way. Pompey looked back at the soldiers until they looked away. Then he returned his fatherly stare to Gaius until the younger man looked up.

"You know searching for the scrolls is forbidden. Have you gone mad? If the rest of our brothers and sisters find out, they will have you banished and shunned. Brother, tell me you jest."

Caesar stood slowly and took Pompey by the shoulders and held him in place.

"For you and the others it is easy, your families are like stone, while mine was weak and always without the funds to make the family Juliai as powerful as the rest of you."

Pompey shook off the embrace and turned away.

"Because the family Juliai," he turned back to face his friend with a sad look about his features, "have always been dreamers, Gaius old friend. You and your fathers have always sought the easy way to power. The rest of the children of Atlantis have always been there for support, but we cannot continue to throw money at your dreams. We share the consulship, isn't that enough?"

"Mere money is no longer a problem."

"Yes, we know you married into wealth, and I hear you are doing wonderfully in Gaul and Britannia, and that alone should be enough--but not with you, Gaius, wealth isn't what you seek. Do not look so shocked. You may fool the rest of our brothers and sisters, but this is me, old friend, I know what it is you seek, and this quest will lead to your destruction."

"I have many soldiers seeking out the scrolls of our people, and now I have knowledge of where they were hidden." Caesar walked a few paces and then turned. "We are allied not only by marriage and blood but by power. With the tales that were told about the power of the wave we could rule the earth, bring all mankind together for--"

"The first family of man will not abide this, Gaius," Pompey stated sternly. "Remember the last renegade of the Ancients, our brother and my joint consul Licinius Crassus? He too dreamed of the power of the old story. The families of the Ancients made him pay for his adultery to our new faith by never returning to the old way, and now you, Brother Gaius, now you. My friend, you are diving blindly into black waters I and the others cannot allow you to swim."

Caesar faced his friend, the man who had married his daughter, Julia, and frowned.

"You will not stand by me, brother?"

The light of knowledge suddenly filled the eyes of Pompey. "Spain! I had heard that you sent the little monster Antony there on some sort of mysterious mission. It was he who found the trail of our ancestors, is this not so?"

"My time spent in that horrible place had its merits. Spain is the hiding place and we *will* find the scrolls."

Pompey shook his head in shame. "If you continue this madness, I will have no choice but to inform the rest of the society of your actions to discover the old ways. That will end you, Gaius; it will end *us*."

Caesar looked at his friend and then reached down and removed his cloak from the fallen pillar and swung it so that it barely missed Pompey as he clipped it around his shoulders.

"I must return to Gaul, there is an uprising there."

"Gaius, please do not do this thing. The family of man will send troops to Spain to thwart any effort you may make to recover the old scrolls. You will be banished from the brotherhood of Ancients!"

"I have more than just a few of our brothers and sisters on my side; they are not afraid to rise against as many of you are. I ask you one more time, Pompey, join us in the quest," he placed the golden helmet on his head and then his right hand went to his sword, not hiding the threat the action conveyed, "or there will be war among us, and that will destroy the family of the Ancients forever. What do you want?"

Pompey's eyes were on the ivory handle of Caesar's sword, and then they moved upward to his determined eyes.

"I see far more than you know, Gaius. I see ambition that would allow no interference from the family, even from me." Pompey slowly picked up his fallen helmet and placed it on his head. "I will thwart you, Gaius, even unto the destruction of our ancestral heritage. Even unto splitting us into two factions, one against the other. Leave the Key and the scrolls in their place, I beg you one last time!"

"Return to Rome, old man, and from here on out, stay out of our way. I came to this sacred place to convince you of our true calling, that our race must--must, I say--be the dominate force on this planet. But alas, you have become a timid old man, not deserving of being an Ancient."

Pompey watched Caesar turn away, his scarlet cape blotting out the rising moon as it fanned out in his haste. The old shoulders of the Roman coconsel slumped as he watched his friend leave. The younger Gaius was right about his age, he *was* tired, but he knew that he would have to invigorate not only himself but other brothers and sisters of the Ancients in an attempt to stop Gaius from finding the scrolls.

Gaius Julius Caesar turned back one last time and saw his friend among the ruins. The face he could not see, but the determined stance of Pompey in the moon's glow told Caesar that they would meet in the field of disharmony, and the Ancient family of man would divide forever.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

JUNE 1875

Karl Von Heinemann cursed his colleague and best friend Peter Rothman. The argument had gone on for days and he was tired of it. He paced in the study of his large home and turned on him once again.

"Yes, the artifacts were found by you. But you are being shortsighted in thinking this is but an archaeological find. It is much more than that, can't you see? Give me two years, that is all I ask, the

you may go public with what you found in Spain. After all, it was I who led you to the papers of Julius Caesar, without which you never would have narrowed the search enough to find the treasures."

The younger man sat in the overstuffed chair and packed his pipe. He, too, was frustrated from days of arguing. Heinemann was not only his friend and mentor but his financial benefactor, without whose generous funding this very argument would have been moot.

"The site is still open and we are not sure if all the artifacts have been recovered. What if," Karl turned in his chair and looked at the older man, "and I say this knowing how tenacious my colleagues around the world can be, the site is found and one of them announces the news of this discovery? and I daresay you, will be the loser in that event, and all for the sake of charts and graphs and a device? One that, if constructed, could only be used as a weapon? I daresay the idea is sheer madness."

"Delaying the announcement and results of your dig a few years is not that much to ask. After all, the twenty thousand marks released to you financed this great discovery. Hard and real science must take the lead here, not the fanciful dreams of a dead civilization!"

Peter stood so suddenly that his tobacco pouch slipped from his lap and fell to the Persian rug.

"How dare you--how dare you even suggest your work is the only real science! We piece together our history from what we dig up out of the earth, and this discovery we have made is a complete and utter alteration of everything we have come to learn about the past, and you daresay yours is the only real science! The art of war, sir, is no science; it is an evil that must be stopped before we discover a quick and sure method of self-destruction. We keep the secret of the Key and the Wave from the rest of the world, and bring them together with the magic that is our history."

The old professor's eyes widened and his lips were set in a grimace of outrage.

Peter let his shoulders sag. He regretted the words as they passed his lips and now he feared he had caused irrevocable damage to the most important man in his life. If not for Karl's work with the armaments industries, he would never have had the funds to find the treasure trove of artifacts in Spain in the first place. He knew himself to be a hypocrite in accepting the very money he was now ridiculing; after all, it was Von Heinemann who had reached out to the other side of the family of the Ancients in an attempt to heal the old wounds between the Juliai and themselves.

"Perhaps you are right, even though your words are disrespectful."

Karl's words caught Peter off guard. Had the argument come down to showing this brilliant man what it was he was asking of him? Had he seen the light of this phenomenal find for what it was?

"My words were foolish and said in anger, my old friend. I respect you and your work more than any man in the world, and I say that not because you are my financier for my research but because you are truly honorable and a brother that few of the Ancients, on either side, understand. We need the disharmony between us to stop, but in order to do that, it's not knowledge of the weapon we need, just the words of our people that have long been silenced."

"When do you plan on announcing your discovery to the world?"

Peter smiled, thinking that he had finally won over the old man. He felt nothing but relief as he once again sat down and looked at his mentor.

"The question should be stated correctly as: When will *we* make the announcement? You must be on my side. It was your grant and your foresight that saw the potential and it was you who came across the trail of Julius Caesar's attempts in Spain to find the treasure trove that led me to the find. You and your scholars have deciphered our ancient tongue, so I insist you be there for the accolades. This can only help bring your Juliai Coalition and my side of the family back together to live in harmony with the rest of the world. The old ones of your side, as you said, no longer desire control of the world the way some of our ancestors did. The purification of the races, I hope, is a thing that will continue, but at a more reasonable pace."

Karl nodded, gracefully accepting the invitation to join the young archaeologist in his press release.

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