

Louis L'Amour's – Haunted Mesa



Bible for a Television Series

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## Concept

While developing an advanced surveillance device, wealthy inventor Eric Hokart stumbles onto a way to detect areas of congruence, portals, that can occasionally connect our world to another. This Alternate Earth is identical to ours geographically but, for the last several thousand years, it has experienced a vastly different history.

Hoping to explore the far side of this strange new border, Eric reaches out to Mike Raglan. Once a captain in the Special Forces, Mike led the team in Afghanistan assigned to test Eric's equipment in combat. But when Mike cannot be found, Eric's curiosity gets the better of him ... and he steps through the portal into the unknown.

With *Haunted Mesa* Louis L'Amour created the basis for a unique "alternate world" Science Fiction series. The primary setting is the modern American southwest, a land of red rock canyons, mesas, parched Indian reservations, and sun blasted one-street towns. It is a haunted land where the ruins of ancient peoples hide in huge wind hollowed caves, and mysteries lie coiled in every shadow. In the Other World the remnants of an ice age still hold sway. There are no glaciers, but the land is cold, dry, and distinctly inhospitable. Ancient megafauna, like cave bears, giant sloths, and saber-tooth cats can still be found. There is only one civilization north of the equator, the seven cities of Xibalba, (She-bal-ba). They have a level of science, art, and architecture roughly equivalent to the Ottoman Empire prior to WWI; superficially primitive compared to the modern US, but well developed in its own right. The individual citizens have all the good and bad of any community of humans but, because of their history, the government remains a stifling theocracy where suspicion, betrayal, and human sacrifice, are common.

A relatively stable portal in Mexico has allowed communication between worlds to go on for a very long time. Conditions and culture in Xibalba have influenced the Olmec, Mayan and Aztec peoples on our side ... and vice versa. However, the relationship has never been peaceful, each world has occasionally subjugated the other. Today, Xibalban agents use the portal to traffic wildly exotic drugs as they maneuver for wealth and power south of the U.S. border. Their ultimate goal, a political foothold in our world.

Eric Hokart's discovery of a nearly forgotten portal within in the US is an opportunity and a threat to those tasked with Xibalban security and operations. Once they are aware that it is open for the first time in more than a century, they will go to any lengths to control it.

Arriving to find Eric missing and a local community suspicious of outsiders, Mike Raglan has the nearly impossible job of discovering what has happened. But with mysterious prowlers scouting Eric's high-tech home in the remote Utah canyon country; strange creatures reported on the nearby Navajo reservation; and a fantastically violent drug cartel called The Army of Cibola moving north from Mexico, there is plenty of evidence that something quite unusual is going on.

Meanwhile, Eric is lost and in danger somewhere in the silent canyons of another world ... and Mike has to follow the few clues Eric has left before time runs out.



## Pilot Episode

We see a video being recorded on Eric Hokart's phone: he props it up on something then moves in front of it to speak. "Okay ... day one. The ruins go on for almost a half mile in each direction." Eric is wearing a jacket, backpack, and has a heavy bolt action rifle slung over his shoulder. "This place is amazing. There are examples of art and written language and it's all very, very, old. Here ..." He picks up the camera ... The exposure flares then reveals ruins that appear somewhat like an ancient Aztec or Mayan city. "Pretty impressive, huh? So, Mike, I'll post this to my secure server when I return. Get your ass off that surfboard and back to the US of A ... we'll go on a real adventure!" Eric vanishes as the recording winks out. A careful observer might note that the place Eric made the video was not the Central American jungle, but a desert landscape similar to Utah or New Mexico.

Mike Raglan, stops for gas in Lyman's Corners, Utah. It is a town with secrets, where privacy and suspicion go hand in hand. Mike has come searching for a friend he met during a special operation in the Afghan War, scientist and inventor Eric Hokart. Eric's new home is situated deep in the Utah Canyonlands and Lyman's Corners is the closest civilization.

Mike tops off the tank of his aging 4X4 and asks directions of an attendant. "Clay Hills Crossing Road? What the heck you want out there?" Mike mentions he's headed for Eric Hokart's place. "Fulla hisself," the man grumbles, "drivin' that fancy vehicle like he's landin' on the moon." Mike is given the barest of directions, the sort that indicate the quality of the road when he's told to bear right as he passes a wrecked army half-track. Mike tries placing one last call but can't leave a message because Eric's voicemail is full.

Moqui County is large and mostly uninhabited. To the west stretches a maze of river canyons and red rock desert, the canyon walls are haunted by the pictographs and cliff dwellings of the vanished Ancestral Puebloans or Anasazi. It is a landscape known for its natural beauty, but it is also an uncompromising wilderness where death can stalk the

unwary or unprepared. Besides the hard working but taciturn citizens of small towns like Lyman's Corners, and the Ute and Navajo Indians, the county contains a modest population of Millennial adventure-sports enthusiasts who work in the local tourist industry, and wealthy, but aging, hippie retirees ... none of these populations is on the best of terms with one another.

After leaving the blacktop, it is fifteen miles over a road that is not much more than a pair of tire tracks. Finally, Mike tops a sandstone ridge and comes to a stop at the edge of the mesa. Though it's in a wild and desolate location, Eric's house is a marvel of native stone and off-the-grid technology, and it has tremendous views of Monument Valley and the San Juan branch of Lake Powell.



It has also been abandoned for some time. In a nearby Quonset hut Mike discovers a Humvee ambulance modified to be some sort of mobile electronics lab, and a new Ford pick-up ... dust has settled on the hood and fenders of both vehicles. Looking through the windows of the house, Mike sees boxes. Eric has yet to fully unpack. Before he leaves, Mike also examines a half excavated Anasazi pueblo near the edge of the mesa. Grid markers are still up, and in a drooping tent there are archeological tools and well-organized trays of artifacts. In all, the place is impressive but strange, half-finished and, with circling crows and whistling wind, definitely creepy. As Mike drives off, someone or some *thing* watches him go.

On the road back to town, Mike tries to get in touch with Eric at his corporate headquarters in Seattle. Eric's office gives him the same run around they've been giving him for days, Mike must talk to company attorney Amandine Dufayel; yet she's always unavailable.

Mike goes to the Moqui County Sheriff's Dept. for help. Sheriff Marsha Black is not keen on the idea of Mike having a look around himself. She is initially polite but ends by practically ordering him to stay in his motel room. Deputy Ben Gallagher, a military veteran who understands the friendships forged in combat, offers to take Mike with him as he checks a few obvious places. This doesn't endear him to his boss but it does defuse the situation. He agrees to pick Mike up at dawn.

Back in his motel, Mike remembers the last couple of years; meeting Eric in Afghanistan and the first use of his amazing surveillance technology. The equipment allowed its operator to see any place within a two hundred square mile zone, day or night, indoors or outside, with no visible camera or recording device. The data is "rendered" into images that the human eye can understand through a CGI type process. When Mike and his O.D.A. team were trapped in an Afghan cave system, Eric lead them to safety, calmly radioing directions, using the equipment to scout ahead for enemies, even telling them where to shoot. It is a remarkable demonstration of a remarkable technology. It is also an interesting look into the character of Captain Mike Raglan. In action he is not the laid-back one-time surfer we have seen so far but a fiercely competent professional soldier, wise or brutal when called for, brilliant at improvisation and more than willing to stray from his orders to do what he thinks is right. He and Eric make a great team.



Mike Raglan, however, became more and more disillusioned by the political realities of war and eventually left the military. A few months before his arrival in Utah the PTSD fired temper that has haunted Mike since his return from Afghanistan lost him yet another job. For a while, Mike left the world behind, surfing the remote north shore of Samoa, trying to clear his mind, downloading emails off his sat phone and growling at the computer screen, "Yeah, yeah. Don't bother me, I'm surfing." Several of those messages had been from Eric. The man who saved his life in Afghanistan, had reached out ... and Mike Raglan, though he intended to respond when he returned to the U.S., had pressed 'delete.'

A thousand miles south of Utah, Mexican Intelligence agents Natalia Albarran and Jorge Baquero are captured infiltrating the mysterious and deadly drug cartel El Ejército de Cibola (The Army of Cibola). The AOC has become well known for distributing exotic "designer" drugs as well as ruthlessly marketing the regular staples of the narcotics trade. The agents are taken before the gang's leader, a man known only as Cabrakan, and find him to be as mysterious and terrifying as the stories told on the street. Though he uses a name out of Mayan legend, his ethnicity is oddly indeterminate and he speaks only passable Spanish. The strangest part of his appearance is a tattoo on each cheek that looks like snarling teeth. Far from an individual affectation, this tattoo seems to be shared by a few others in the abandoned bullring that is his headquarters.

Cabrakan's second in command is an exotically beautiful woman, Tak-shan 'aa. Questioning the gang member who vouched for Albarran and Baquero, she almost seems to be flirting with him, yet the man behaves as if he is terrified of this incredibly seductive woman. Not long afterward, the man becomes suddenly and mysteriously ill. Cabrakan, orders Baquero thrown into an arena for the entertainment of (and as an example to) his troops. Shot up with some exotic drug and dragged through the jostling crowd, Natalia sees little of what happens. But something barely glimpsed, horrifying, and unbelievably vicious tears Jorge Baquero apart ... something that looks shockingly like a saber-toothed cat from a paleontology textbook. The fate awaiting Natalia as another sort of entertainment is little better.

In the morning, Deputy Gallagher and Mike head out, driving deep into the desert below Eric's property. Gallagher explains that the old families in the area, the Lyman and the Blacks, are sensitive about outsiders ... in the pioneer days they may have done things they wouldn't want to be common knowledge today. Mike and Ben take the other fork in the road past the old half-track and Mike asks if there was ever a military base in the area. Ben Gallagher tells Mike, "It's rough country, and uranium prospectors used half-tracks back in the 1950s." It's an interesting comment, because Mike has noticed a hole in the steel flank of the military vehicle, the sort of hole caused by an armor piercing rocket.

They stop and talk to a Navajo man, Hokart's closest neighbor, asking if he's seen Eric. "Out on Tanner Mesa. Workin' some big radio." When Mike asks if he's seen anything strange, the Navajo says he's heard Skinwalkers at night and worries that they are killing sheep. Heading out, Ben explains to Mike that "Skinwalker" is a flexible label among the Navajo; it

could indicate imaginary demons, witchcraft, a neighbor who's an everyday criminal, or just a son of a bitch.

On Tanner Mesa they find the tracks of the Hummer and one of the stations that feeds Eric's surveillance system. It's power is on and connected into the network. Mike wonders what Eric is up to. The equipment has been left, fully operational, in the middle of nowhere. Ben asks what the equipment does and Mike jokes, "This is one of those times where, if I told you, I'd have to kill you." But it's not funny, and Mike is worried.

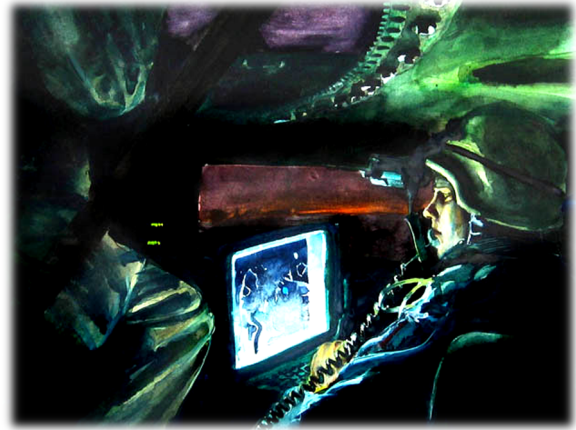
Back in town Sheriff Marsha Black is starting to get organized. A judge has been contacted about arraigning a warrant for Eric's house and the local search and rescue squad is on call. Mike overhears Ben and Marsha talking privately, Ben mentions "Skinwalkers" and "... both this guy and Eric have worked with the Feds." Then Mike is rushed out and dropped off at his motel. He is told to go home to San Diego and they will stay in contact.

Mike tries to call Quantum Concepts, Eric's company, from his room but hears the extra click of someone listening in. He gets in his Land Cruiser to head out of town but sees a police car covering the local gas station. Pulling onto a side street, he hauls the gas can off the back of his 4x4 and tops off his tank. He waits until the road is clear and heads back out to Eric's house by himself.

There is a set of fresh tire tracks on the road and, when he drives up, Mike finds a pair of graduate students poking around the tent near the ruin. They are Albert Tsosie, a Navajo from Los Angeles and Ros Pickering, an Australian. According to Albert, Eric hired them to excavate the ruin. A month or so earlier he told them he was shutting down the dig and that he would send the money he owed them ... money that never arrived. Ros complains that the locals are really suspicious and Albert starts to explain a theory he has about the importance of the site. But Mike knows Eric wouldn't let people go unpaid, and wouldn't leave classified equipment unprotected ... something is seriously wrong.

As Albert and Ros look on in surprise, Mike breaks into the house. A search reveals several important things. First, Eric did not intend to be gone long. Though the battery is nearly dead, his laptop computer is "sleeping," as opposed to being turned off. Also, in a room used for storage there are several backpacks, camping supplies, and identical big game rifles in travel cases. It's almost as if Eric was planning a safari. Except one of the rifles is gone. Lastly, behind a steel door Mike finds a bank of computers, monitors and a couple of racks of more obscure equipment. Mike remembers this set-up from the war ... it's a modified version of the control module to Eric's top-secret surveillance device. Mike sends the students away, promising to help get their money if he can.

Mike starts by looking through Eric's computer. File after file is locked away behind encryption software but there is a photo management program that is accessible. Shots of building the house, excavating the ruin, some strange night time pictures of the ruin at dusk with the light creating an odd glow around the ruin's kiva (a round room dug into the ground that served as a clan ceremonial center), and photographs of Mike, Eric, and Eric's right hand man Gene Wasserman, in Afghanistan.



Mike remembers meeting Eric Hokart for the first time in Afghanistan, and how he and his Special Forces team were tasked with helping Eric set up the devices and to test the system's unique capabilities in combat. Eric eventually used it to save Mike's life, but they also uncovered a problem ... occasionally the equipment showed things that were not, and could not be, reality. At least not the reality we are aware of. Once that happened Eric recognized a good deal more work was in order ... and, because of certain conditions his equipment has uncovered, he chose Utah as the place to continue that work. There is also a desktop folder that has not yet been stowed securely. It deals with solar weather and its influence on the earth, diagrams of magnetic activity and photos of the northern lights. ... Mike works late into the night and eventually nods off to sleep.

That night Natalia Albarran seizes an opportunity to escape from the Army of Cibola. She acts decisively, fleeing, nearly naked, through garbage strewn streets, leaving a dead man behind her. Elsewhere, Cabrakan moves on the territory of a rival gang. Tak-shan 'aa arranges to meet the leader at a nightclub, lets him take her back to his compound and seduces him. A peculiar breed of assassin, besides martial arts and weapons expertise, she has been subjected to increasing amounts of virulent poisons since childhood. She is immune, but the toxins that have soaked into her body over many years kill the man within minutes. Then she drops a handful of weaponized Hanta virus into the air conditioning system and leaves, blowing a disease dusted kiss to the guard at the gate. As she washes up in a ditch, the soldiers of the Army of Cibola attack the rest of the gang. Throughout the town gangsters are rounded up and made an offer they can't refuse: join or become food for the same dangerous pet that devoured Agent Baquero. It is a terror tactic that works very effectively once the first prisoner is thrown into the shipping container in which Cabrakan transports the beast. A messenger arrives from their superiors. Cabrakan is being called home to answer for an incursion in the north. A portal between worlds believed to be long sealed seems to be open again. Cabrakan heads home but he dispatches Tak-shan 'aa to the United States to follow up on the problem.

Just before dawn Sheriff Marsha Black and a Navajo rancher have pulled their vehicles up alongside a dirt road and, leaving the headlights on, are searching a field with flashlights. Along the edge of a waterhole the mud is churned up and they find the body of a sheep that has been torn apart and partly eaten. Marsha takes a photograph of a deep footprint,

human seeming but heavily callused and with animal-like claws. "It's starting again," warns the rancher. "No," she tells him. "We'll kill it and it will be like it never happened."

Mike awakens in Eric's house. Though he has only seen it being used by others, Mike gets the surveillance equipment working. "Let's start with some place we know," Mike says to himself. "Eric's house." He starts backing up data to a jump drive and enters the coordinates of his own location. "That's odd!" All he sees is the bare top of the mesa, the house and outbuildings are completely missing. Mike rotates the view. He sits up in shock ... at the base of Eric's mesa are the ruins of a city. Acres of four-story buildings, a grand plaza; and a three hundred-foot, Mayan style, pyramid. Mike steps out of the house and walks to the edge of the mesa. In the early morning light, there is nothing but the sheer drop into Monument Valley and the lake beyond. He is still looking off into the distance when Sheriff Black arrives with two SUVs full of deputies. She arrests Mike for interfering with the official search for Eric, and for breaking and entering.

In a strange but luxurious apartment in another world, a beautiful and exotic young woman, Kawasi, spies on a pair of Xibalban priests as they meet with her parents. Her father is not favored by the Lord of their section of the city, yet Kawasi has been identified as a candidate for the greatest oracle in the Empire, The Voice. The Voice sees many possible futures and directs the policy of the Lords of Xibalba. She is taken from one of several families, trained and conditioned with mind expanding drugs. She is revered across the land and serves for life ... however, in the last three hundred years, no one has survived the chemically induced initiation. Her parents must decide if she is to enter the training, it is a great honor, so great that their Lord has decided that the family only deserves it if they give up their younger daughter as a temple sacrifice. It is a demand to knuckle under, to demonstrate their obedience to a cruel system.

While her mother pushes their father to take their offer and raise the family's status, Kawasi acts immediately, waking her sister. She presses a bag into the girl's hand and tells her that they must be very quiet and very brave. As they move down an external staircase the entire city is revealed ... it is like nothing that has ever existed in our world ... aging nouveau-Mayan style buildings, terraced gardens, the grand architecture of a sophisticated people, all cloaked in a haze of air pollution. It's also obvious that this is a very different culture. Crucified bodies hang from racks attached to the sides of the temples and everywhere the symbolism of the sun, death, and life, are intertwined. Kawasi and her sister move off, down nearly deserted streets and disappear ...





## Episode Two

Southwest Colorado, 1888. Lay archeologist Richard Wetherill rides with two Navajo Indians through the canyons of what will someday be Mesa Verde National Park. “Why would someone live fortified up like this,” he muses, “Who were they?” One Navajo replies, “Anasazi.” It is a term that means ‘ancient enemy’ and the Navajo was answering the first question, not the second. That night, Wetherill describes ‘the abandoned houses of the Anasazi’ in his journal. The Navajos lie side by side on their bedrolls. “He didn’t understand you. These people, who their grandchildren call the Hisatsinom, came here to defend themselves *from* the Anasazi.” The other says, “Who cares, he is Belagana. He asks so many questions, he cannot understand the answers.

Mike Raglan lies in a jail cell. He remembers Eric asking him, “Ever wonder if there’s something more to it all ... something else out there?” It seems like there is ... more than even Eric might have predicted. In the next room, reports are coming in from the four deputies and the search and rescue team in the field. The retired deputy in charge of the jail looks at Mike with ill-concealed contempt. Since the Sagebrush Rebellion the Federal government has not been welcomed in much of the rural West, but this seems to go deeper, neither Eric nor Mike have a direct connection to Washington any longer. In the next room, Ben Gallagher takes an AR-15 from the Sheriff’s Department armory. Like the other men in the field he’s going hunting. But he’s not hunting Eric, he’s hunting something only the oldest members of the community have ever seen in person.

Cabrakan, the leader of The Army of Cibola, returns to his home world through a hidden portal, a great cave full of huge crystals in northern Mexico. As he does, he takes on a somewhat different personality. In the Empire of Xibalba, he is an officer of only modest rank. He has been given the assignment of infiltrating and discovering how to dominate our world, yet his superiors have never truly understood the scope of this job or the concept of a civilization greater than what they see every day. With few resources, Cabrakan created the idea of a drug cartel acting as an intelligence agency and guerilla army ... a self-financing organization. In our world, his position is one of great power and

he finds it hard to remain subservient to people in his own who can't comprehend what he has accomplished. Cabrakan must report to the shadowy association of powerbrokers known as The Lords of Xibalba. The Lords are furious over an incursion through a portal on Xibalba's northern frontier. The Utah portals have been closed for more than half a century, one buried beneath the earth the other, poured full of concrete then submerged under the waters of Lake Powell, but that is no excuse. Cabrakan, for all of his success in Mexico, has failed in his mission and will have to redeem himself as quickly as possible.

Recovering in a sleekly modern Mexico City hospital, Agent Albarran attempts to describe what happened to herself and Baquero. It sounds crazy and her superiors think she's simply traumatized and coming down from the hallucinogens she was given. She stares out the window into night. She asks a fellow agent to bring her a gun, one she can hide while she is in the hospital ... and she will not take any medication. After what she has been through the whole world looks different ... there is no normal any more.

Mike is arraigned and the judge, given the circumstances, is willing to arrange a diversion and reduce the charges. Mike has to pay a stiff fine and is advised that any further interference will be dealt with harshly. He is also told he must leave town and let the professionals do their job. Outside the courthouse a group of local toughs, unemployed gas field workers, and high school kids, watch Mike carefully. When he returns to his hotel room, he discovers it has been searched and his cell phone chip has been removed and copied. These people may seem like hicks but they can also be surprisingly sophisticated ... the real question is, what do they have to hide?

In the other world, Kawasi and her sister take the Xibalban equivalent of a railroad as far as they can. The sisters join a disreputable seeming caravan that is heading farther north. They have been told of a group called The Guardians, one of the few communities to resist the control of Xibalba and a place where they hope they can live in peace. Their new companions are heading there with supplies, avoiding the soldiers that are patrolling the roads. But, as the wagons, pulled by domesticated bison, move slowly toward the edge of Xibalban civilization, it becomes more obvious just how alone these young women are ... and the situation with their fellow travelers is becoming more and more tense.

Ignoring the judge's advice, Mike tries to hire a private plane but the pilot says that he and many others have been warned against helping Mike in any way. The rumor is out that Mike is a "Government" agent of some sort. The pilot, who notices the sticker for a surf board shop on Mike's truck, talks to Mike through a haze of pot smoke. He is obviously not considered a model citizen by the strait-laced locals, and opens up about how the pioneer families from around Lyman's Corners, are clannish and suspicious. They don't socialize much with newcomers. Just when it seems he might give his theory as to the why of it all he loses focus and slews off into alien abductions, cattle and sheep mutilations (a couple just recently!), and just about every other rural conspiracy theory imaginable. He can tell Mike isn't "a Fed" but Mike should be careful, the Moqui County rednecks are not above violence.



Tak-shan 'aa gets off a plane in Albuquerque. She uses a computer to get a map to Lyman's Corners and searches articles on the "Missing Inventor." She buys a used car in an industrial area using cash. Some of the men from the nearby businesses gather, catcalling; one of them coming on to her pretty forcefully. She offers, almost challenges, to have sex with him then and there. Far beyond the behavior of an aggressive woman there is something about her quietly menacing demeanor that causes the man to back down, even his friends seem subdued.

In Mexico, Agent Albarran is now working a desk. On her own, she attempts to investigate the Army of Cibola, gangsters with tattooed cheeks, and drugs that can make you hallucinate prehistoric animals. She eventually discovers Luis Mondragón, a reporter who has destroyed his career by reporting, honestly, on the drug cartels. He also has the hobby of collecting the strange and supernatural lore of Mexico. He is a font of information on The Army of Cibola, and a whole range of monsters from goat suckers to man-bats, ghosts, and witches. He also has a great deal of information on a mythical struggle with the forces of evil, the legendary Lords of Xibalba, that has gone on since the time of the Mayan Heroes. Natalia looks at aging illustrations of a maze in a huge cave, armies of men with snarling tattoos, and conquistadores killing a mammoth with a volley of fire from their match-lock muskets.

Leaving the airport office, Mike runs afoul of the Lyman's Corner's goon squad, the young men from the courthouse. The message is for him to leave town immediately, but the results are not pretty. As Mike completes beating the two ringleaders senseless, Marsha Black and a car with two Deputies roll up. When asked about what happened, Mike gives her a bit of attitude about the men bringing 'mouth to a fist fight.' Blindingly quick, Sheriff Black saps Mike with a blackjack. She slaps cuffs on him, then proceeds to read the riot act to wounded townies. She's had it with everyone ... or maybe it's the fear of what she thinks may be happening. As paramedics arrive to patch up the young men, a private jet lands. Marsha is Mirandizing Mike in preparation to locking him back up when a beautiful, elegantly clad, Jamaican woman sweeps down on them. To everyone's surprise she introduces herself as Mike's attorney ... the previously unreachable Quantum Concepts legal counsel, Amandine Dufayel.

Gene Wasserman has arrived on the same plane. Following Eric's instructions on what to do if he disappeared, they have come to Utah to help find their missing friend and employer. Taking on the bureaucracy of Moqui County, Amandine attempts to get access to Eric's property. She and Marsha Black face off, very different women with very different styles of doing business. Gene brings Mike up to speed on what Eric has figured out since they were all together in the mountains of Afghanistan. "Ever find something lost in a place you can't remember putting it? Ever hear of the Mandela Effect ... a time when a lot of people around the world were convinced Nelson Mandela died in prison on Robin Island?" Gene asks. "It's possible we move through different realities, different universes, all the time, it's just that they are so similar we barely notice. The greater the deviation from our reality, the rarer it is, and the more energy it seems to take, to make the shift."



Eric's equipment is capable of tuning into a "harmonic" of our plane of existence. Four stations are placed up to two hundred miles apart and a "node" or virtual lens can be steered anywhere within that area. It can move through walls, brush, rock or mountains. It can see many hundreds of feet underground. It is like a real time, X-Ray version, of Google Earth. But as effective as it was directing Mike's team in combat, the system had problems. Sometimes it returned imagery that seemed completely inaccurate, showing icy landscapes and even once a group of men that turned out to not be there at all. Eric moved to Utah, a spot that contained similar magnetic and gravitational anomalies as the area of Afghanistan where they ran into trouble. He then isolated himself, realizing that he was on to something more than just a glitch in his machine; he settled in for a long process of research and discovery. The problem is that Gene has only the slightest idea of what Eric thought he would find.

Gene takes the copy Mike made of Eric's hard drive. Breaking the encryption leaves the material fragmented, but it is clear Eric was nearing some sort of solution when he disappeared. Certain spots on earth have an effect on the device. Solar weather, the earth's magnetic field, and gravity do also. In essence, in certain areas, and under certain conditions, Eric's surveillance system can see into a highly divergent universe, not just the "sideband" of our reality he used for intelligence gathering. What none of them recognize yet is that the same intersection of conditions that allows Eric's machine to see into this very different world also allows people to travel from one universe to another when conditions are right. It is a process that has been going on for thousands of years.

In the desert, a Navajo family has hired a singer to perform the three-day Enemy Way ceremony, intended to clear their son of the effects of bad spirits. The Sheriffs are there to investigate the 'demon,' or Skinwalker, that attacked the boy. Nearby, a posse of ranchers use dogs and planes to search. They would be happy to find Eric, but they are more interested in tracking the strange creature that eludes them at every turn. Glimpsed only momentarily and at great distance it is lean and hairy, almost like a primitive man but with long teeth and claws, and boney spikes on the backs of its elbows and the tops of its knees; something that can scare a good hunting dog so badly that it acts like it has been abused for years. Ben Gallagher is with the search party that finds the creature. In a dim canyon, just after nightfall, the creature makes them wish they had stayed home. No one dies but it is clear they are up against something truly out of this world.

Near the intersection that is just about the only thing that marks Lyman's Corners as a town, Mike is carrying some groceries back to his room when a bullet punches through the side mirror of a nearby truck. A combat veteran, Mike hits dirt and slips under the vehicle almost before he understands what has happened. Furious about nearly everything that has gone on in the last few days, this is the last straw. He rolls out from the gutter and sprints up the street, using cars and doorways as cover. Another bullet ricochets off the sidewalk. Up ahead of him a car accelerates down a side street. Cutting over a block, Mike leaps a fence, sprints across someone's yard and, as the escaping car slows for the corner, he hurls a brick he has snatched up. The side window shatters and, as the car lurches to a stop, Mike hauls the driver out from behind the wheel ... and steps back in shock. It is a frail old man! There is a hunting rifle on the seat beside him. With a few people gathering

from the homes and businesses nearby, the man shakes the glass off and advances on Mike shouting, "You clear out! All of you! We kept your secrets, now leave us alone!"

Around sundown, Tak-shan 'aa parks her car just off the highway near a roadside death shrine. She re-laces her running shoes, it is fifteen miles across the desert to Eric's house but there is no other way to go in secretly. She starts out at a pace that would exhaust all but the most serious athletes. It is full dark when she arrives. Slipping past the Sheriff's Dept. SUV on watch, and the crime scene tape, she takes a strange device from her pocket, it is a small crystal cube that glows on one side as she turns it. Following its indications, she makes her way to the kiva. As the cube gets closer, the portal reacts ... the edges becoming visible. She tosses the cube and when it hits the barrier it disappears with a pop and a flash of light. An active portal has been verified. Wondering what caused the flash and the slight sound, the deputy investigates. As he does, Tak-shan 'aa coolly breaks into Eric's house, stealing some clothing and shoes, before disappearing into the night.



### Episode Three

Glen Canyon, Utah 1872. Dawn. A detachment of U.S. Cavalry prepares for combat. Nearby, a war party of Navajos does the same. The two groups ride on what seems to be intersecting paths but when they confront one another instead of the expected battle, the soldiers pull up ... and salute. The Indians ride proudly by; perhaps stifling a smirk or two. They are finally getting the respect they deserve. They join a long line of men and wagons of supplies rolling down the canyon. Navajo, Ute, and Apache, warriors shuffle forward. Then Army soldiers; Navy gunners and engineers transporting massive cannon; a long line of elegantly uniformed Mexican cavalry troopers; and even convicts, each given a pardon and a rifle. They are led into a large cave and then through an outcropping of shimmering crystals into another world. A world in the midst of total war. Zig zag trenches, constant

artillery fire, and muddy field hospitals full of the cries of the wounded, give way to a battlefield worthy of World War One. The Xibalban enemy is armed with airships, pneumatic rapid firers, and armored mammoths. The Indian Wars and Border Strife of the American West have been a carefully prepared fiction; all the people of North America are allies in the secret war of the "Internal Border."

Everyone is at each other's throats in Lyman's Corners. Mike Raglan, Amandine, and Gene, are demanding to know what is going on, who is covering up what, and what the progress is in Eric's case. The shooter seems to have made bail and gone home pending a hearing. In a living room across town, another discussion is raising the local citizens' blood pressure; all signs indicate Moqui County's old troubles are back. Strange creatures are prowling the night, people going missing in the desert, and there is the possibility that Government agents already in their midst. They know what they are supposed to do in these circumstances ... call the Army for help. However, they also know that, in the past, the "help" has been almost as destructive to people's lives as the problem it was supposed to correct.

Southeastern Utah has been invaded by the soldiers of Xibalba, and other dangerous creatures from that world, on many occasions. In the distant past, Native Americans banded together to fight off slaving raids from the other side. In fact, for centuries the clan inhabiting the Anasazi pueblo on Eric's land was given the responsibility, and honor, of raising the alarm. Not only was there a small and well-guarded portal directly inside their village but, before the dam that created Lake Powell was built, the cave enclosing the much larger portal had been distantly visible from the pueblo as well. That smaller entrance, now near Eric's house, was buried by the Army in the 1870s; but Eric's excavation of the Kiva has reopened it.

By the mid 19th century, the U.S. Army found itself fighting a war alongside the southwest Indian tribes, and the Mexican government. These allies were dug in on the Xibalban side but it was a bloody slaughter for the men of both worlds. As the ever-changing solar weather that had allowed the portal to remain open became more and more erratic, an end to the conflict appeared likely but neither combatant was the victor. Brief skirmishes continued for many years and Army outposts in the world of Xibalba were frequently cut off from help or resupply.

At times all of the citizens of Lyman's Corners and Moqui County were rounded up and placed in "protective" camps. They were allowed to go free when the hostilities ended and everyone was forced to sign secrecy oaths. This is the treatment they so fear and resent. For the most part, the cover story sold to the outside world was that of intermittent war with the Ute, Apache and Navajo. The last time full-on warfare broke out was in the 1950s. Frightened by adding this interworld conflict to the stresses of the Cold War, the Army Corps of Engineers sealed the large Glen Canyon portal with concrete ... and then built a dam, creating Lake Powell that covered their work with hundreds of feet of water.

The suspicion the long-time citizens of the county have toward outsiders exists for a reason. The Anglos, Latinos, and most particularly the local Indians, do not exist in perfect

harmony but, when threatened, they immediately band together. More than anything it is the unspoken bond these secrets from the past creates that divides the old families of Moqui County from the younger ecology-and-adventure-sports focused newcomers. The more recent residents don't understand and it creates a tension they angrily attribute to religion, conservatism, ignorant red-neck attitude.

Usually fairly liberal in her approach to policy, Marsha Black remains with the senior citizens on this subject. Like everyone of a certain age in Lyman's Corners, she was raised on horror stories of demons from the desert. She can remember her father talking of defending the family ranch against raiders ... and of his growing up in an Army "protective custody" camp on the Navajo reservation. The only people the older citizens of Moqui County welcome less than the U.S. government are Xibalban soldiers. When smaller incursions have occurred, they have tried to hand it as they are now, vigilante style. If they can make the problem go away before the Feds find out, they may be allowed to live in peace. Eric, Mike, and the others have broken open a hornet's nest and now it's anyone's bet what will happen.

In Mexico, Natalia and Luis Mondragón dive into the realm of Mexico's occult. She's investigating The Army of Cibola and the legend of Xibalba on her own time. The only pieces of hard evidence she is able to find are the unique substances sold by the AOC. Hallucinogens and uppers that combine the effects of LSD, steroids and methamphetamines in one addictive and deadly package. Government labs have been studying these drugs since they first showed up in police evidence, and the result has been a great number of deeply puzzled scientists. As co-workers Albarran and Mondragón are new school and old school, but they are both motivated by the fact that their peers have ignored or ridiculed them.

A lean and fit, but lonely, sixty-year-old gas field worker meets a woman in a bar on the outskirts of Farmington, New Mexico. She is strangely, exotically, beautiful and incredibly seductive. In a motel room on the outskirts of town she makes a telephone call, while he dies, spasming from some sort of horrible poison he has been exposed to by having sex with her. Tak-shan 'aa says good night to Cabrakan in a manner indicating that this call has been some bizarre form of intimacy, and hauls the body out to her car, wrestling it into the trunk. She is strong, but the man out weighs her by quite a bit. She does this calmly; she can deal with anyone who might see her.

Amandine pulls strings in Salt Lake City and Washington and soon they are able to take over Eric's house as a headquarters of sorts. Mike is able to show Gene the strange landscape of the other world on Eric's device. The three of them spend hours exploring the ruined city or viewing the herds of bison that occasionally cross the desert to the river. Yet all the time they are searching for Eric in one world or the other. Mike hires the dope smoking pilot to run search grids above the desert, dragging him out of bed before he can get too high to fly. From the air they notice that there is something odd about the way the locals are behaving ... they are not searching; they are on *patrol*.

Mike see changes around Lyman's Corners. People moving in with relatives, going armed, the heavy metal shutters on the doors and windows of the old stone buildings closed. The newer citizens are on edge, not understanding what has happened to their community and thinking that somehow the change must relate to them in some way. A few have overheard the stories, or have been told in confidence, but they don't believe what is being said. They are becoming aggressively afraid and demand their neighbors behave in ways they understand. Everyone in town is circling the wagons.

Ben Gallagher meets with Mike and fills him in on what little has been discovered in the search for Eric. Ben is not an old time resident, but he knows some of the local lore ... and believes it to a certain extent. Enough to accept that something strange has happened in Moqui County over the last one hundred and fifty years. Regardless of pressure not to talk to outsiders, he is interested in discovering more and takes Mike with him when he goes to interview couple of old people who live so far out of town, he doubts Sheriff Black will hear about it. They listen to strange tales of a war in the desert, and see fading photos of military bases that are never supposed to have existed and soldiers at a huge cave near the not so ancient as was once believed petroglyph of a mastodon. They are told of concealed a gateway to another world that is now full of concrete and submerged under slowly receding waters of Lake Powell and hear stories of the town of Hite being destroyed in a battle ... Hite is now also on the bottom of Lake Powell.

Tearing into Eric's device, Gene goes through the surveillance logs trying to recreate exactly what Eric was looking at in the days just before his disappearance. One of the spots that the "collection node" returned to over and over is a spring where tiny effigies of animals seem to have been tied from plant fibers and attached to twigs set in the mud ... similar to the traditions of some Native Americans. Watching the spot over many hours gives Mike and Gene their first clear view of a Saqua. They look on in wonder as the fierce looking creatures gather briefly to plant new offerings at the spring. The Saqua are fast and graceful, not at all ape-like in their movements. It is Gene's careful eye that notes something out of place in the corner of the frame ... a zip-lock bag wedged into a fork in the tree branches. Inside the zip-lock is an artifact from our world ... Eric's phone!

This is the first evidence that Eric somehow made it into the other world. He must have hoped that someone would investigate the locations he indexed and see where he stashed the phone. There are many other places he might have left it, like the ruined city near the portal ... Mike and Gene can only guess that, for some reason, he could not get back there. It is a fact that does not bode well.

Mike looks up Albert and Ros, the archeology students who were working on the site near Eric's house. The two of them put forward their theory on The Guardians (more literally "those who watch" in Hopi), a Pueblo clan with a very special history. Albert has traced a network of ruins, each part of a system intended to communicate over a large area using signal fires. This particular ruin was inhabited for a much greater period of time than the average Anasazi village. In fact, it is Albert's theory that long after they exhausted the soil and firewood, other tribes carried in supplies. Ros, the more cautious of the two, reminds him that this is only one possible theory based on the evidence. Albert, not to be dissuaded,

explains that the term “Anasazi,” meaning ancient enemy, or ancestral enemy, was mistakenly picked up from the Diné, or Navajos by early archeologists. The Ancestral Puebloans who built the Cliff Dwellings were not the enemies of the Navajo. In fact, the early Puebloans had moved on, died out, or had become the Hopi, Zuni, and modern Pueblo peoples by the time the Diné arrived in the area. But Navajo have a great capacity to retain the memory of other cultures. Within the name “Anasazi” lurks a greater and more ancient truth, a clue about the invaders from another world. Their obsession with defensive architecture is another intriguing element.

Late one afternoon Gene goes to pick up supplies and to bring Amandine out from town. Mike is exploring the other world with Eric’s device. As he does so, a blinking icon appears on the screen. Clicking on it, Mike finds an automatic update of raw data from SOHO, the Solar & Heliospheric Observatory satellite. A count down timer appears, ticking down from three hours thirty-eight minutes. Puzzled, Mike wanders outside and looks at the sun. There is nothing but a strange noise, a rippling hiss of static coming from the area of the Anasazi ruin. Peering into the unfinished kiva, Mike sees a bluish haze hanging across the large alcove in the wall. Stranger still, a gust of cold wind is blowing through it. He climbs in to have a closer look.

The ruin is perched right on the edge of the mesa and through an alcove in the wall a small cave or grotto can usually be seen. Now, suddenly, that cave seems to penetrate clear through to the cliff face. Mike sticks his hand into the haze and draws it back quickly, the experience makes it prickly and numb.



Mike considers for a moment then runs for his truck, grabbing his Colt automatic from the glove box. He leaps back into the kiva and crawls into the alcove ... and through the veil of static. Where the hole emerges from the cliff there is the remains of some sort of shrine, a dilapidated platform and then steps, both rickety wood, and then crumbling rock, leading down to a spot where a more conventional trail leads toward the bottom of the mesa.

Mike heads down the trail and into the outskirts of the ruined city. He walks the empty streets and across a huge plaza. At the base of a ziggurat is a large panel with an aging design in inlaid ceramics. A maze. And in the center of that maze, the image of a woman with Nefertiti-like beauty and elegance. Darkness is falling, the streets of the ruined city are silent except for the sound of crows ... looking to where the birds are gathered, Mike finds a body lying in a sand choked alley. It is human, dressed in a strange uniform and carrying an odd weapon. There is nothing odd about the cause of death, a bullet wound is centered in the man’s chest. Mike discovers a shell casing on the ground, .375 H&H ... the same caliber as the big game rifles stashed in Eric’s house!

Something moves in the shadows, too fast for Raglan to register. Alarmed, and suddenly worried about that timer on the computer, he snatches up the dead man’s weapon and starts back to the grotto. As he hits the slope, he sees something coming furtively up the

trail behind him, an animal? He moves faster. Where the trail ends Mike comes to a stop. The blue glow of the portal fades, then goes out ... the back of the grotto is just solid rock. Then the passage returns but flickering, like a badly tuned TV. Mike dives through. Just as he does so the field collapses, clipping his boot heel, shearing a piece of it off. As he regains his composure he sees, over the stone rim of the Kiva, a strange face ... one of the odd creatures from the other side, the hairy men. He scrambles backward, clawing for his gun, but the apparition is gone.

When the caravan stops at a remote outpost, Kawasi trades a piece of her jewelry for a whip-sword, the standard side arm of Xibalban civilians. The men have been behaving more aggressively toward she and her sister, and Kawasi worries about what will happen to them when they leave this last vestige of civilization behind.

Gene combs through all of the SOHO records looking for information on what happened to open the portal. If he can figure out the next time the portal will open Mike intends to go through, to find Eric or at least to retrieve Eric's phone and, with a fresh battery, see what is on it. Amandine has opened Eric's accounts, so money is available. Gene has ordered up additional supplies and broken out Eric's equipment laden humvee. He is ready to thoroughly investigate the phenomena to whatever extent he can. In a better world the first choice would be to call in some of the DARPA types that Eric worked with. But Gene warns them that may not be a good idea. After the unreliable behavior of the equipment in Afghanistan Eric convinced them to pause the project and allow him to continue its development on his own. But there were those who has maneuvered to take the project over, those who considered it to have so much potential as a surveillance tool that Eric was afraid for his life. They might be just as happy to arrest everyone who knew about the device and leave Eric to die ... so long as they could get their hands on his invention.

Other than to stare at the alcove that was once an opening to another world, it has been hard to get Mike away from Eric's machine. He crisscrosses all of the territory that can be viewed, quickly from a great height and then closer to ground level. In doing so he comes across the first actual humans they have seen, a slowly moving caravan drawn by buffalo. Some twenty people in strange looking garb and five or six carts. Among them is Kawasi. Mike is immediately drawn to her, watching closely as she walks beside the cart and sometimes as she sleeps at night. She is very beautiful but he also likes the way she takes care for her sister and the kindness that she shows everyone around her. He worries as he sees the men of the caravan become more and more domineering, behaving almost as if they own the two young women. He finds it interesting that the caravan is cutting across country and obviously avoiding the only Xibalban check point in the area. Mike notes that the Xibalban troops are dressed just like the dead man he discovered in the ruined city.

One evening while Kawasi's sister and one of the men are hobbling their draft animals, they are approached by a gigantic bear. It seems ready to attack, and the girl and the teamster are unarmed. Kawasi rushes to their aid, pulling the whip-sword from under her robes. She plants herself between the mother bear and her sister, swirling the sparking lash in a figure eight. Other men, though similarly armed, hang back ... clearly these creatures are greatly feared. "King of the forests, go away ... I do not wish to kill you," the girl murmurs.



Mike, watching the scene from the silence of Eric's machine, knows what her hesitation means. "Kill it, don't warn it!" he growls. The bear attacks. Mike is helpless, he can't even move the node. This delicate little woman, her eyes swimming with tears and a complex mix of emotions, stands there, a barrier in front of her two cowering companions. Using the taser-like lash she shocks the bear, but this just makes it more aggressive. As the bear charges, she snaps the blade straight and thrusts, skewering the animal through the chest. She releases the tension, making the blade whip-like, as the giant animal begins to thrash about, maintaining the electric charge until it dies. Mike looks over at the odd device he found in the ruined city. Clearly it will require some additional investigation.

Now Kawasi is a hero. The caravan teamsters, who might have enslaved her, might have raped her and her sister, are now her brothers, her father and uncles. They carry her on their shoulders and give her choice pieces of food as they gather around the fire. "Horrible creatures!" one of the men proclaims. "No. Beautiful," She says and weeps. Watching from the silence of another world Mike Raglan is entranced. It is obvious that the people around her agree. And it is only in this moment that he realizes how much she looks like the mosaic from the wall of the temple, the beautiful woman in the maze.

Ben Gallagher drives out to the Eric's house with the bad news. A search and rescue team, following a tip they got from a pilot, has found the remains of Eric Hokart. Eric seems to have died from exposure in the desert. Sheriff Black would like to declare the search ended. There will, of course, be an autopsy and an inquiry. She is hoping that they will all go home or at least follow the remains up to Salt Lake while the Medical Examiner does his job ... with luck she can be rid of these troublesome outsiders.

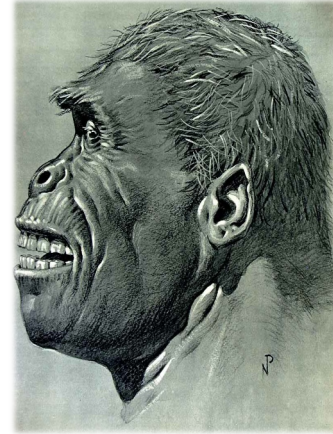
Mike has a hard time believing it. The corpse is unidentifiable, animals have feasted on it, it has spent days in the elements. But the clothes are Eric's ... just not his normal choice for hiking. Eric always wore custom made Russell boots and carried a nail clipper in case he tore a nail in the field. The missing rifle is nowhere to be found. A pair of officials arrive from the state capitol. They want the body, even though Amandine represents the family. Their behavior is ... odd. Someone has been bought off, but these guys only know what their orders are. Amandine can take it up with the state Attorney General.

That evening, Mike drives back out to Eric's house, intending to spend the night there rather than in town with the others. As he pulls up, he sees the barest edge of a chrome bumper sticking out from behind Eric's Quonset hut. His gaze snaps to the rear-view mirror. Men are closing in around the vehicle! He slams into reverse. His old 4x4 throws dirt, backing until the burst from an assault rifle shreds the rear tires, bullets punching through metal, blowing out seat cushions. Mike bales out of the vehicle. Someone tackles him, he gets on top, breaks the man's arm, rolls into the shadows.

Men come looking with flashlights, Mike takes one down, can't get to the man's gun but pulls the knife from the man's scabbard, stabs his attacker in the neck. He leaps out of the light as another man shoots at him. Then he is backed against the wall of the house and pinned in the flashlight beams. Out of the night walks a tall, pale skinned, man with dark

tattoos on either cheek. Mike has never seen Cabrakan but he is familiar with the weapon he carries, a Xibalban whip-sword, dripping sparks.

Though it seems like the battle is over, a man suddenly screams from the darkness. Flashlights turn. One of Cabrakan's gangster lackeys is trapped in what looks like a blender of hairy skin and flashing teeth. A Saqua, the animal Mike thought he saw on the edge of the Kiva, drops the man and vanishes from the light. Cabrakan and the two remaining companions move back to back, one of them gibbering with fear. The whip-sword swirls, the beast attacks, a man screams and the Saqua howls, the burning wire tearing the flesh on its back. A shotgun fires, the flexible sword slashes, but the creature is gone again, a shadow in the night. Cabrakan and his last accomplice jump into their SUV and pull away, a burst of gunfire aimed at Mike's last position. Mike scrambles for his truck, for the .45 still in the glove box, but the Saqua rises up before him, jaws open, ready to kill ... until it sees who it is attacking. Not the hated Xibalban, or the men with him, but the man they had fought, tried to capture. It stares at him for a moment, then vanishes into the darkness of the desert. Mike leans back against the door breathing hard, trembling with crashing adrenaline.



On the other side of the country, the oldest Lt. Colonel in the U.S. army, Julius Stanfield, is skimming a collection of reports that contain information which, for years, he has both hoped and feared he would never see. Unrest in Mexico. Highly unusual animals or individuals seen in a remote part of Utah. Sun spots. To top it off a scientist, a man who has worked with DARPA and Lawrence Livermore Laboratories is missing. Last known location: Southeast Utah. Lt. Colonel Stanfield picks up the phone and dials. "Good Morning. Please confirm that you recognize this phone number ... Yes, I'll hold ... Sir? Mr. Secretary? Uhh ... I'm sorry to tell you, INBOCOM is active. No, Sir. I can't tell you that outside a secure room. If you look inside your safe you will find a sealed envelope. It is labeled I-N-B-O-C-O-M and ... don't be surprised, it will be somewhat old."



Season One Continued ...

Mike Raglan's arrival at Eric's house has temporarily foiled the Xibalbans plan. Cabrakan intended to remove all of Eric's notes and equipment, everything indicating that Eric had found a way to the world of Xibalba, then fill in the kiva containing the portal and assassinate anyone who pushed the investigation too close to the truth. A contingent of soldiers on the Xibalban side would have solved any further security issues. Cabrakan planned to accelerate his agenda inside the U.S. With luck the situation might have been controlled. When Eric's rights to the government land elapsed, the Xibalbans might have obtained a mineral lease on the area and used the portal as a conduit to import drugs and consolidate power, just as they have done in Mexico ... after all, the US is where the customers are. Cabrakan will have to try again, and soon ...

Mike looks through the boxes of Eric's personal belongings, computers, data storage and classified equipment, everything the thieves have left strewn around the house and piled in the driveway. Little had been loaded into Cabrakan's SUV when it tore off into the night. Mike looks at the dead men ... a vastly bigger problem. He calls Ben Gallagher and asks him to come out, and to bring his boss and a crime scene photographer. Then Mike calls Amandine and tells her that he is going to need a lawyer. He has killed one man and there are a couple of other corpses that will require a great deal of explanation. On the other hand, Mike is going to demand some answers about what is going on in Moqui County. And, if he doesn't get them, he's doing to do the one thing everybody in Lyman's Corners seems to fear ... he'll place a call to every Federal agency in the phone book.

What Mike Raglan doesn't know is that the alert has already gone out. Because of a one hundred and fifty-year-old protocol at the Pentagon an antique military district, the Department of the San Juan, and its cold war corollary, the Internal Border Command, (INBOCOM) have been automatically reactivated.

Every element seems to explode at once. Cabrakan lays a trap for those who know about Xibalba. According to Gene Wasserman, conditions are nearly right for Eric's portal to

reopen. Additionally, multiple government law enforcement and military agencies have brought in under cover of darkness to sequester everyone and quarantine the area which has now been legally defined as an international border. Chaos and violence surround Eric's compound. In the turmoil, Mike, Sheriff Black, Albert, Deputy Gallagher, and Sgt. Tyrone Jacks (one of the INBOCOM soldiers) are forced to retreat through the portal into the other world and fight their way past the Xibalban troops who are arriving to reinforce the area.

Escaping across the top of the mesa in the other world, Mike's group must avoid the Xibalbans and lose themselves in the landscape. This is only possible because of Marsha Black's in-depth knowledge of the terrain ... the topography on the Xibalban side is virtually identical to our earth. Pursued through an alien world, trapped unless they can elude the guards to make it back once the portal cycles open again, Mike must try keep himself and his party alive and to discover what has happened to Eric.

There are two places Mike's group can go for help. Eric's cell phone is still in the tree and Albert has brought along a backpack with a solar charger for his computer. They discover that the information in the phone chronicles the first eight days of Eric's adventure in video and proves to Mike's satisfaction that the body that was found was not Eric. The other place they can seek help is Kawasi's caravan. The travelers seem invested in avoiding the Xibalban soldiers, therefore they may be potential allies and certainly they know all about circumstances in this world.

Mike succeeds in connecting with the caravan which is heading north to supply the community of people called The Guardians, the descendants of the Ancestral Pueblo group who lived near Eric's house. Over the years some had moved to the world of Xibalba, and they were eventually joined by soldiers from the old U.S. army forts who had been trapped on the Xibalban side, plus some renegade Xibalbans. There are people among them who speak English and some can communicate with Albert who speaks Athabaskan (the root of Navajo and Apache) and a little Hopílavayi (Hopi) which has similarities to Aztec. The Guardians live in an idyllic canyon lined with cliff dwellings; the canyon floor carpeted with farms. So far, it has been safe from Xibalban soldiers and can serve as a base of operations from which Mike can search for Eric.



In our world, the US army takes over Eric's property at gunpoint, clamping down a lid of high security. The leader, Lt. Col. Stanfield, the army's only remaining expert on Xibalba, is a bit of a fish out of water. Any conflict with Xibalba automatically elevates the ranking officer of the Internal Border Command to General and allows him complete access to both the head of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense. The week before, Stanfield was

just an aging Lt. Colonel stuck in a dusty file room with a single assistant. As the only expert on the “Special Access” subject of Xibalba, he suddenly has rank, power and influence beyond anything he could imagine. Suggesting that he’d like to speak with the people in Lyman’s Corners, causes every one of those poor citizens to be forced from their homes and onto busses by soldiers in full battle gear. For Stanfield, being taken that seriously takes some getting used to. For others in the military, the entire subject of Xibalba is an amusing myth or practical joke, a sort of Jackalope patrol or snipe hunt, and seeing it suddenly taken seriously is a threat to their authority.

Making Eric’s home his headquarters, Stanfield slowly gains the confidence of Gene and Amandine. However, he finds himself in an immediate turf war with Homeland Security, the FBI, and the CIA. Gene directs a military crew to reconfigure Eric’s base stations to follow Mike’s progress in the other world. Intelligence is vital; in 1872, the first time the U.S., Mexico, and the southwest tribes, fought a major war with Xibalba they were definitely out matched. But today’s Xibalban military hardware seems to have evolved very little. On the other hand, some of the classified reports from Mexico are chilling. Bio weapons, drugs for amazing strength, poison gas ... a whole area of chemical and genetic knowledge that we can barely guess at. As terrorists the Xibalbans could be everybody’s worst nightmare.

Using carefully set traps at a number of water holes, the army captures the Saqua that has been on the loose. Anything they can learn about the other side is useful and Ros attempts to communicate with it. A contingent of Special Forces has been tasked with going through the next time the portal opens to extract Mike, whether he has Eric with him or not. The information Mike has gathered just through his brief experience is worth a great deal, and he is also a civilian messing around in a highly classified situation. If he and the others won’t come willingly, they’ll be placed under arrest ... or terminated.

In the other world trouble is brewing amongst The Guardians. The newcomers may have unwittingly brought the seeds of disruption to their wilderness paradise. Though the community has a reputation amongst Xibalbans as one of rebels and renegades, they have actually survived by causing as little trouble as possible. They have learned to stay off the Xibalban radar and hope for the best. But Kawasi is discovered to have been a candidate for The Voice and some Guardians feel that if she went through the initiation, she might be able to lead a movement to overturn the rule of the Xibalban lords. Though she doesn’t like being volunteered for a process that has meant the death of many, curiosity about her destiny and what would happen if she did try the procedure plagues her. The leader of The Guardians, Qaletqa, is not pleased to be harboring Mike’s group who Xibalba considers high priority fugitives. He also doesn’t like that Kawasi might offer something other than the minor manipulations that he passes off as leadership.

In Mexico, Natalia Albarran has been studying testimony gleaned from the trials of Indian heretics in the 1500's. She heads for Tahtzibichen on the Yucatan peninsula. She is deep in the Mayan heartland and closing in on the historic gateway to Xibalba. What she finds is a New Age tourist industry exploiting both the Indians and their mythology. Walking tours of the most accessible cenotes (sink holes that supposedly lead to the underworld) are



offered for a few Pesos; cave diving expeditions cost quite a bit more. It is a Club Med Xibalbaland complete with bad dance music and flickering neon.

But hidden behind the kitschy “doorway to hell” salesmanship is something darker. The actual Xibalbans are using it as a front to run drugs one way and Central American migrant slaves in the other. The local authorities know something is going on right under their noses but are either too frightened or incapable of believing that Xibalba is an actual place. Taking a tour, Natalia can see what passed for Xibalba in our world, Mayan ruins in the caves that seem to symbolize the terrors of the underworld ... but wandering away from guide, for a moment she is able to spy a group of men carrying materials in strange looking back packs and a blue glow from somewhere beyond. That is as far as she gets before being spirited back to the surface by some Indians attempting to protect her.



Kawasi is rapidly gaining a string of followers. This is not only because she might be The Voice, it is because she is a brave and compassionate personality. A traveler brings her some information about a man in the clinic of a nearby town who has seen Eric. Mike and some of the others go there to check out the story. The wounded man is a soldier who has been blinded in a fight while searching for Eric. He found the American but he and the patrol he was with were jumped by a pack of Saqua, an attack that was much better planned than normal. As he talks to Mike’s Guardian interpreter the soldier realizes something isn’t right about the questions he is being asked and raises the alarm. Mike and the others barely make it out of town.

They escape only to discover that villages of The Guardians have been raided by soldiers looking for Mike and his friends. Pursued again, Mike’s group heads back toward the only place they can hope for help, the portal above the ruined city near Eric’s mesa. One night they walk into what seems like an ambush. Suddenly surrounded by Saqua, fighting isn’t even an option. But none of them are harmed and the beasts quietly stand aside as Eric Hokart walks out of the darkness.

Eric doesn’t speak the Saqua language, they don’t have much language, but they are intelligent and a meeting of the minds is possible, quite literally. The Saqua have a vague sort of ESP. If Eric is able to clear his mind, simple thoughts and images can be communicated. It works well for them but it’s rough going for any normal human. They are being hunted to extinction. The Varanel guards, the Xibalban soldiers with the teeth tattooed on their cheeks, must kill a Saqua before they can enter the order. Saqua are killed for sport, and sacrificed to the gods ... because of something that happened long ago, Xibalban society has a vendetta against them.

They are chased until finally Cabrakan, Eric and Mike's group, and a detachment of the US military that has shot their way past the Xibalbans now guarding the portal, all collide at the ruined city. The Saqua know the streets and tunnels very well and try to help the humans get away but Eric and Kawasi are separated from the group and are forced to escape into the wilds. Marsha is killed protecting their escape and Mike is wounded. He and his people are arrested by Delta Force and returned through the portal to our world.

As the solar flare that opened the portal passes and the portal closes. It is now heavily guarded by troops on both sides. General Stanfield leaves Utah to brief the president and reminds his humorless aid to be sure complete secrecy is maintained ... it's another comment that is obeyed in the most literal sense.

Mike wakes up with the sounds of surf in his ears, another balmy day at camp X-Ray. In the next pen Gene plays computer games and, farther down, Ros is working on her tan. There is an unhappy roar from the member of the group most confused by recent events, the captured Saqua is locked up beside the irritable and fastidious Sgt. Jacks. Everyone who was involved with the world beyond the portal has been interred at Guantanamo Bay until the powers that be can decide what to do or General Stanfield remembers to ask what happened to them.



## Season Two and Beyond

Natalia Albarran is surfacing through swirling bubbles and dark water ... rising from the depths of the Mayan underworld. Something real? A dream? Her memories are fragmentary, a place of fear, a cave of knives, a river of scorpions ... the Mayan death gods in a dim chamber, then cities, amazing, golden, horrible places filled with death and life and alien culture. She is back in the hospital and, again, she has barely survived.

With the Utah portal heavily guarded and conditions rarely allowing it to open, a stalemate has set in. But the covert war Xibalba is fighting in Mexico is still in full swing. The story



picks up again with Natalia's return to Mexico City. Prepared for the journey to Xibalba by Mayan Indians, she has been to hell and back but now she knows the way.

Eric must still be found, and intelligence must be gathered on the situation in Xibalba. Mike and his cohorts are freed from Guantanamo and offered another mission ... this time into the heart of Xibalba with Natalia as their guide. Mike and Eric will find one another and Kawasi will attempt to become The Voice, the next best thing to a living god, and lead her people to a better life.

Governments and corporations will realize that there is also an entire planet on the other side of the portals. The old forces of the industrial economy will consider the possibilities of natural resource extraction, the new forces of the information economy, and modern governments, will fear a place to which people might escape their oversight and control. The national security implications are staggering. The Xibalbans are a threat, but also other nations may have their own points of access and thus a way of accessing the territory of their rivals.

Then there is the question of whether or not Xibalba has a right to be protected from the whims and morality of our culture. It's a place that has maintained slavery and sacrifice. Not all Xibalbans approve, but many might object to any alien people attempting to enforce a change. Is a war called for and, if so what other, more positive, aspects and valuable knowledge might be lost? Without care, the fate of the Aztecs at the hands of the Spanish could be reenacted.

While the powers that be are bogged down with the big questions Mike, Eric, Natalia, Albert and Roz, so long as they have survived the events so far, may try to embark on a voyage of discovery. There is a whole unknown planet out there, hundreds of places as interesting and alien as Xibalba, for them to explore. They cannot be stopped, except by the harshest means, Eric has gathered enough information to find portals unknown even to the Xibalbans and Gene may have found a way of applying a magnetic field to the smaller, less stable, portals to cause them to open. A different kind of Yellow Brick Road awaits.



## Characters

### Eric Hokart - 58

Eric grew up in a small town in Oregon. As a child he excelled in scientific subjects but was also very handy with tools and machines. Scholarships allowed him to go to Princeton to study physics. Always more interested in practical applications rather than theory, he started his own company, Quantum Concepts, to develop technologies that push the boundaries of what many thought possible. Eric married early and his wife died young. He has been a solitary widower for many years and has also survived a bout with kidney cancer. That brush with death has changed his outlook on many things.

Both a science fiction fan and an outdoorsman, he is a scientist from the Robert Oppenheimer school, as comfortable on horseback or fly fishing as he is in a lab or classroom. In a quiet way, Eric is a larger than life character, with a tendency to “go native” in differing environments. While testing his surveillance equipment, his compound outside of Kandahar was done up like something from the Arabian Nights, he races vintage cars, and climbs mountains with vintage gear. He has developed some of the world’s most advanced telecommunications and military hardware, yet he hates the aspects of those industries that make the world smaller and invade people’s privacy. His latest brainchild is a surveillance technology that needs no hardware at the point of collection and where walls or even many feet of rock are no impediment to its function. Quantum Concepts is also developing civilian versions that can be used for medical imaging, or mining exploration. Eric can be at ease as a multinational business executive and a celebrated physicist, or living out boyhood dreams straight from the pages of Edgar Rice Burroughs or Talbot Mundy.

Discovering that his surveillance device can not only see into another world but can also be used to detect the subterranean “thin spots” where a human can naturally cross over, he calls on Mike Raglan, the man he considers most qualified to join him in an initial exploration of this world. When Mike doesn’t immediately respond, Eric takes off on a short reconnaissance by himself.

Once on the other side, Eric happens across a pair of Xibalban soldiers torturing a wounded Saqua. Eric defends the beast, killing one of the soldiers and is surprised when, given the barest moment to recover, the animal kills the other soldier. Pursued by the rest of the Xibalban patrol, and cut off from the portal, Eric flees further and further into the desert west of the ruined city. He tries to keep a record of his experiences on his phone but, eventually, the battery dies. He locates a tree near where he has repeatedly parked the node of his surveillance device and places the phone in a spot where he hopes someone from our world might see it. Eventually, strung out, starving and on his last legs he wakes to find himself captured, by Saqua ... and begins the next phase of his journey.

Though a great deal of energy will be spent trying to find Eric and bring him back to our world, he may not want to leave. He has found a place where everything seems like a mystery waiting to be solved, a place where he, a solitary man looking for life's next challenge, can be completely free.

Mike Raglan - 34

He is an army major who has a master's in history, served in the Special Forces, attended Defense Language Institute, and grew up a surfer from San Diego. He is a man looking for challenges both intellectual and physical. He joined Special Forces in order to get out in the world and help people and, for a while, operations in Afghanistan and Columbia granted that wish. But, on his return to Afghanistan, the mission, or his sense of it, seems to have become corrupted. When an Afghan journalist who has angered both the administration is captured by the Taliban, Mike's unit uses Eric's machine to free the man ... even though it was suggested he look the other way. An inquiry is held and Mike tells the story with a bluntness that embarrasses politicians and military officers in both countries and lands him in hot water. Fed up, Mike chooses to leave the military at the end of his enlistment. Worn out from years of war, he returns home to a country that he struggles to understand.

Whether it's because he has the sort of personality that tends to be recruited by Special Forces, or because of a severe case of PTSD, Mike is a man who does not deal well with authority. The politics that invaded his area of the military did not agree with him, but he struggles with the civilian world as well. He tries to make a living teaching language and culture skills to people he dislikes; military contractors. He does not like medication, yet must deal with stress reactions, flashbacks, and hallucinations. He pairs down his life to the simplest existence, spending his money on solitary surfing expeditions, testing himself against nature. He craves a return to the high stakes, high focus, life that once was his but he no longer has an avenue to do so. He fears he is losing his ability to cope with what others consider to be reality.

He is hiding from the world on the beaches of Samoa, when Eric Hokart calls him for help. Eric knows that Mike needs a mission, something bigger than himself to pull him out of his funk. But Mike impulsively deletes the messages and goes surfing. Later, when Mike discovers that Eric has vanished, guilt and the will to protect his friend, pulls him back toward the person he was meant to be.

Kawasi – 28

Part of an aristocratic family in the Empire of Xibalba, she has always felt different from the society around her. She is a kind soul, yet the stress to conform to the stifling yet ever changing political and social expectations in the capitol cause her to question everything ... making her even less comfortable with society. As a child she was identified as a possible successor to the oracle known to the Xibalban people as The Voice. But the last time the Voice actually prophesied was three hundred years ago. Since then the few candidates have either died from the regimen of hallucinatory drugs used to prepare the initiate or been assassinated by the Lords of Xibalba.

The day will come when, independent from the agendas of others, Kawasi will find a way to secretly experiment with the drugs and training that have supposedly killed so many in order to see if she truly has the potential to be The Voice. Once her candidacy as The Voice is known, she might be the only person who could unite the highly suspicious Xibalbans. Becoming the Joan of Arc of her world will stress her relationships with all the people she knows and loves to the breaking point.

Kawasi can never be tough or a warrior in the way that any of the men, or a professional assassin like Tak-shan 'aa, is. She is always physically vulnerable and emotionally sensitive. What sets her apart is the core of absolute bravery she discovers in herself. Though full of fear, and doubt, and with death, or worse, as the price, she sees no alternative to doing the right thing. No matter what she must face, or what mistakes she makes, she retains the sense of innocence and purity about her that is usually found in a much younger girl.

Cabrakan – 38

Not his actual name, "Cabrakan" is a nom de guerre chosen for his war with the Mexican cartels. In religious terms, it is the name of the Mayan god of earthquakes, the leveler of mountains. In reality he is a Xibalban agent who has been given a nearly impossible, and very secret, mission.

In ancient times Xibalba was a world-spanning empire containing many races, in its current degenerated state it still retains a mixture of ethnicities. One's political position, however, depends on how well one can play the game within the complex Xibalban religious landscape. An officer in Xibalba's elite Varanel Guard, Cabrakan has killed a deadly Saqua in arena combat and earned the tattoos of snarling teeth on either side of his mouth. He has allied himself with an influential sect, and he has avoided controversy long enough to succeed.

Once a candidate to become a scientific oracle, Cabrakan reached his limit of the mind-expanding potions needed to attain that post before he was ready for full initiation. Failure left him few options, but the partial course of the drugs has provided him with an advantage in insight and intelligence over most soldiers.

Though tasked with infiltrating and discovering how to dominate our world, Cabrakan has been given very few resources. Passing through the southern portal into Mexico he lived in

that country for some time and traveled with migrant laborers to the U.S. Now he has created El Ejército de Cibola, an intelligence organization and guerilla army masquerading as a drug cartel. The violence of the recent drug wars has, in great part, been caused by the pressure that the Army of Cibola has slowly exerted on the previously existing gangs. Using the gangsters his operation has absorbed, entire Mexican states could soon fall under his influence and the time has come to move north of the border. He knows that direct domination of any country in our world is a pipe dream, but infiltration, subversion, and manipulation of the criminal underworld and, therefore certain sorts of politics, are attainable goals.

Fleeting moments of intellectual brilliance still haunt him, hinting at who he might have become. The freedom he has found on our side taunts him and the knowledge that though loyalty is demanded by his superiors ... they are unlikely to return the favor. Where does the line between loyal soldier and autonomous gangster lie?

As a failed initiate, Cabrakan will have immense respect for Kawasi, once she goes through the process of drugs and training to become The Voice. The fact that she does it without the help of the priesthood will impress him even more. What she becomes will challenge both his independence from the established powers and his loyalty to them. To make matters more complicated, Cabrakan is also emotionally involved with one of the most effective weapons the Lords of Xibalba have ever created, and that desire is returned yet can never be physically consummated ...

Tak-shan 'aa - 27

A Poison Woman. A highly trained Xibalban assassin. Versed in weapons, martial arts, seduction ... and fed and injected with toxins since childhood. She is a walking disease vector, a living stew of deadly chemistry. Her prolonged touch can sicken a man, a kiss can hospitalize, sex will kill within the hour. She is the Lords of Xibalba ultimate stealth weapon.

There are very few Poison Women in existence and, while their preparation takes a good twenty years, not many survive to middle age. Eventually, their immune systems give out and the deadly materials they carry turn on them. Tak-shan 'aa is a time bomb in more ways than one, for she wants to see Xibalba's mission in our world fulfilled before she dies. Because of the price she has paid, Tak-shan 'aa is much more invested in her loyalty to Xibalba than Cabrakan is ... and that price is making her more and more mentally unstable.

Natalia Albarran - 32

An agent with Mexico's General Directorate of Investigations and National Security (DGISN) and assigned to the Presidential Command Staff's Narcotics Intelligence Section. Natalia comes from a well-placed political family and is one of a new generation in law enforcement circles, highly educated, driven, incorruptible. Proud and temperamental, Natalia can be too high strung for her superiors, or even for herself.

When she is raped and her partner killed by soldiers of The Army of Cibola cartel, she makes vengeance her private mission ... more secretly, she was terrified to the point of

insanity (a barrier her coworkers may believe she crossed) but now she is going to strike back at that fear, even if it takes her to hell itself.

Sheriff Marsha Black – 55

Lean and fit, Marsha is a hunter and seasoned outdoorswoman. Daughter of Moqui County's long time Sheriff, Martin Lyman, she has followed in her father's footsteps. And she has taken on the responsibility of continuing his mission to protect the secrets of their community.

Her jurisdiction has been disastrously invaded, not only by the soldiers and animals of an alien world, but also by our Federal government. People have been killed and enslaved by a foreign power, but they have also been imprisoned and terrorized by their own country. The Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1970s and '80s (an attempt in the West to take back state and county control from Washington DC that continues to this day) had an extra poignancy in Moqui county, and Sheriff Black sees it as her job to defend her constituents from all threats both foreign and domestic.

Though she has won reelection several times, she is a forceful woman in a conservative locale, so she has had to get used to being thought of as a ball breaker. Marsha will go from being Mike Raglan's nemesis in our world to becoming his strong right arm in the world of Xibalba ... it will not be an easy transition for either of them.

Amandine Dufayel - 38

An impeccably educated immigrant from Jamaica. She is Eric's lawyer and the CFO of his Seattle based company, Quantum Concepts. Elegant and businesslike she can be haughty and intimidating presence. She is deeply loyal to Eric and anything he may believe in. Amandine has endless reserves of cool and she is hard as nails. If she has your back you never need to look behind you ... if she wants your hide, you'll never know what happened. Amandine is secretly in love with Eric

Gene Wasserman - 40

Tall, Fat ... addicted to Mountain Dew and '70s rock and roll. He is Eric's right arm, the guy who turns theory into reality. A techie, computer whiz, a gifted engineer who is not afraid to get his hands dirty. He knows as much as anyone about what Eric is working on as anyone. He has a wife and children he rarely sees but he tries to remain the remotely connected dad in the midst of a failing marriage. While he seems the type who never gets his head out of the computer, he has been with Eric in many exotic situations, some of them quite dangerous.

Albert Tsosie – 22

A Navajo graduate student in Anthropology at the University of New Mexico. He's not your traditional Native American. A brilliant, punkish, smart-alec, from Los Angeles who is at odds with many of the tenets of his culture but not quite at home in mainstream America either, his discomfort is hidden underneath protective layers of sarcasm. He is a big city Indian whose family was relocated to Los Angeles after WWII. Cut off from his roots he compensated by learning everything possible about Native Americans, both the overly

politically correct anthropology taught in universities, and the traditional tribal lore. Though he is very much a product of the modern world, being told who his people are supposed to have been by white academics rankles him to no end.

Albert was hired by Eric to excavate the Anasazi ruin near Eric's home based on a paper he wrote with his classmate Ros on the legends of a Native American group referred to as The Guardians. Their theory is that the Indians known as the Anasazi, Cliff Dwellers, or Ancestral Puebloans, retreated from more open farmlands to a fortified and more difficult life in the shelter of the canyons and cliffs to escape the domination of, as yet, unidentified interlopers. These violent outsiders ruled the area from a headquarters in Chaco Canyon and the Cliff Dwellers developed system of signal towers to alert the villages to their movements. With the eventual assistance of the newer tribes in the region, the Utes, Navajos, and Apaches, the invaders were fought to a standstill. The effect that these unknown, yet powerful, people have had on the southwest has been completely misunderstood by closed-minded anthropologists, even to the point of initially calling the Cliff Dwellers "Anasazi," a Navajo label for their actual oppressors "the ancient enemy" who we know as the soldiers of Xibalba.

Ros Pickering – 24

An Australian archeology student, Albert's classmate and co-author. Also hired by Eric to excavate the ruin. The two are a great team despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that they argue about nearly every detail. Ros is tall, spare, and never one to draw undue attention to herself. As a child she was dragged all over the world by filmmaker parents who were working on a series about New Age mysteries. She's heard too many fables about ancient astronauts in her young life and it has turned her into a very cautious and conservative scholar.

Ben Gallagher – 72

Born in Kansas, Ben went to Vietnam as a US Marine and then into Law Enforcement. He served as an undercover narcotics officer before he moved to Utah with his wife and three children. Gallagher has a good understanding of the Native American communities that surround him and, is also a collector of the many local tales of the supernatural. A long-time resident of Lyman's Corners, but not one of the pioneer families, Ben has heard many rumors of what has gone on in the area but is not sure how much of it he believes.

Gallagher is virtually retired but is the only real detective in the department, a tough outsider among the half dozen Boy Scout locals. He liked his original boss, Sheriff Martin, and was like an uncle to his daughter, Marsha. However, since the old Sheriff has died and Marsha has been elected in his place, Marsha and Ben have ended up at odds on many occasions.

Qaletqa (Guardian of the People) – 50

Leader of The Guardians on the Other Side. A descendant of the clan that lived in the Anasazi ruin near Eric's house, he knows the full history of The Guardians and the descendants of the soldiers, Navajos, and renegade Xiblabans who have joined them over the years. In Qaletqa's life, however, Xibalba has always been a distant threat. Deeply



narcissistic, he believes he has led the Guardians loose organization though careful manipulation. In reality, The Guardians are simply pretty good at cooperating and are tolerant of him because he knows so much of their history. Now, with both Mike's group and Kawasi having arrived in their community, he sees more and more challenges to the comfortable old order. Some are legitimate, like the fact that Mike has been pursued by Xibalban soldiers, others are less so ... he fears Kawasi's quietly charismatic leadership. Not only does she distract his people from the attention he desires but, among the runaway Xibalbans that have joined his people, she is seen as the possible savior for all of Xibalban society. Qaletaqa is not only jealous, he rightly fears his people's growing militancy.

Lt. Colonel Julius Stanfield – 66

Head of The Department of the San Juan's Internal Border Command (INBOCOM). The department is a leftover from the Indian Wars of the 19th century, the only thing the "Command" commands is a dusty office full of Top-Secret archives set up during the Cold War, and a staff of two archivists. INBOCOM has been nearly forgotten. Its existence has always been "need to know" but, for the last seventy years, fewer and fewer have "needed to know."

Should a threat from Xibalba be detected, INBOCOM is automatically elevated in its power and authority. Lt. Colonel Stanfield, an officer at a dead end in his career, will soon find himself promoted to General and, by default, made the leader of the entire US response to threats from Xibalba. A man unused to leadership, he will be the unwilling and somewhat unwitting commander of the Xibalban conflict. He must discover a practical response to the intelligence that a neighboring country, Mexico, is being infiltrated by agents of a hostile power, Xibalba. And he must defend his department's jurisdiction from the many powers that dream of using the world of Xibalba for their own corrupt ends. The situation eventually transforms an aging and mild-mannered file clerk into a leader to be reckoned with.

Sgt. Tyrone Jacks – 27

One of the soldiers recently assigned to the INBOCOM force that takes over Lyman's Corners and Eric's compound. The military has offered him a way off the mean streets of Chicago, and circumstances force Sgt. Jacks through the portal with Mike and the others into the world of Xibalba. Buttoned up, meticulously organized and structured, Sgt. Jacks has a hard time believing the stories about where he is and can't entirely decide whether he should try to arrest and detain Mike and the others. Following orders is something he excels at, but a parallel universe is about as far as you can get from a structured command system. His is the complete opposite of Mike Raglan's improvisational style of soldiering.



## The Universe of Xibalba

Ever feel that our reality has become a slightly alien place? Everyone does at one time or another. There are an infinity of parallel universes, and we may drift into and out of those closest to ours without ever noticing. Alternate versions of reality that are more distinctly different take more energy to access and therefore are rarely experienced. Through a quirk of physics, an interplay between the magnetic fields of the sun and minerals in the earth, this one distinctly different alternate world is accessible at certain times from a few specific locations. An accidental byproduct of the surveillance technology that Eric Hokart has invented is that it can be “tuned” to both look into this other world, and to identify the places and the moments when portals from one reality to another will open.

Geographically, the universe that Xibalba exists in is almost identical to our own. However, it is still trapped in the waning years of an ice age. The Great Plains have a climate much like northern Canada. This situation has kept the human population of the entire planet vastly lower than ours, and ancient megafauna, giant sloths, bison, cave bears, mammoths, and saber tooth cats have yet to be hunted into extinction. Sea level is lower, the air is drier and, because of the cycles frigid weather, human civilization has developed in a completely different manner.

As in our world, several significant civilizations evolved in the area between the Eastern Mediterranean and South East Asia. The last of these was as advanced than our own. A continent straddling, multi-racial, empire, it was mostly destroyed by some sort of catastrophe, like a series of volcanic explosions or a meteor strike that triggered a period of dramatic global cooling. The exact nature of the event has been lost to memory, except that it was as if the gods had rendered some horrific judgement on all of humanity.

Typically, the end of an Ice Age is marked by long periods of rapidly alternating weather, glaciers advancing and retreating, freezes, floods, and earthquakes. The Xibalbans relationship with their gods reflects this highly uncertain world like that of a child with an abusive parent. Their religion worships dueling and hostile deities. Human sacrifice to maintain the blessings of those gods, to control population growth, and as political tool, is an accepted part of life. The mechanism for choosing who is to be offered is both complex and cynically administrated. They are emerging from a dark age of religious fundamentalism and from under an unpredictable and totalitarian government where suspicion is rife and the rules change in arbitrary ways.

For many centuries there was a good deal of trade and cultural diffusion back and forth through the portals. In ancient times the Xibalbans were an outpost of a multi-continental empire in their own world, but since they have occasionally intermarried with the natives of our North and South America. Some of their culture is similar to that of pre Columbian Mesoamerica. But that similarity is not simply because our side has taken on the culture of theirs or vice versa, it is a complex mixture and the greatest historians would be hard pressed to sort out what came from where. In Mayan myth Xibalba is known as a sort of “underworld” or place of evil, and the legendary Mayan Hero Twins once vanquished its rulers. Whether Mayan adventurers actually traveled to Xibalba and won a significant victory is an open question. It is obvious, however, that the Mayans had little love for ancient Xibalba. The history of warfare and abuses on both sides goes back centuries.

Although Xibalba is the isolated and decaying remains of a once great civilization, the technology it was able to retain was still easily a thousand years in advance of the Mayans and five hundred years in advance of the Spanish who accidentally visited their world in the early days of the Conquest. Xibalban culture, however, is such that it has remained oppressively conservative, a warped and faded reflection of its ancient glory. To a great extent their current state of development might be similar to that of the Ottoman Empire in its final days during WWI, sophisticated but aging, modern but stagnant. Ripe for change.

Different power blocs keep technology as secret and as separate as they can, even different neighborhoods in the same city may have incompatible forms of electric power. Transportation technology has been held back by a leadership fearful that mobility will lead to insurrection, but there are a few rail lines and primitive, battery powered, land vehicles. The Xibalban military has electric airships using chemical batteries that give them a huge edge over any restive citizenry but they aren't so fast, or so numerous, that one Lord has too much to fear from another. Day and night communications are through an automated heliograph system that uses flashing light reflected from one station to the next. Mass production is almost nonexistent and the look of it might be described as Aztec Diesel Punk. It is often brilliant but generally one-off and highly eclectic in its design. The chaos of this everything-designed-differently and everything-made-by-hand technology suits a leadership resistant to change ... even as it inspires momentary innovation.

The one area where Xibalban science has a great advantage over ours is in medical chemistry, herbal formulas and a science similar to homeopathy. This has not ushered in

an age of great health or general quality of life because the elites do not share its results with rest of their fractured society. However, it has led to advanced medications and truly mind-expanding drugs as well as those that can enhance strength and agility to a reasonable extent. The dark side is that Xibalbans have the potential for a vast and deadly chemical and biological weapons industry.

Xibalba has no peer to peer enemies in its world. The various power blocs each have cadres of soldiers that can be called up to serve the entire nation, but the Varanel Guards function as an elite force commanded by whichever of the Lords happens to be dominant at the moment. They are very tough, very well trained, and viewed with great fear by Xibalban society. Each officer must kill a Saqua in the ring before he can enter the ranks of Varanel ... the human is armed, but it is still a fearsome challenge. Once they have graduated, they are given a tattoo on each cheek that symbolizes the Saqua's snarling teeth.

The current population is around twenty million people and is spread across an area that, in our world, would reach from New Mexico to southern Guatemala. Six great cities and many villages pay tribute to the capital, Xibalba. That tribute comes in the way of crops, raw materials, and slaves. The empire is ruled by a group of mysterious elites, the Lords of Xibalba. The Lords are advised by a cadre of oracles, men and women initiated into a sect of intellectuals and seers, augmented in their intelligence to a certain extent through the use of sophisticated homeopathics and psychedelics ... remnants of the knowledge left over from the time before the glaciers.

Cities that flourished in the "golden age" now lie abandoned in the jungle or desert. As disaster loomed, the early citizens are claimed to have split into a number of groups with competing ideas of how to survive the change in climate. One group of more scientifically minded citizens disappeared, a continuing source of legend. The others are the modern Xibalbans, preserved, so they think, by obedience to their harsh and untrustworthy gods.

The creatures known as the Saqua are related to this ancient story. In reality they are the descendants of the vanished group. Their form is a compromise achieved through genetic engineering, one that would let them live on a frozen planet that looked like it would be devoid of the possibility of civilization. Tragically, this was an overreaction, clearly mankind *did* survive without such drastic measures. Now, after a thousand years, they have become an alien life form in their own world. They are intelligent, yet with a thought process completely different from a modern human. They are vilified and hunted to extinction by the Xibalbans. The Saqua hold valuable knowledge about the benefits and the cost of living so close to nature ... and are painfully aware that their future is severely limited.

Traditionally, The Lords have accepted the guidance of one great oracle, The Voice. From her station at the center of a huge maze in mountains outside the capital city, The Voice once provided spiritual and intellectual leadership to all of the empire. However, for the last three hundred years the initiation, a process of drugs and mental exercise, has led to the death of all who were found to be potential candidates ... or perhaps The Lords simply

don't relish taking advice from an enlightened being and have sabotaged the process. No one knows.

While the conservatism of the Lords of Xibalba is such that they have neither noticed nor care ... their society is changing. The cities that pay tribute to them are restless. The long dark winter of their world is ending. Already their people have more grain in their storehouses and more money in their pockets. Attitudes about religion are evolving. Self-taught scholars are exploring the ruins of their forefathers and discovering remnants of forgotten science and culture. All that is needed for a profound change is something to lift the crushing suspicion under which they have lived, a leader, a religion, or a new philosophy, to inspire hope.

The Xibalbans understand a great deal about the behavior of the portals. Having a civilization that has been extremely stable for thousands of years has been an advantage to their observations. The so-called Mayan calendar owes much of its complexity and accuracy to Xibalban observations of sun spot cycles and the correlation of those cycles with the opening and closing of the portals between worlds.

Through the major transition points are in Mexico, and the smaller, and less stable, ones in Utah, and a few other places. Xibalba has a more than one-thousand-year history of interaction with our world. The differences in weather, culture and technological development have led to colonization and warfare. Yet the tendency of the portals to naturally cycle open and closed has often made the connection between worlds intermittent, much like that of Europe with a far-flung colonial outpost in the age of sail.



### The War of the Portals

At least as far back as the first Ancestral Puebloans, people and animals from the Other Side, passed through the portals. Some of the humans, no doubt, mixed peacefully with the native tribes, but the ones who are remembered were the more militant groups and the

soldiers of Xibalba. Eventually, many of the Puebloans who built their villages in unprotected areas were forced to relocate to more defensible places like the mesa tops and shallow caves in the canyon walls. Signal towers were built with the mission of alerting the clans when raiding parties emerged from the portals, or left their outpost in Chaco Canyon. Other tribes, like the Apache and Navajo, learned the hard way and eventually came to share the name the Cliff Dwellers used for those from Xibalba: The Ancient Enemy, or "Anasazi." Memories of the occasional Saqua that made it into our world became mixed with the stories of Skinwalkers, shapeshifting "Navajo Wolves," and witches.

Spanish settlers also had their run ins with the interlopers from another world. Colonial officials were aware of similar incidents in New Spain, or Mexico. There were even rumors of Conquistadores discovering a world of marvelous golden cities, and magical elixirs that prolonged life. Soon after the Mexican War of 1848, the soldiers of the United States of America fought their own battles in the territory they had recently acquired. The situation worsened to the point where Washington eventually created the "Department of the San Juan," a special military district referencing the San Juan River, the area where most of the trouble occurred. Minor outposts were established on the Xibalban side as a protective measure. Preparations for a large scientific expedition gathered momentum, but then were cut short by the American Civil War.

Knowledge of the Other World was kept as secret as possible. American settlers had a tendency to expand into whatever space was available, and the government had no interest in being asked to protect civilians against the technologically advanced Xibalbans in the way they were obligated to do when faced with Native Americans on the warpath. The country was already stressed to its limits over which territories would become Free or Slave states. More chaos was not in anyone's best interest.

In 1872 a significant conflict was fought by the allied forces of the US, Mexico, and a collection of Southwest Tribes against the army of Xibalba. In this case, the battleground was primarily on the other side of the portals. For a time, the portals cycled closed more frequently and the war came to a standstill, the bases in the Other World were abandoned and the smaller, and therefore less stable, portal in the ruins of the village of The Guardians was filled in.

Raiding parties from Xibalba intermittently triggered military lock downs of the citizens of what had become Moqui County. When necessary, the army would "sequester" the population in a series of camps on the Navajo reservation. After a major incursion, and significant battle, in the 1950s, the government set about ending the problem for good. The large portal in Glen Canyon was filled with concrete, and Lake Powell was created to cover that plug with hundreds of feet of water. Any attempt to remove the plug from the Xibalban side would be met with a nasty surprise.

## General Notes

Narrative Speed: The materials in this Bible and the pilot episode screenplay move quickly in order to convey the overall intent of the project. The pedal to the metal pacing gives it a useful momentum but an alternative approach might be to slow the entire story down, to spend more time building the mystery at a more deliberate pace. There are a lot of elements in the script and this bible, and there is a great deal of story potential in the initial search for Erik, the secrets of the town of Lyman's Corners, the tracking of the lost Saqua, and the mysterious history, and cover up, of our world's war with Xibalba. Crossing over to "the other side" might be best be delayed until the mid-point or even the end of the first season. That might shift the tone more toward Mystery and Horror, with Science Fiction initially being a secondary genre. On the other hand, the story isn't fulfilled until we go to Xibalba, so it should be preset in the minds of the audience to a certain extent.

A restructuring of story elements could lead to Kawasi and her sister escaping Xibalba to hide out with The Guardians prior to Mike Raglan's arrival in Lyman's Corners. If Eric also ended up in the village of The Guardians, and it was raided by the Varunel, a situation might be created where she used a map drawn on the back of a page of Eric's notes to get to the ruins and then the portal to our world. She would be lost, confused, afraid, and desperate to return to find her sister. The map and fragmentary notes would prove Eric was still alive. It is very likely that she and Albert could share a language, possibly contemporary Mayan or Hopi.

The goal of the first season could be more, "What happened to Eric?" with the opposition coming from the pioneer families of Lyman's Corners, led by Sheriff Black, trying to keep their secret and their freedom. Once their concerns are finally understood, they become allies rather than opponents. The end of the season could be moment when Lt Colonel Stanfield realizes his moment has finally arrived. Cabrakan's drug war might be played in the background, an element to be more fully developed in the future, and it would delay the expense of having to go to Xibalba, leaving that for a big reveal later on.

In the second season the goal would become, "How do we save Eric?" and the opposition would be more our government and the Xibalbans. Setting up for a third season, Natalia's story could be introduced. A slower, more atmospheric start with fewer characters and less expense might be a very viable option. It gives the whole project somewhere to go and room to grow.

Flashbacks into History: There are a few scenes in this bible that take place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century "wild west." One is where the archeologist misunderstands what his Navajo guides are saying when they describe who the "Anasazi" or ancient enemies really were. Another is the big sequence where we are led through all the diverse groups that have gathered to fight the war with Xibalba. It would probably be a good idea to expand on this concept, to sprinkle these mysterious "prologues" throughout the series. Some could go back to the time of the Ancestral Puebloans or Mayans and their relationship with Xibalba while others could deal with the struggle in the 1950s that led to the creation of Lake Powell by the Army Corps of Engineers.



Many Worlds: In this age of social upheaval there is always someone ready to complain about something. There is already an aspect of “alternate history” to this story. It pretends that certain Mesoamerican and Native North American civilizations were influenced, perhaps ruled at times, by people from the universe of Xibalba ... and that, in turn, our Native cultures influenced them. Wars were fought, areas were colonized and surrendered, knowledge was shared back and forth. Closer to the present day this bible suggests that some of the conflicts between the Native American tribes and the US government, and between the US and Mexico, were a cover up, and that actually, whatever their problems, all were united against a common enemy.

Thus, it might be appropriate to the subject matter to subtly, but continually, suggest that the world in our story is not, in fact, exactly the one we and our audience live in. Its history is not exactly our history, its tribes are not exactly our tribes, its politics are not exactly our own. These differences should not be a direct commentary on any of our current events, that’s the quickest way to make it feel dated in the near to middle future. *Haunted Mesa* suggests that there are an infinite number of alternate universes, perhaps the universe that the story exists in one that is just enough different from our own to avoid controversy. If we offend someone ... well, it’s not exactly our world, what we represent isn’t supposed to be truth or to have a direct relationship with anyone’s life. At the end of the day it’s all fiction anyway, an alternate world of its own sort.

Service to Actual History: Even in the best of cases, fiction rarely does history, anthropology, and archeology, any justice. Perhaps a corresponding website containing some background on what is real and unreal about the world of *Haunted Mesa* could be produced with material drawn from the appropriate sources. The Hopi, Pueblos, and Navajos, as well as modern Mayans and southwest archeologists might be encouraged to contribute. Many minor aspects of *Haunted Mesa* are true: The “Anasazi” were misnamed by early anthropologists. The people of Chaco Canyon were different, and potentially hostile, to their neighbors. The reason the Ancestral Puebloans built so defensively is a mystery. Many places in Southeast Utah are considered to be “haunted” by the people who live there. There is a broken-down half-track at the split in the road that leads to the location of Eric’s house. Petroglyphs of mammoths or mastodons can be found on rocks near Glen Canyon. The Ancestral Puebloans did communicate regarding their enemies with signal fires. Playing with alternative history and culture is fun, and the primary purpose of our work is to entertain, but we might also take some time to offer legitimate opinions and information when we can. That might be both educational and fun.