

JAN 28 1966

MEMORANDUM TO: Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research & Development)

SUBJECT: Preliminary ELF Testing

We will be taking point on the Michigan/Wisconsin ELF project. Thank you for the notification concerning strange activity; your operations have revealed a new zone of interest for one of our teams.

We will be scaling back the planned operation, constructing more discreet bases in Clam Lake, WI and Republic, MI, with Paulding roughly in between them.

We will still allow you to continue your research and communication with submarines through these new constructions, but this will not be the primary operative goal. Please respond with a shortlist of employees who will be working the bases and must be sent agreements.

This project will be transferred to the Directorate of the Foyer. Thank you for your cooperation.

Richard M. Helms
Director
Central Intelligence Agency

JUN 14 1966

MEMORANDUM TO: Directorate of the Foyer

SUBJECT: Local Superstition Re: Project Sanguine

The locals in Michigan have become especially interested in the abnormalities surrounding Project Sanguine. Frequently there are reports of some people being able to hear a low buzz (some people may indeed be able to hear our ELF transmissions, I am told); one even appeared on a local radio program, spouting nonsense about UFOs and aliens and Roswell.

The entrance to the Foyer in Paulding has become a source of curiosity for local folks, as well. They are calling it the Paulding Light, due to the strobing effect from the Foyer that bleeds through into our world. The same sort of drivel, conspiracies about nothing that come with a hefty mistrust of us and our operations. I'd rather not validate these by putting out some sort of official explanation. These people are fine running circles around themselves. The environmentalists are also all up our ass, but that's not new. None of this is impeding our operations in any way, I just figured I'd let you know that we are not passing inconspicuously.

Vincent Caldwell
Sanguine Project Lead

JAN 6 1969

MEMORANDUM TO: David C. Goldberg

SUBJECT: Assignment Primer Documents

There is a newly discovered inhabited alien region we are calling the Foyer, accessible only through extraordinary circumstances. You will not be provided with more information concerning this area than what resides in this letter. Do not inquire further regarding it.

A Navy project in Wisconsin has provided a means of access to the Foyer. Their Extremely Low Frequency (ELF) technology, designed to communicate with submarines, incidentally provides an opening for us. Specifics of entrance will be provided on site in Republic, MI; entrances and exits must be timed with ELF blasts, so you must be punctual. The physical entrance to the Foyer sits in between our Wisconsin and Michigan sites, in Paulding, MI.

Just inside this entrance we have found a small society of entities which seem to be intelligent, communicative, and humanlike. Attached is a description of our first foray into this region of the Foyer, and our first contact with these entities. You might find it useful for preparation. The work you will be doing is, as I understand it, largely standard for you. Anthropological in nature, even if it is definitionally separate. Of course, the environment will be unfamiliar, and those you are studying will be perhaps more alien than anything you have as of yet, but I trust that you will be up to the task. Your research on pain has been excellent in the past. Please continue in this vein if you see fit.

You must report as much information as you can glean regarding these entities to us: their potential use cases, their weaknesses, their strengths, their practices. Anything you come across is ours, by law. If they could pose a threat to our nation, it is your duty to inform us of this. I am aware that this is not your usual priority, but, as you have agreed to, given a directive, you must fulfill it.

As a reminder: Everything in this document MUST REMAIN PRIVATE. Do not breach your contract.

Michael Holloway
Sanguine Project Lead

DEC 8 1967

MEMORANDUM TO: Sanguine Project Lead

SUBJECT: Preliminary Incursion #1

The region of the Foyer to which Paulding provides an entrance seems to be [REDACTED]. The ground is black, reflective, glass, the dark purplish-reddish sky is empty, save multiple large red circles (potentially moons or stars of some sort), and there are no signs of life.

We have set up a camp near the incursion point, and are being extra cautious, communicating only via radio and visual morse and keeping shifts, so no one has to be in the open air without protection. This new gear is something else. The new tents and [REDACTED] suits are incredible, and these new floodlights are extraordinarily bright.

The cause of the Paulding Light has been identified; a great big light, pulsating, about five or six miles away, pointed directly at the incursion point. Nothing surrounds it. We will investigate further soon.

Largely rote proceedings, excepting the light. No sign of [REDACTED]. We will keep you updated.

Ronald McDowell
Excursion Lead

MAR 20 1968

MEMORANDUM TO: Sanguine Project Lead

SUBJECT: Preliminary Incursion #5

We have not engaged with the society surrounding the Light, as per your request. As such, we have not gained much more information about it. It is entirely possible that they are observing us as well (although they do not seem to be hostile), as they seem at least somewhat intelligent. Our scouts can hear singing, sometimes, from their camp.

Ronald McDowell
Excursion Lead

David C. Goldberg
2/9/69 Incursion Personal Notes

The area around the transmitter had been cordoned off, sterilized. I was shepherded through one of the (manned) entrances into a fluorescent beehive of activity, promptly assaulted with new documents to sign and levels to be checked. I reassured them that I did not need or want assistance, or backup; I would be alright by myself, thanks. I was outfitted with a thousand tiny devices, rubber gloves and a branded facemask, reminded that all transmission was one-way, and sent on my way.

I got in my Cadillac and began the hour-long drive to the light. I stopped at an all-hours diner to get a cup of coffee (not a vice I usually indulge in, but the nature of this work demanded working far later than my usual schedule requires). The woman working barely looked at me. The coffee made me queasy.

When I got to the site, there was a group of men, standing, waiting for me.

“When you feel the ground tremor as discussed, return directly and promptly to your entrance point.”

And so, with a notepad, the quick exchange of shortwaves, and, I assume, the subsonic blast of some low-frequency wave, I stepped through the light. I left the gloves and facemask in the backseat.

My shoes made a rubbery squeak as I hit the ground. The darkness was expected, but its viscosity surprised me; the rhythmic strobing of the Paulding Light, now far off on some matte-finished knoll, became slower here, as if pushing through some tight-knit, stretched filter. The sky was black, not purple.

A low ringing in my ear came and went as I walked towards the light's source. The thought occurred to me that despite the obvious risks, this work might be easier than my usual; the environs were uninterrupted. Endless. Easy. I made it to the camp(?) within an hour.

As I approached, a strange chorus drifted over a lip in the polyester. I paused and made an audio recording of this. Then, with my flashlight on, I walked into the camp. They were encircled, singing(?), through what orifice I know not, their timbral changes far wider than what our greatest opera singers can produce. They were joined in such a way that I could not quite tell where one being began and the other ended. I remained momentarily unseen as this chorus finished its song.

They gave off a sort of visual buzz, as if appearing on a dodgy television set, the eyes sliding off of them as soon as they made contact. Surrounding them were similarly staticked tents, neat, propped up by metallic beams and nylon rope. The nylon did not seem to be tied down to anything; when I tried to inspect its intersection with the ground, my eyes began to water.

And, of course, there was the grand LED. I wondered about this. How did it look so similar to Earth's floodlights? Why did it turn on and off so erratically – did this not bother

them? Was it stolen? How and why was it pointed directly at the entrance point? Are all cultures eventually drawn towards an LED-lit endgame?

Suddenly I was blinded by a sterile, hospitalized beam. Their voices cut off abruptly as they separated, individuals becoming clear. Pinpricked white-bright eyes opened and trained on me, illuminating my rumpled suit. Staring at my flashlight. I waved, hesitantly. A few loped over to me, their gait surprisingly jagged, unpracticed. They were tall, seven or eight feet, and bipedal, skin grayish and gauzy. There was nothing where I would imagine their genitals should be, with no discernable sex to speak of. They were not clothed except in the case of their face. Under those illuminated eyes they wore face masks. Their heads were slightly oblong, skin folded and wrinkled in the way of a low-quality swimsuit. They would not show me what was under their masks. I did not push the issue.

They spoke amongst themselves with those piercing eye-beams, the frequency and timing of blinks and winks seeming to do most of the communicating. Some had lights where I had hands. Some stomachs were replaced with lights. This fascinated me. The huge light might not be LED after all – it matched the hue and intensity of their body-lights, some sort of bioluminescence. Was it a creation? Was it living? Why was it still hatched and flickering?

I quickly began writing down the qualities of this light, attempting to decipher at least something about how this language operated. How had the primer files not touched on this? It was remarkable – they obviously could make sounds, but this was not the organ with which they communicated. Perhaps it was reserved for rituals? Was it religious? Did this have something to do with the big light?

They spoke at me in this manner, flashing lights at me and expecting a response. I turned my flashlight on and off slowly, carefully, in a rhythm that felt right. The leader seemed satisfied. There was an air of smugness about him, I thought. We carried on like this, blinking and deciphering, for a good while.

I decided I would attempt to engage in a dialogue with them. I cleared my throat.

This elicited a strained, abrupt series of movements from the aliens (is that the right word? What are they? Where are they from? I do not know anything about this place, or their origins. Certainly the Roswell stories from my teens are beginning to seem much more plausible). There were not many of them at all, but they gathered around, moving in a much smoother manner than before, slithering, looking down on me. Suddenly I felt very small.

One of them made a similar, guttural, wet noise. The others followed suit. I could not quite tell where their sounds came from; it certainly was not behind their masks. I continued, feebly.

“Hello.”

A pause.

“Hello.”

They were remarkably fast learners.

The one I spoke with the most was on the shorter side, with a limp and seemingly malformed hand(?). Despite this, the others seemed to defer to him. His upper right limb was squeezed by something armband-like, floating skin tucked into an elastic holding cell. A leader of some sort?

We went back and forth for hours, exchanging languages, attempting to understand each other. They got a lot further with English than I did with their bursts of light. I attempted to ask about the big light, the Paulding Light, but got nowhere. Some dipped behind tents, ridges, went and fiddled with the big light. It had, I noticed, substantially slowed down in frequency since I had arrived. There seemed to be a sense of liveliness to the camp, but it did not center on my presence. This surprised me.

They looked curiously through my notebook, inspected my tie and flashlight. I showed them pictures from my wallet. Previous girlfriends, suburban pasts.

When I tried to imitate their singing ritual(?) with my own voice, they grew cold. Stiff. Their leader put his hand over my flashlight, then my mouth. I stopped. His skin was cool and still. We remained like this for longer than I'd like to admit.

The first round of tremors in the ground came. One short, four long. I could, for the first time, hear the frequency that accompanied them. I told the figures I would be back, this time with a camera. I was determined to stay with them for some extended period of time.

My way out was a squeeze, but I made it through.

I'm staying in a motel off of Highway 41. The window looks out on the parking lot, facing the road. The blinds don't do much to cover the piercing headlights that roll by every few minutes. The ring at the front desk rings every so often. The walls are thin. I'm having a hard time sleeping. The owner's skin is pleasantly mottled, dressed up in a way that reassures me. Frog-shaped, corduroyed. The water is clean, the bed is satisfactory. The Bibles are where they should be. The quality of the air is strange, or that place did something to my senses. They're calling it the Foyer. To what, I don't know. I'm obviously extraordinarily excited by the night's events, but I'm not sure that's what's keeping me up. The walls make wet sounds. Openings and closings.

My mouth is cold.

We know what you want.

What is this?

I wake early.

FEB 10 1969

MEMORANDUM TO: Sanguine Project Lead

SUBJECT: First Incursion Report

Entities appear to be non-threatening and non-aggressive. They are, however, potentially useful as codebreakers or some such - we were able to communicate in rudimentary English after only a few hours of speaking. They are also remarkably light on their feet; they seem to slide over the land despite their bipedal nature. I do not know what other abilities they might hold. I was unable to glean anything directly concerning their larger society (if it does exist) or their purpose of being in the Foyer. They are very curious creatures, and seemed to defer to me.

They live in tents, made out of nylon or similar material, and communicate with bioluminescent organs on their limbs, eyes, or stomachs, despite their ability to speak. The Paulding Light seems to be one of these organs, sized up. Attempts to gain information about this proved inconclusive, but as understanding grows between us, I trust I will come to know its inner workings. I have attached audio recordings I've made of some sort of ritual they were engaging in before I approached. I do not know its significance.

I would request the go-ahead to stay with them for an extended period of time. I'm aware that the nature of this work requires a hard exit date, so may I propose that I spend a week there, perhaps after a few more incursions? I will be heading in once again tonight.

David C. Goldberg

David C. Goldberg

2/10/69 Incursion Personal Notes

It was my third cup of coffee that day. I was suited up, drove to the light, desuited, and entered. My shoes echoed. The ground was concrete-ish now, porous, rough. Had it been before?

I began my walk towards the light; it was more difficult, this time. Little malformations scattered themselves about, and the ground seemed to change texture every few steps. A slow writhe. Walls, as high as my chest, slowed my progress. My Swiss army knife slid off of them. As the light grew in size so too did these blockades; they began to form into large cubes, one-room studio apartments for no one. They connected with each other, spaces almost like doors (often too small or far too large) joining them. Sometimes walls would completely block out the LED, this world's only light source; I had to use my flashlight a fair bit. Its shadows encouraged paranoia. Eventually, through these linked structures, I arrived.

They were lined up to greet me. Their eyes were no longer pinpricked; saucered pools of light flooded my body, my mind. Why did eye size change? Were they eyes? As mine adjusted to the new flood of light, I could take in their bodies more clearly. Still staticked, they had shrunk down slightly, taking on a more angular appearance; their skin was more leathery, porous, less folded and floating. They wore more than just facemasks, now; implications of jackets now adorned some of their blocky shoulders. Some had hairish strands extending from their heads which were, at a minimum, six feet long.

Why the changes? Why so sudden? Was it a quick aging process? Were their lifespans only a few days? Was it (more likely, I'm thinking) some sort of cycle? What were the changes for? How did they reproduce?

The leader came forward. His limp was more pronounced than before.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello!" I clicked my flashlight on and off, in the pattern for what I thought was a greeting. "Why have you changed so much?"

"This is our way. You will see. Come."

He led me through their little encampment. It, too, was vastly changed. One pathway led directly to the light, and on each side, more of those amalgamated, boxy structures, flanking the path like guards to some religious procession. The Paulding Light sat on the top of the hill, at the end of this exalted road. The tents were gone. Lights watched me from the windows of these structures. The beings dispersed back into them. Moving fast, slinking. Were they living in them?

This new architecture made me nervous. A science-fiction-style time dilation was out of the question; yesterday I had been in there for the same amount of time that had passed on Earth. How could this society, less than two dozen, build so much with so little time? Had they built all of this?

I asked.

“Yes.”

In between these structures sat great big matte black poles. As we proceeded, the tops of them began to light up, in much the same way as the major, primary light. I could, for the first time, turn my flashlight off without sacrificing my vision.

“Why more lights?”

“For your eyes.”

We hadn’t spoken about senses in great detail last time; this claim confused me. The exchange of light was, I thought, obviously important to them culturally. It was their primary mode of communication with each other, their little town was built around one.

“Why for me? Is it...is it a welcoming thing? Is this customary?”

“Customary?”

“Yes, like traditional. Like you do it all the time for new people.”

A pause, a cock of the head.

“Yes, then.”

—

“What about the changes in your bodies?”

“I think, also, customary.”

“Your skin is different. Softer. Do you do this regularly?”

“Maybe, maybe not.”

His saucered eyes shrunk.

—

“We prepare for it. This is preparing.”

“What is it? Winter? A change of seasons? Reproduction?”

A look, almost calculated in its emptiness.

—

“We move. Soon.”

“Why? Where?”

“You know.”

“It seems to me that you are settling down, though; you are building more permanent houses, becoming entrenched.”

He laughed. “We must be ready for the move!”

—

“Do you have a name? Like, I am David. What are you called?” I gestured at him, then myself, then him again.

“No.”

“You are called no?”

“Not for you.”

“I need something to call you, my friend.”

A pause. That blank look, once again.

“I will call you Francis.”

The leader, given a name.

“Are there more of you? More towns, camps?”

Something twinged within him, his barren expression contorting for a moment.

“No.”

I spent most of my time with Francis, again. I figured once I began to stay with them for longer, I'd have ample time to branch out. I did attempt to speak with some of the inhabitants of the buildings, but I was not allowed into any of them. I spoke through the window with one. Its eyes stared at me, swirling, eddying. Nothing useful.

From inside, I heard chewing sounds.

I asked Francis if I would be able to stay longer soon, perhaps in one of the buildings. He seemed amicable to the idea. I took a few photos. I tried to explain what a camera was. The entities did not seem to be impressed. And then, of course, the tremors came. I shook Francis' hand. Time to go.

As I made my way back, weaving through the maze of joined walls, the Paulding Light began to blink faster, faster, becoming epileptic, framing the last steps of my journey in blinding 10-frames-per-second brilliance. The last tremors came; the window to leave would close soon.

I looked back. A sprawling, searching, crimson explored the sky, finding nooks and crannies within the thick blackness to push up against, break, split. I stepped out.

I am at the local high school. It's 3 A.M., I won't be able to sleep, and I figure I might as well get the photos developed. I went and got a key from the sheriff yesterday. I'd rather not do it during school hours. It's a small school, four hallways crisscrossed and stacked on top of each other. The darkroom sits in the basement, down a flight of stairs in the center of the school, next to the art classroom and the generator. I can't tell if the low buzz I'm hearing is coming from the generator or not.

I have more photos than I thought I took. I gingerly lay the first round of them in the liquid, and then, under the red light, I begin to write notes for my formal report. I have been given a videocamera as well, which I am to use to compile a total preliminary report before attempting to live in the Foyer for about a week. This is, to me, farfetched; how am I supposed to create an accurate report without that experience? But what Uncle Sam says goes. It's a shame about his requirement of secrecy. This would all make such a wonderful book.

Another round of photos, dunked in shimmering red. The first set to dry. They come out well; I mark the ones which I think the higher-ups will find interesting. I sit back down. I find myself staring at the crimson bulb. It expands and contracts, pushes out of its cage, meaty fingers hungrily exploring the painted-across brick. I take out my wallet. Look through its pictures, blinking, headached.

"These are some wonderful pictures."

I nearly jump out of my skin. It's an old man, dressed in faded blue denim. A dripping mop in one hand, bag of loose paper wrapped around his shoulder. It's the janitor. The school janitor. He is inspecting one of the drying photos, a picture of Francis, looking below the camera.

"Thank you." My voice shakes. He is tall, svelte. His head is bowed to accommodate the small size of the darkroom; his back hunches angularly. He cranes over to me. He is wearing a facemask. It moves, slightly, as he speaks.

"Do you know who is in this photo?" He holds up the picture of Francis.

"Yes, that's a – it's a friend of mine."

"They look quite like you."

"Why are you wearing a mask?" I ask.

"Asbestos. You didn't know? The upstairs, it's leaking out."

My palms open up, sweat adhesive to the photo I'm holding.

"You should be fine. You haven't been upstairs, have you?"

"The ground floor or second floor?"

"Both. Either."

I get up to retrieve this round of pictures and soak the final ones. As I'm hanging them, the neck snakes his head closer to me.

"What's a big city guy like you doing in the U.P., eh?"

I'm tense. "Oh, you know. This and that."

He eyes my wallet. Alights on my badge.

“Oh, CIA stuff? Look at you, man. Lotta crazy stuff going on these days, yeah. Good for you. What a gig.”

“Yeah. Pays the bills,” I say.

“I guess I shouldn’t press more about it, with you havin’ ta be all hush-hush and everything. I’ll leave ya be.” The head slithers back into shadow.

“What is your goal?” It said, mop sloshing across the floor.

“What?”

An empty pause. Red eyes in the dark. The mop keeps sloshing.

“What do you want from this?”

“I don’t know. What? What do you mean?” I look down at my photos.

“Do you think it will end well?”

A low, low buzz.

As I hurry out of the school, shirt pulled up over my face, I see the janitor again. He is pudgier than I thought, mop working away at the floor below the trophy case. He’s taken off his mask.

David C. Goldberg

2/15/69 Incursion Personal Notes

The next few incursions went much the same as the second one. There was a lot of conversation with Francis, some amount of exploration, and no insight into (or access to) the structures the entities had built. There were many things of note that I learned, most of which will be covered in the preliminary film report, but some I'd like to touch on here.

Francis' English is getting extraordinarily good. His grammar is sometimes strange, and I am of course teaching him new words all of the time, but his ability to pick up on meanings from context(?) seems to be very very sharp. He uses words I'm not sure I've taught him, sometimes.

Their little town keeps changing rapidly. It's still one street, but their structures are becoming less overtly stone, patterned, weaker, splintered. The grays are seeming less dour, more vibrant. They have something like porches, now, and they sit out on them. The people keep shrinking in size, and their skin has become tubbier, more curved. Francis' skin is beautiful. This is strange to me.

One has opened a shop. He sells tools for a game that is played there.

The light has not strobed again in my presence, nor has the sky gone red. The one time I was ushered into a structure (all lights had been turned off or closed, so I was unable to see anything), there seemed to have possibly been some sort of weather event, perhaps that same enveloped red sky. I was not allowed to go outside and check.

I hear sounds from inside the structures, sometimes. Eating, perhaps. As far as I can tell, they do not eat in our traditional way – the facemasks (which seem to be a part of their skin) would preclude this in any case. These sounds seem to contradict that, though.

I have not heard their singing again. When I inquired about it, Francis quieted me again, hand over my mouth. His eyes became hostile and blank.

No one would look directly into my camera, which surprised me. They do not tend to look into my eyes, opting instead for the head of my flashlight. The camera, looking more like a flashlight than an eye, in my estimation, should register to them as a point of visual contact. It did not. In fact, their eyes are becoming less bright, and their torso lights and arm lights are beginning to subsume into their new skin.

David C. Goldberg
Film Report Script

Beyond the Paulding Light, there lies a gray and black wasteland filled with rubble and glassy floors, populated only by a strange, humanlike race of gray folk. These gray beings reside here, in this little encampment. They construct these structures for some intermittent weather event, taking shelter during this wasteland's harsh storms.

Here we see Francis, the leader of this small tribe, playing a game involving scratching the rock which blankets the floor of this place. As you can see, he communicates with his eyes, blinking to tell the others of his success. However, after spending some time with me, he began to be able to speak English quite proficiently. Indeed, during my last visit, he and his friends were communicating occasionally in English. This was for my benefit; they are very welcoming hosts.

Despite this, they are very secretive. I was not allowed into their abodes. They lead private lives, not to be trifled with by outsiders, and while welcoming, are distrustful.

This is the only tribe, Francis tells me. There have been other tribes in the past. It is not clear how many or how much their population has shrunk, but this is the only known population of these creatures. They hadn't been friendly with the other tribes, when they had existed, it seems.

They are cyclical beings, as you can see here. Francis has changed; it is the next night, and he is shorter, paler. All lost some of their naturally emitted light over the course of this past week, and hunched over slightly more. Moved slower. Their living place changes too. You see here how it moved from a scattered camp to a religious flanking of the light to the way it sits now, a circle of structures starting at the light.

This stems from their nomadic lifestyle. Francis keeps telling me about "the move", preparing for the move, getting ready for the next thing. They do what we would think as settling in when they are preparing to move, though. Moving from tent to house. Perhaps this movement is based on the weather, and this settling in is necessitated by that. Once they move, you will see them revert back to their grayish, tall, indistinguishable forms. You see now two of them watching the sky to the North. They do this often.

I have never seen them build any of these structures you're seeing now, or add onto them. These structures, when built, seem to extend out into the wasteland, as you can see. They do claim to have built them. I have seen their bodies change slightly firsthand. You see here Francis' eyes change shape and size in front of me. The larger bodily changes seem to again be private affairs.

They do not seem to eat in the traditional sense, or if they do it is an exceedingly private matter. One may hear extremely gruesome gnashing sounds from inside their houses if one listens well enough, but I have not been able to catch a glimpse of the cause of this sound. A potentially dangerous unknown.

There is no discernable familial dynamic, and the structures in which they take rest in seem to matter not; there is no sense of ownership over one or the other, and I have the impression that most of them are connected. I have no sense of their reproductive methods or capabilities, or how to distinguish between their males and females. There are no children about. You see two entities here, filmed from afar, holding hands with each other. They connect through their arms, but it is more complete than a simple hand-hold; they seem to enmesh with one another. They do this with anyone in the tribe.

Francis buys a game stick from the shop in town. This is a recent development, the shop.

Here, you may listen to a recording I made before coming face to face with them. During this, they held hands in this way all together, in a full circle. The tribe acts as the family unit, with no smaller cells within it. This singing is potentially a religious ritual, related to the Paulding Light and their movement and cycles. This would be the focus of my research in my longer incursion. It is impossible to know where their organs to sing or talk reside; not behind these masks you see, as those are, contrary to what you may think, part of their skin.

They do not feel pain in the same way as us. Here they are, throwing rocks at one another, another game.

I pull back into the motel after mailing my film and report off. Tomorrow, Uncle Sam willing, I will begin my extended stay in the Foyer. The frog-ish owner, clad in a corduroy shirt, corduroy pants, and too-small eyeglasses, squints at me.

“Didn’t you just check in?” His voice is round, crackling.

“No; I’ve been out all day.”

“You said you lost your key.”

I pull out the key ring from my pocket, walk towards the counter. It’s there, in its place between my apartment and car key.

“I’ve got it right here. What do you mean?”

He takes the key in his hand, gingerly.

“Ah, probably just an old man’s bad memory. Someone else, I bet.”

“Someone else.” I walk up to my room, at a clip.

A suited figure stands in the hallway. My height, holding a mop. The Cloroxed walls glimmer, dripping, seeping. It’s a wonder the floor isn’t soaked. A mirror, on the far end of the hallway, displays my face, the back of his head, infinite, repeated.

He turns. Paper slicks to the walls, censored reports and interminable jargon. I can hear my own lungs, ballooned, constricted squeals. An awful smell. I cover my face with my hand. My head is pounding; my eyelids pull themselves shut so tight they must be trying to burst my eyes open. Crimson invades this space of marooned blackness, poking and prodding at my retinas.

“Are you alright, son?” The hotel owner’s voice worms into my head, sneaking through the eardrum, sliding away the piercing pain.

I open my eyes. I’m on the ground, curled up; the hallway is ordinary, dry, there is no man or mirror. On the far end sits a few Coca-Cola vending machines. The corduroy rubs against my shoulder.

“Yes. Sorry. Sorry. I’m—”

“I’ll bring you some tea, alright? Come on, here’s your room.”

My door, unlocked.

David C. Goldberg

2/18/69 Incursion Personal Notes

I was suited up, examined, given military rations for the week. There would be tremors at midnight every night, helping me keep track of how many days had passed during my stay; they would release a veritable blast of ELF waves on the last day in order to ensure I knew it was time to exit.

I stopped at my usual diner to get coffee on the way to the Light. There was a folk band playing there. Tunes from the mines and trees. As I left, they started up an upbeat tune, set to the words of Service's The Cremation of Sam McGee. I paused in the doorway, smiled.

As I pulled into the small lot off the highway, I had the distinct impression of being watched. There were a few more cars than usual here, teenage couples trying to get glimpses of the light, maybe, more government vans than I was used to. I dug my tent out of my trunk and walked through the brush to the little clearing where the light became visible.

It was more pronounced today, more frequent. I checked in with the folks manning the station. They briefed me again on the timeline of my visit and gave me some devices to do some tests they wanted done on the entities and their environment. I heard the low buzz of a frequency blast, priming it for entry, and stepped into the light, laden down with a backpack and duffel.

It was windy. It struck me that I had not before felt wind here. The ground, still concreted and hard, was waving, almost like a field of grass. Surrounding me were the structures built by the entities. They extended in every direction, spiraling and sprawling out into the wasteland. Before, they had stayed near the encampment, contained within the reach of the Paulding Light. Francis had told me he and his friends had built them, but now, at this scale, that seemed impossible. Perhaps they, too, were living, and grew once built.

I couldn't see the Light at all times during my approach, but those pole-lamps were scattered about, horizontal and vertical, connecting the dark maze, guiding me towards the encampment. The structures were different, too; planked, wooden, patterned. My footsteps created creaks and splinters in the flooring. The wind pushed itself through the longhouses' winding corridors and the empty streets between them.

After a few long hours of pressing through its crisscrossed membrane, I arrived at the town. As I had grown closer, the structures began to become more spread out, gridlike. I saw plants for the first time, or at least things that looked like plants: trees dotted the landscape. What was happening to this place? Was the whole world here cyclical?

The wind blew a slithery mess past my face. I did not get the chance to study it.

"Hello, David." Inches in front of me stood Francis, further changed. He was now my height, eyes level with mine. He still did not look directly at me, but his eyes were dimmer, and I could look into them without pain. He held my arms, enmeshed his pale whitish skin into mine; he was clad in a breezy button-up, which I had given him, and slacks. A small ridge bisected his

face down the middle. His skinmask now moved when he spoke, and cold air struck me as he continued on.

“You are here to stay for a long time now.”

“Yes, Francis, that’s right. I’ve brought my own tent. I know you do not wish for me to stay in one of your houses.”

“No, no. We have made accommodations. Come.”

I followed closely behind him, one arm still entrenched in his. As we walked, I noticed that their houses had slanted roofs, now, and larger windows. Some were still built of the groundstone, but some, like the outskirts, were something like wood. Trees adorned the top of the houses, the spaces in between them. The lived-in ones were no longer connected to each other. Some nascent suburbia. Is this where cultures go? The Light had a rope railing leading up to it, with plaques adorning each switchback. Like some museum artifact.

He led me to a thatched house, one side open to the street. As I walked, wary eyes tracked me from windows. In my new room, there was nothing except stone flooring, a window out to the back. I sighed, detached myself from him.

“Thank you, Francis.” I began to set up my tent in this exposed veranda.

“This will close down for night and storms. You will stay in during this time.”

“Oh! Wonderful. Why has everything shifted once again? Your houses seem to be expanding outwards.”

“We must be ready. Very soon.”

“Okay.”

They had some sort of houseparty, a gathering in the backyard of one of their abodes. I mingled as best I could; they all spoke English well at this point and were communicating less and less with their lights, I assume for my benefit. They all had come to resemble Francis, becoming pale, stouter, and mushier. Some were becoming more feminine, and some more masculine. A sexual cycle, then; becoming humanlike to mate, and then reverting?

They spoke about the move with great enthusiasm, some with nervousness. I could never gain specifics on it. They were, in contrast to previous visits, very excited to speak with me; I found myself answering more questions than I asked. They surveyed me.

There was a moment when all crowded around one, who drew rightwards eddying spirals in the rock. They all looked at it, understanding something I did not. A written language, potentially! I took out my notebook immediately and began to copy them down.

“Have you not brought your camera back?”

“No, I’ve finished my film, sent it to my boss.”

“What did you make it for?”

“To tell others about you.”

“Ah! Wonderful.”

A tremor hit the ground. Francis eyed me. "Is it not time for you to go?"
"No. A more major tremor will tell me when to leave this time."
"Why do you follow it so closely? Whenever there is a tremor, you leave."
"I have to, to get back."
"Why?"

There came a time when the entities began to file inside of one of the houses, leaving the remnants of this strange gathering outside (except for the rocks with the language on them, which they took inside). I, of course, was not allowed in, and Francis escorted me to my new home. I sat down, and with a hurried goodbye, a wall came down in front of me. I was stuck in here for however long they wanted me to be. I brought out some rations, but was not hungry. Fell asleep on the rock.

Burning thatch and furnace roar, the first time I've been warm.

David C. Goldberg
2/19/69 Incursion Personal Notes

I awoke to the grating of the wall moving, opening up my little cubicle. The silhouette of Francis greeted me.

"Hello, David. How are you doing?"

I felt as if I was wading through waves of silk, consciousness slipping through my fingers every time I grasped it. I sneezed. He looked a little taken aback

"I'm alright." I gestured at my nose. "Probably just allergies, from your new trees. Why have those appeared?"

"We are preparing for the move."

He wouldn't elaborate.

I didn't have breakfast. I haven't eaten or drank anything since being in here; I haven't felt hungry or thirsty, and my body was still running at full capacity. It stunned me that I hadn't noticed this in my previous incursions. This was phenomenal, a grand scientific discovery. A place where one only had to sleep to sustain themselves.

We spent most of the morning speaking, other entities occasionally flowing in and out of our conversation. We spoke of their customs, my rituals. He asked as many questions as I did. I got a few of those looks again, this morning. Distrust had always been a factor in my interactions here, but never this kind of staring.

Left to my own devices, I wandered over to the Light and its switchbacked plaques. The first plaque, at the beginning of the path, displayed an image. Their little suburb, maybe. Warped,

growing, like some black vine. The next showed a hazmat suit, growing black, interconnected vines out of its pores and openings. The next, two gigantic red eyes in the sky staring at a group of tall, gray beings. The next, up by the Light, showed a reddish-purple being, operating the light with his hand, turning it towards a group of ramshackle buildings.

The last, a storm, ravaging a field full of reddish-purple beings in fetal positions, struggling to move, an awful tapestry of carnage.

I examined the Light itself. It had some sort of apparatus, similar in appearance to a weather vane or something. It pulsed, slightly, moved under my touch. I tried to push into it.

“Time for the midday gathering.” Francis had appeared, silently, at my shoulder. I reluctantly went with him.

It became windy in the afternoon(?). I roamed the street, anxious to talk to somebody, but most were sheltered away in their houses. Francis was away, doing ‘something important’. I settled near the side of a house, sitting against the outside wall. Waiting for somebody to speak to. The darkness pushed into me, clasping my tired torso to the wall.

Something caught my eye, scampering across the terrain towards the labyrinthine outskirts. I jumped up and followed, stealing a few glimpses around to make sure no one saw me leave. I didn’t know why. It had appeared from behind the house, possibly out the back door, and was halfway across the backyard.

It disappeared into one of the longhouses on the outskirts. I disappeared into the same entrance moments after, frantically trying to follow its dry scraping along the ground. After a few dozen rushed seconds, stretched elastic, I grabbed it, stopping its escape around another corner.

It was surprisingly light, and it wasn’t moving. It wasn’t living. It was almost translucent, a yellowish tint put on everything seen through it, and it was as large as I was. It had been being puppeteered by the wind, made to dance through these tunnels by some mischievous god.

As I examined it closer and pulled it together, I realized that it had the outline of arms, legs, a head. It was slimy, flaky, falling apart ever so slightly. I could have put it on and it would have coated me entirely, if not for the neat slice down the middle of the front. It was almost like a snake’s shed skin, a husk of a human body. Or an entity’s body. Do they shed? Is that how their cycle, their change, works? Is the reason I wasn’t allowed in their houses that this process is in fact very private? It had been thrown out a window of the house, towards the labyrinth.

When I came back to the town, a few were walking around. They had noses.

“I’ll stay in with you this night. I do not wish for you to be lonely.”

“That’s not necessary, Francis. I’m quite used to staying alone.”

“I insist, David.” He sat down, legs folded over one another. He looked remarkably human. His now-dimmed white eyes wandered up into mine for the first time. This new connection felt strange.

“Alright, then.”

“You must sleep, yes?”

I unfurled my sleeping bag, set up my tent on the hard rock of the place.

“Yes. You will be watching, I assume.”

“I will afford you whatever privacy you need.” He sneezed with his new nose. His mask stayed dry.

The wind whistles deep, cleaning out the bowels of this hallowed place. Everything is doused, chilled clean through to the bone. Raving corpses, sliding down mountainsides, a massive

Francis stands over me, staring intently into my eyes. The roar outside is deafening. I cannot tell if it is wind or not. The door begins to grind open.

“It is time to move, soon. Come with me now.” He grips my hand in his, his slender fingers enmeshing into my hand, forcing my cooperation. My supplies are left behind, and I follow him closely, a rumpled button-down and slacks now adorning both of us.

The street is a strobed, pulsating whirlpool, houses twisting and turning, growing and shrinking piecewise in the wind. The Light has grown in size, assaulting us with the ferocity of its strobing, and behind it I catch a glimpse of that crimson beast, pushing and prodding its way into the atmosphere, bleeding the sky red.

People are scampering through the street, far more than I have seen yet, forcing on rubber gloves and boots as they run outside, towards the Light. I only catch glimpses of their preparation until Francis slams me into the wall of an alleyway, swiftly detaching his hand from mine. He looks into my eyes.

“Stay here. Right here. Do not move.” He slides away. I grope at pockets for my flashlight, finding it tucked into my belt. I look to my right. A hunched, broken man, leaning on a splayed, dry mop. Staring at me. I turn my flashlight off, frantically gripping at the wall behind me for some sort of purchase. I find none.

To my left, the whirlwind. The janitor takes a step closer, neck extending forward, limbs undulating, changing, moving itself as if it were a wire puppet in the hands of a too-raucous four year old. Sweat roils over my pimpled back, and I dive into the street, making a dead, barefoot sprint for the nearest house, arms up over my head. I am battered by the winds, shoved by a few others with more purpose to their gaits. I trip. Mud splatters on my body. Mud?

In a few excruciating seconds I am back up and at the door, slamming my body through its thin wood, crashing onto the floor of this alien home. My shirt rips, my back splinters. I take the stairs two at a time. I stand at the top of this flight of stairs, head whipping around, arms shaking. I look downstairs. The door is closed. No one is coming in to clean this house.

The stairwell is shiny, a new, nice wood varnish coating it and its elegant railing. Around me are frames, people in them. A family photo. A man in fatigues, nicks on his chin from a bad shave. Down the hallway, a rocking chair, a mirror. It is the picture perfect suburban house. Out of the window, I see the outskirts’ longhouses begin to be ripped from their bases, or perhaps

transform; they coagulate into some sea of black and gray, oily harbingers of this strange apocalypse.

I lurch down the hallway, towards the mirror. I'm still gripping tight to my flashlight, and it glances off of the mirror, kaleidoscoping into hundreds of other reflectors. More dead skin. Shedded, yellowed shells, increasingly human-shaped, line the floor, the walls, spill out the windows. Molts towards humanity. It smells awful. I pull my shirt up over my mouth.

Vomit in the bathroom. Sit on the rocking chair in the baby blue room with a crib in it. My stomach churns, whirlpools.

"You have been warned repeatedly not to go into our homes."

"What did you expect me to do, Francis?"

"You were to stay, as I asked. You cannot remain here."

"You know I have no place to go."

"Neither do we. Leave, now, before the others find you."

Francis' mask was gone, an uncanny, viscerally wrong mouth spitting these words at me. He would not touch me, would not look me in the eye.

"I thought now was the time for the move. What do you mean, you have no place to go?"

"The move is happening. Your part in it is finished. Thank you for your work. You must leave."

"Francis, please. I have so many questions. I can go back to my tent. I won't be a bother."

"That is not my name, David. Leave."

I've made a small fire out of the remaining outskirts houses. Trying to stay warm.

Five days left, I think, until I can go home.

The air is calm. The wind, since last night, has been still. I've been wandering, eyes over my shoulder, coughing and cramping and limping. The maze doesn't end.

I'm waiting for the next tremor, hoping it will give me some directionality concerning my exit. I don't know when it will be; last night's was lost in storm or in sleep. I've lost track of which way the gateway lies. My bare feet are breaking open, calluses forming strangely, splinters worming through my toes. I only have my flashlight and my wallet. I don't even have my notes. A useless trip. My hands are cold.

My wallet's pictures of my parents, my childhood home, my past girlfriends, don't help. The Fifties. Past lives.

My flashlight flickers. Batteries are in my bag, back there. With him.

Huskies, round in a ring, Howl out their woes to the homeless snows.

I round a corner, a tremor later, and there is a clearing within the maze. Its ground is soft, grassy, and its bulbous, oil-slicked translucent roof is held up by a few trees, growing into and through the walls. Veins.

A few flowers mark the clearing, gridlike, and it has a slight rise in the middle. A small knoll. I sit, at the top of it, for a moment. If I am to die, why not here? At least, a room for sleep. I lay down, and my head hits something hard.

It's a rock, glassy, peeking out from belowground. I start to brush the dirt on top of it away. My own face shines back at me. As I brush more away, I realize it's some sort of lens, set onto goggles. Minutes of shoveling reveal something resembling a hazmat suit, grayish and gauzy. Folded in on itself.

A rotting man lays inside, barely visible through its goggles and facemask. When I shine my light on the goggles, they reflect back, white-bright pinpricks. Reflections of Francis.

The smell is awful.

I dig more. At least a dozen people, sent in here by the same people I've been sent in by. It's hard to say when. All in these gray hazmats, hooded, masked, goggled. Covered now by dirt and trees, flowers adorning their makeshift graves.

The grass and dirt grows back, within minutes of excavation. Time for me to go.

I have been catching glimpses of myself, in the maze. Moving through streets and alleyways, weaving in and out of the longhouses. Perhaps this place is circular in a deeper sense than just its shape. Perhaps I am going insane.

Two tremors, three tremors into my stay here. Maybe. I see someone (myself?) rounding a corner with a mop, leaving a trail of bleached sludge. I break out into a run. I see and hear him occasionally, enough to stay on his tail, following the mired trail, panting, for at least an hour. I see my face, in mirrors and corridors.

I do not catch up.

I've been out of the maze for a while now. Wandering the empty wastes. I gave up trying to keep the maze, my path to the gateway, in sight. I won't make it back. In front of me lies the only natural topographical feature I have seen in this place, a hill, almost a mountain, made up of reddish stone and some rubbery purple. I begin to climb it.

The top is a plateau dotted with small valleys and hills. From this vantage, the rest of this mountain range is visible, almost indistinguishably similar plateaued mountains extending east as far as the eye can see. Covering this expanse and the sky over it is a shimmering, yellowish kaleidoscope, a mirage of some sort, blowing in the wind. It is beautiful. Like the Northern Lights, or something. I continue forward.

A few hours pass, and I arrive at the highest point on the plateau. There's a grand slit in this bit of it, a slimy chasm, skin of the mountain slightly parted to reveal dripping, seeping indoor walls. It smells awful. Just below the lip of the chasm sit a row of parted stones, perfectly square, huge, so ordered that they seemed placed.

There are two giant tunnels beyond the chasm. Beyond that, two saucered pools. I originally thought they were liquid, but upon walking into them, I realize that they're gooey, membraned. I look closer, my waning flashlight flicking on to satisfy my curiosity.

These are eyes. Gigantic, twenty feet in diameter at least, looking dead into the black sky. Those two tunnels are a nose, the chasm, a mouth, its rocks, teeth. I run to the tip of the nose and look down. Indeed, a bipedal giant, dead and gone, lays before me.

How interesting.

The yellowish mirage, I soon find, is more dead skin. I walked straight into it, expecting that it was just some trick of the light. It's the same texture and consistency as the stuff from the town, just much, much larger. Giant-sized remnants of Francis. As I exit the mountain range, going South now, I wade through this skin. Its shimmering, golden grandiosity shrinks as I move through the day. I follow its trail, going from one shedding to the next. In the distance, another storm ravages the land. From this vantage, I can see the spiral sprawl of their suburbia, writhing and dodging and sliding through itself.

The Northern Lights have seen queer sights
But the queerest thing they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge,

When I come to the last shedding, now only slightly bigger than me, I hear voices. Singing? I continue towards them, cautiously, and find myself greeted with a wall. Looking around it, I see a government encampment, filled with humans, flanneled, dressed in the clothing of the U.P., walking back and forth, attending to their tasks. One has a videocamera, interviewing someone. Suburbia beyond. The gateway back to Paulding in between. I crumple.

A badged man in a clean, ironed suit strolls up to me, picks me up off the ground, dusts me off, looks me straight in my eyes. His eyes reflect mine, retinas in place, sky-blue, piercing, perfect.

"Mr. Goldberg! So good to see you again. You alright? You seem shaken."

I do not recognize him. My mouth works. Nothing.

He bodaciously gestures at the crowd behind him, milling about, packing up. Smiles wide, putting his new, now-perfect teeth on full display.

It's my face, smiling at me. My hair, combed perfect, my thin torso, my teeth, my tongue, my arm on my shoulder. His eye twinkles, and his hand slips into mine, shaking it strongly, enmeshing into it ever so slightly. Pulsing, regretfully.

"Why didn't you say they were just men, old boy?"

FEB 25 1969

MEMORANDUM TO: Sanguine Project Lead

SUBJECT: Final Incursion Report

The incursion was unsuccessful, as far as these things go. The entities proved to be threats to our security. Dangerous. Aggressive. Savage. I escaped by the skin of my teeth, with aid from a storm that seems to have taken all of the entities with it. I fear that the team you sent in, whom I met once relations fell apart, was not so lucky.

I look forward to our meeting, where I can share the details.

David C. Goldberg

The population of Paulding, increased by a few dozen.
Sam McGee, back in Tennessee.