



Dazhan

Secrets of the Cave People

3rd Edition



Douglas Dunn

ESCONDIDO, CALIFORNIA: Word Wizards®

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3rd Edition

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Also by Douglas Dunn: **Extro • Dynamics**, a non-fiction presentation of personal and social strategies for making desires and values work together instead of working against each other. A non-fiction adaptation of principles introduced in the parable **Dazhan**, with extensive analysis and examples that can be applied in our daily lives.

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Others' comments about **Dazhan** for the 1988 edition

Titles or descriptions of individuals are those applicable when the comments were made.

IN NORTH AMERICA:

Continue with your vital work, because we must change people's outlooks before we can change the world. Your 'pleasurable' approach to compassion makes it all the more possible.

— Leo F. Buscaglia, Ph.D.

Author of "Love," "Personhood," "Loving Each Other" and other books and articles on compassion

Reading *Dazhan* is a delight. The story is so engrossing you don't even realize how much you've learned until you're through. This is self-improvement in a very tasty form.

— Steve Snyder

President, co-founder, Live & Learn

I find the book, lectures and warmth of *Dazhan* to be highly stimulating and a determining factor in furthering students' involvement in compassionate behavior, e.g., working in special projects with the homeless, recovering alcoholics, senior citizens, and so on.

— Gerald L. Hershey, Ph.D.

Chairperson, Psychology Dept., Fullerton College

Want to learn an easy way to enjoy the people in your life? Even strangers? Even 'difficult' people? ... *Dazhan* is a coined word for "compassionate joy." It is also the process which leads to experiencing appreciation and pleasure in sharing life with the other humans around us. ... The simple Steps in the Practice of *Dazhan* were easy to apply. And they **do work!** They are clearly explained and a variety of examples are given. I tried it. ... The result? A turning point....

The whole package: introduction, adventure, summary, commentary and the examples — all were what I needed. ... I usually consume growth and self-help books like so many bowls of popcorn ... [but] this book has been valuable to me. If you want more joy, empathy and compassion in your life, I recommend you read it and **try it!**

— Jean Mountaingrove

Book review in "Friend's Review," Sept. 1990

Two very intriguing books in one ... The fiction shows, the non-fiction explains. A trustworthy blending of two different forms of definition ... The detailed fictional examination is in the best tradition of superbly crafted utopias. The equally detailed nonfictional side is simple and profound and very clear ... It works.

— The Book Reader

Book Review, March-April, 1990

You may enjoy this interesting book on two levels: First, it is an entertaining story ... on an entirely different level, this book offers a new way of looking at our world and relationships with people ... with practical suggestions for self-improvement.

— Arizona Networking News
Book Review, Winter 1989-1990

A refreshing book. The story is a nice fantasy, but the concepts presented are uniquely appropriate — something we can do as individuals...

— Adell Leslie Shay
Program Administrator, Learning Tree University

IN THE PHILIPPINES:

...It is not far-fetched that I would rank *Dazhan* next only to the Bible in reviving Man's dying hopes and beliefs.

...*Dazhan* is a loud, unabashed, eloquent protest against the materialism, violence, terror, perversions of a technological society — a world of things, not of people.

The author's sensitive eye and penetrating mind and soul have perceived the external world as a creation of high technology which sadly neglects the full and balanced development of Man.

...*Dazhan* is both a symbol and a literary monument to a subject on morality without moralizing. Books in the genre of *Dazhan* seldom appear in our literary scene.

Dazhan is must reading for people buried in the mire of high technology and materialistic philosophy.

— Benjamin M. Montejo, award-winning writer
Book review "The Freeman," Cebu City, Philippines 12-31-88.

Dazhan can be considered as a modern day classic, simply presented in a fantasy/adventure story but conveying a powerful message that attaining full happiness can be possible by being compassionate about others ...

Dazhan is more than a story, it is a technique for how to overcome our conflicts and frustrations... a marvelous book!

— Elizabeth Y. Blardony,

Guidance Counselor, University of San Carlos, Cebu City (Released on behalf of University)

Acknowledgements

Every “single parent” understands the delicate balance of trying to pursue career objectives without denying needed attention to a little one. It is with special fondness that I express appreciation to my daughter, JoAnn, for the closeness and affection she has shared so freely for the many years I raised her alone as a single parent prior to finding a lifetime companion. I have tried to respond in the same way, without sacrificing either domestic or professional responsibilities. With concern for my inadequacies, I am grateful to JoAnn for a child’s love, which sees beyond these shortcomings, and encourages efforts toward continual improvement. Now that she is all grown up and a mother herself, she has also become my supportive friend who continues to provide encouragement and ideas.

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There are many others who have contributed much to this project. I have made various attempts at compiling lists, but in the interest of space and in fear of overlooking anyone, it seems more appropriate to express

appreciation to *all* the friends, relatives, and professionals whose input has been so valuable. I can honestly say that every person willing to share their ideas helped to influence the final product. However, there are several whose special and exceptional contributions require special mention, in particular: Jim Newman for energy, and enthusiasm in sharing the project with others and arranging programs and activities; Dr. Gerald Hershey for support in academic circles; Julie Lilly and Bill Belote for assistance with strategies for public relations and promotion; Kim Watkins for many suggestions toward improving and refining the presentation of the message; and Mark Neary for support, advice and arranging many of the other personal and professional contacts whose influence was so valuable in completing and refining this work.

Finally, the most special acknowledgement must be expressed to *you, the reader*, through whose consciousness these little blurbs of ink on paper are made meaningful as thoughts and ideas. Best wishes for enjoying this book, and in discovering the happy feelings of **Dazhan**.

Preface

Each year when spring comes, especially if the preceding winter has been particularly miserable, I have a hard time keeping myself indoors. One bright spring morning, as my twin brother, Dennis, and I were tossing baseballs back and forth at the neighborhood park, we stopped to watch some little-leaguers taking infield practice from their coach. There is a special pleasure in watching children play: watching their childish enthusiasm and the development of adult personalities in embryo.

While watching, I noticed that one of the players, a hopeful but awkward young kid on second base, was having a pretty hard time. And the worse things got on second base, the “tougher” the coach got. With each mistake, this ten-year-old “Babe Ruth” got more frustrated, and the coach got more determined to make him learn it *right*. Finally, I overheard the kid mumble to the player next to him at shortstop, “Y’know, this isn’t as much fun as I thought it would be.” Apparently I wasn’t the only one to overhear this remark, because the coach suddenly stopped and looked up, right toward second base. “I think I heard someone complaining about *fun*. Baseball’s not supposed to be *fun* — it’s *hard work*! After you learn to do it *right*, then maybe you can have some fun.”

It bothered me to hear the coach talk that way, and I hope the boy didn’t grow up believing what he was told. Sure, it’s great for kids to practice and learn to play well and enjoy performing skillfully. But the real purpose is still more for making life in a hard world a little more pleasant than for producing flawless playing-machines. Baseball *is* supposed to be fun — if it has to teach them anything, it should be how to get along and enjoy doing things together. It just isn’t right to make a chore out of it.

Unfortunately, this attitude is not confined just to the baseball diamond. Take a look at the world around, and you will see that we often work hard for difficult goals without considering, often without even knowing, how we may be helping or hindering the Good Life. Our whole cultural ethic has developed this way. Modern technology, for example, has advanced far beyond the wildest dreams of even a few years ago. We have developed more fantastic creations; we can perform more unbelievable miracles; we can think more profound thoughts and discuss more involved questions than the great minds of yesteryear would have dreamed about even in fantasy. Yet, where has it gotten us? Is life in our twentieth-century technocracy really any more pleasant or happy than it

was, say, in pre-Western Samoa or Hawaii? Our modern society has also developed more fantastic problems, performed more unbelievable destruction, and ended up with more ulcers, headaches, and tension than even the most sadistic minds of old would have cared to conceive. We have been able to construct from the raw materials of Mother Earth a fantastic network of gadgets and devices — often at the cost of great destruction to the very resources of Nature from which they were spawned. Yet, if Mother Earth strikes back with something as insignificant as a quivering of her crusty surface or a swirling gust of whirlwind, our “great” creations crumble, while something no less than a delicate bird’s nest may survive. What is the real worth of all our great creations?

The problem is essentially the same as with the little-league sergeant-coach: the goal has been to improve *things* rather than *people* — to upgrade the game itself without regard for the player. And even though our obsessions started out with a better life in mind (a game to have fun with; conveniences to make life a little easier), we have made the things themselves so important that our values have become mixed-up, and the real goals are obscured. The means are too often confused with the ends, at the expense of both. Thus, in our production-oriented society, technology and achievement have increased at a tremendous rate (which certainly is no problem, if priorities do not become confused or social values obscured), while the level of actual human happiness has remained static. Look around. In many ways, the human race has very little of true value to show, for all its “success” and “achievement” in producing more and better merchandise.

One of the questions I have been most often asked since the first edition of **Dazhan** came out in the spring of 1981, is, “Where did ‘*Dazhan*’ come from?”

During my late teen-age years I was sorting out my own values and belief system and exploring the many ideas offered by the great religions, philosophies, and social movements of the world. I was trying to find the best of each, and draw it into my own emerging awareness of values.

One night, as I was relaxing in front of the TV set after a hard day, the eleven o’clock news came to an end, but I was feeling just lazy enough that I remained sprawled out on the sofa and didn’t bother to turn off the set or even change channels. I just lay there as the late movie rolled onto the screen, watching with only partial interest the early plot development.

Since I really wasn’t paying close attention, I missed a lot of what was going on at the beginning of the movie, but after a while I looked up to see that a small group of people — some who knew each other and some who didn’t — had gotten themselves stranded together on a mysterious island somewhere in the middle of the ocean. At this point, my interest was stimulated somewhat, and I watched a little more closely. The plot, as it continued to develop, was all about how these people worked

together to build shelter, gather food, and eventually leave the island. It was about the problems of survival and social order that they faced — problems which they were unable to solve as individuals, but which they could eventually overcome by working in cooperation with one another.

When I finally crawled into bed, I lay between the sheets staring at the ceiling. Only moments before, I had been too tired to even turn the TV off, and now I was haunted by a strange sleeplessness as I reviewed in my mind the scenes from the movie.*

During this time when I had been giving a great deal of thought to various concepts of human value and social interaction, such ideas gave me the opportunity to consider the process of social cooperation and its relation to the problems of human happiness: how much better it is for people to work together with mutual give and take for the benefit of all than for them to bicker and quarrel and fight and hate and make no progress whatever. It seemed that, just being practical, it was more sensible for people to get along and avoid the unpleasantness of fussing. In my mind's eye I pictured the very origins of civilization stemming from a few primitive individuals who joined forces to work in unity for the common good, and I concluded that this element of cooperation stands at the very core of social development.

But as my weary mind again fell into sleepiness, I further considered that I am certainly not the first person to be impressed with the great value of this kind of cooperation. Most people acknowledge that as a fundamental truth, and my few thoughts of praise surely added no new contribution. With those thoughts, my tired brain submitted to the demands of sleep.

Yet the direction of my thoughts remained unchanged even in sleep as a haunting dream into my mind. That's all it was — just a vivid dream. But it seemed very real:

I saw myself wandering along on a misty plain, groping through a shroud of fog. I stumbled blindly through the cold, moist air, groping through the clouded mist, and reaching out in confusion for something higher — to lift me above the fog — without really knowing what. And yet, I was not really reaching for a higher *place*, but a higher *feeling*. The thoughts and feelings that had been running through my mind earlier were now finding meaning in this dream.

And I was not alone. There were others, groping and wandering through the fog, lost like myself. In the fog, I reached out past all the other faceless bodies, trying, as were they all, to find something better.

* The movie was *Mysterious Island*, the 1961 Columbia Pictures production based on the novel by Jules Verne.

Suddenly, I felt a firm, warm hand take hold of my outstretched, searching arm. With sureness of direction, it led me forward. My anonymous Friend led me to the slope of a small hill, and drew me with him to its summit.

The little hill extended up out of the fog, and from the top of it I could look out over the fog and I could see, with great clarity, for miles around. The hilltop was sunny and warm and pleasant. After having been mired down in the cold and mistiness of the fog, it was pleasant and beautiful.

I started to say something to my new Friend, but he motioned me to silence, firmly yet gently. He said nothing, but he radiated to me a new feeling of warmth and of close unity. It was this *feeling* that had drawn me up out of the fog. It was an understanding that, as long as I struggled alone, I was stranded in the misty confusion, but that I was able to rise above it only when joined by another.

I realized that all the groping, grasping bodies still down in the valley were like myself. By themselves, they were hopelessly lost, until they could join together and work together to find the Hill. My Friend did not speak, but I understood from him that the name of the little Hill was “Cooperation,” because it could only be found and enjoyed with the guiding help of a fellow human being.

And then my dream became even more intense:

My Friend motioned me to turn around. I turned and saw a huge Mountain towering up from the little Hill. He directed me to go to the top of the Mountain, and I sensed from him that, because the little hill of “Cooperation” is of such great beauty and value to those who come up out of the lonely fog, that very few of those who find the Hill ever feel the need to go beyond it to the great heights of the Mountain. He radiated a countenance that assured me I no longer needed his help, directing me to go alone and find new treasures of feeling at the highest summits of the Mountain — treasures which include all value but which no longer require the active participation of, or dependence on, others.

Somewhat puzzled, I left him and ascended, alone, along a narrow, rocky path. This dreamland climb was long and arduous, with the thirsty heat of a barren landscape in sharp contrast to the cold and damp of the earlier fog or the pleasant beauty of the Hill. I struggled over steep rocks and dry, hot, sweaty, bloody thorn bushes; fending off pain and fatigue with weary purposefulness. I could see why those who had found the comfort of the Hill wouldn’t rush to leave it and face this harsh journey.

Finally, I found my way to the massive summit of this imposing formation. At the top was a beautiful garden, with rocks and ponds and waterfalls, and with rainbows glistening among the trees and ferns and flowers. And, this garden summit afforded a spectacular view. From this highest height, I could see that the fog and the Hill and all the surrounding area were but minor features in a little valley, and from my new

position I could see the *whole world!* I could see *everything!* It was not *just* a mountaintop that I had ascended, but new *perceptions*, synthesized out of all the thoughts and feelings that had been floating around beneath the surface of my conscious mind.

Flowing into my mind was an insight into human social interactions that drew upon bits and pieces of many different ideas, but which — as a whole — was not quite the same as any one of them. It evolved from “cooperation,” but was also different, extending far beyond cooperation in the same way that the beautiful and majestic Mountain dwarfed the little Hill. I was so excited I wanted to scream and shout and tell all the people down in the valley — down in the fog — what I had seen. I wanted them to come up and see it, too.

I could see that this kind of compassion is more than a passive, feel-good celebration of “love” and “peace.” It does feel good and it is love and peace, but more — *it represents real power!* It was this direct *power of practical compassion in action* by which Gandhi brought down the British empire, the greatest empire the world had ever known. It was how Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela brought down centuries-old systems of institutionalized racial injustice. And it was how the families and survivors of the massacre at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, brought down a symbol of hate that others had tried to lower for 54 years, by repaying hatred and violence with love and forgiveness that softened long-hardened hearts. This same power can improve every aspect of our personal, social and productive lives. The *power of practical compassion in action* not only brings personal contentment, happiness and serenity, it also makes our lives better and more successful as it brings goals, values and desires into harmony with each other instead of working against each other.

And then I woke up.

It was 3:30 in the morning, but I jumped out of bed and scribbled down some notes so I would not forget what I had seen and felt. I then realized that my Friend had not been with me at the greatest summit to give me a name for the Mountain. Because it grew out of the Hill of “cooperation,” and encompassed feelings which were related, but with a different, more broadened perspective, I originally called it “Neocooperation” — a *new kind* of cooperation. This was the name used for the concept of “Dazhan” in the early versions of the writing, before I decided to use a fantasy, fictional setting to *show* how it works. For the story, I coined the term “Dazhan” as a word from the language of that fantasy civilization. It is this expanded offshoot from cooperation that I want to share. I still want the people in the foggy valley, and even on the pleasant Hill, to come up and “see the Mountain.”

In one sense **Dazhan** is a fictitious narrative about the cultural shock that arises from an unexpected encounter between two very different

civilizations. One is rich in technological wonders, but is plagued by violence, terror, and social injustice; the other is industrially primitive, but thrives in an advanced, harmonious social order. When the Earth is turned inside out and the cave-people of Enrisa come face to face with the Outside world, both cultures are confronted with strange new wonders. But in a fuller sense, it is about much, much more.

Notes on the publication history of **Dazhan**:

Dazhan was first published in 1981 as a pedagogical novel (allegorical parable), using the format of a fictional fantasy to introduce examples and explanations for how a community of people, though primitive in technology, could be far advanced in terms of living in peaceful harmony with each other.

Following publication, a series of lectures was presented based on the concepts introduced in the story by its characters, but the lectures tended to be primarily non-fiction in nature and less about fantasy than how people can really live by principles that integrate values of compassionate joy with practical needs to have successful careers, enjoy financial and economic stability and security, and enjoy life as contributing members of their communities.

As a result, a revised and expanded second edition was released in 1988 to include an extensive Expanded Explanatory Appendix that presented in extensive detail a presentation of the non-fiction values and techniques of **Dazhan**.

As the non-fiction elements continued to expand, it finally became necessary to simply move them into a book of their own, and thus was born the non-fiction companion to **Dazhan**, *Extro•Dynamics*, which was first released in 1995, and has been extensively updated and expanded for a new 2014 second edition updated the following year, 2015 for a revised third edition.

With the non-fiction presentation now in its own book, we are now releasing a third edition of **Dazhan** that removes the expanded non-fiction commentary entirely, and recommend that readers who wish to pursue that aspect of **Dazhan** pursue their interest by exploring the more extensive discussion in *Extro•Dynamics*.

So, once again, **Dazhan** returns to its origins as a fun, pleasant fantasy as the sole vehicle for introducing values of compassionate joy in what one reviewer described as “self-improvement in a very tasty form.”

Enjoy!

DOUGLAS DUNN

Escondido, California

Dazhan

Secrets of the Cave People

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Chapter One

Darkness

Without warning, the cave began to shake. Starting as a light rumble, it suddenly erupted into powerful jolts of granite in motion. Rocks began to fall. At first, a few pebbles crumbled loose, but then large wedges of granite came crashing down all around. A haze of dust quickly filled the small chamber. The pounding and crashing continued for a long moment. Then, the noise and shaking and blur of dizzying motion ended as abruptly as it had begun.

A quiet stillness settled through the cave. Clouds of silt still swirled in the dusty air, filtering slowly down upon the rocks.

A solitary human form was draped motionless against the uneven granite floor. The sleek contours of his athletic frame lay battered and helpless. The grimy dust settled into his sandy blond hair and on his skin and clothing. He remained oblivious to it all. He just lay there, crushed and broken beneath the rockslide.

After a while, the Form stirred ever so slightly. His eyes fluttered open.

Darrel groaned, and turned his head weakly. He became aware of a throbbing ache resonating through his head and down the left side of his body. Choking on the dusty air, he started to roll slowly over onto his good side, but was abruptly halted by a sharp pain stabbing through his left hand and arm. He felt like screaming but could only manage a feeble whimper.

Falling limp against the cavern floor, he lay helpless in the pall of silence that hung tomb-like over his stony prison. His mind was drawn to the faint sounds of delicate biological rhythms: his labored breathlessness in the dust-filled chamber; the humming and whining of an over-indulged digestive system making new demands; the throbbing ache that pounded against his head and side in time with the pulsing beat of his heart.

He tugged again at his arm, and another sharp pain shot through his body. Groping around with the other hand, he felt his way to his lantern. He turned it on. Good! It wasn't damaged. A gentle beam shone through the swirling clouds of dust that still hung in the air. He drew the light toward himself, revealing several large stones pinning down against his left side.

Rolling onto his good side as far as he could, Darrel drew his legs under himself for leverage and reached out with his good hand to the largest stone. Grimacing against the constant pain, Darrel managed to

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loosen it a little before collapsing in exhaustion. He rested a few moments, and tried again. Little by little he was able to dislodge the larger stones. At length there he had made enough space so he could tenderly slide his arm out.

He cradled the battered limb close to himself and positioned the lantern to inspect the extent of his injury. His arm was bruised and bloodied, and badly scraped, but did not appear to be broken. He wiped it with cotton dipped in alcohol from the first-aid kit in his backpack. After the first bite of medicinal stinging, the initial sharpness of pain began to lessen, but still there was the constant throbbing.

Darrel loosened his wristwatch, and slipped it gingerly over his sore hand. Holding the mangled remains of springs, gears, and crystal up to the lantern, it was clear that his expensive timepiece had ticked its last. He tossed it aside. He could buy a new one later. He could afford to buy a whole store of them if he wanted. But for now, he had other concerns.

“What happened!?” he wondered aloud, trying to re-orient himself to his surroundings.

The last thing he remembered was Lee chiding him for wandering off too far on his own. It seemed Lee was always on his case about something.

He remembered the little passageway he had discovered leading off from the main chamber of the cavern. The floor of the little tunnel dropped off in a steep incline away from the main chamber of the cave, with walls that slanted at about a forty-five degree tilt. “Oh yeah,” remembered Darrel. He had wandered off into that passageway when the shaking started.

Now, he was stuck inside a deep cave somewhere in the mountains of Canada. “Damn!” he muttered. His first thought was for the great inconvenience to his vacation plans. Something like this could ruin his carefully-planned schedule. “Damn!” he repeated. “What if I’m late getting back? I’ve got to get ready for that big Reynolds deal coming up a week from Tuesday, and escrow is supposed to close on those shopping center deals a few days after that. Goddammit. I knew this vacation was gonna cut it too close.”

He picked up his lantern and guided its beam down into the plunging crevice. A colony of bats stirred to life, fluttering ghost-like through the shadowy chamber. On the stony walls of the narrow passage squirmy insects and strange cave-spiders crawled over the sand and granite, trying to hide from hungry, pale salamanders in the constant balance between death and survival.

A cool chill shuddered through his body as he watched Nature act out its little dramas of life and death. “The world can be a cruel and violent place,” mused Darrel, with the realization that he might be its next

victim. He felt a strange knot tightening in his stomach. He couldn't believe this was really happening. He began to think of possible consequences more serious than just the loss of his next big deal. He could really die in here!

He was gripped with a pang of sudden terror. "I've got to get out of here!"

No longer pinned bodily under the slide, he was still buried, tiny and insignificant, beneath the vastness of the Canadian Rockies. He had to figure a way out. He had a business to run back in California! No ideas sprang immediately to mind. What if he couldn't get out at all? He had read about things like this. Maybe others, flipping casually through the back pages of their morning papers, would read a cold, factual report detailing the untimely demise of one Darrel Swift.

Other thoughts nagged at his consciousness. His whole life seemed to be crashing in around him. He had been working too hard, too many days in a row, and had taken this trip to get a badly-needed change of scenery. But this was more than he had in mind. He might not even get out alive! And he wondered for a moment if he even wanted to. Successful in his own commercial real estate business and not yet thirty, Darrel was already starting to feel like an old man. He worked all day, figuring new angles to old deals, and then worried about it all night. He never stopped. And it was paying off — for a price. He had money in the bank, in stocks, in money-market funds, and in his own real-estate investments. He could buy anything he wanted. But he was tense all the time. Rushed. Pressured. He snapped at people. He felt a vague emptiness. For all the money he was making, something was still missing. His life of schedules, three-piece suits, and two-martini lunches was a step backward from the casual pleasures of playing Frisbee or bumming around on the beach that he had enjoyed as a poor but happy college student.

Now he was too busy. Relationships had come to feel shallow and artificial, and romantic intimacy left him feeling empty and dissatisfied. He had just completed another stormy breakup with his girlfriend, Linda Ferret, who had become increasingly possessive as their two-year relationship of nightclubs and parties deteriorated.

As the world around him grew stale and confining, Darrel had finally agreed to take some time off to sort out his thoughts away from the joyless compulsions of his real-life monopoly game. With Alan and Lee, he had left his home and business back in Santa Barbara, California, to "get away from it all" — and now it "all" might come to a sudden end.

The immediacy of his own mortality began to set in. Seized with sudden panic, he drew his sore arm close against his body, and with the other clawed frantically against the mass of dirt and rock. He cast the beam of his lantern toward the main chamber of the cave, and realized

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how completely the rockslide had cut him off from the others. He called out. The only answer was silence.

He had felt no fear or danger in wandering off by himself through the darkness, despite the warnings from his more experienced companions, Alan and Lee. But now he was consumed with a strange mixture of deep regret and panic.

He tried again to yell through the mountain for help, until his voice cracked into frightened sobs. He pounded his good fist helplessly into the granite, yelling and sobbing, until he collapsed in tears against the stones. A few pebbles crumbled loose, but the rockslide remained firm, and Darrel remained trapped. He slumped dejectedly against the stones, whimpering.

* * * * *

“Oh my God!” quivered Alan. “What happened!?” He got no response from the friend at his side. “That’s over where Darrel went.” He called out loud, towards the rockslide — and his cousin. There was no answer.

Alan grabbed his lantern and shined the light over where Darrel had wandered off. There was a newly-fallen blockage of granite sealing off the little passageway that Darrel had gone off to explore.

Lee, Alan’s companion and friend, groaned with disgust. “Now look at what he’s gone off and done this time,” he complained. “This could really be a problem.”

“Lay off the kid,” scolded Alan. “You’re always picking on him. C’mon, we gotta figure out what happened and try to get him outta there.”

“If he’s even alive,” muttered Lee.

Left unspoken was the fact that it was Darrel, youngest of the three, who was picking up the tab for this little holiday.

* * * * *

After a while, Darrel regained his composure and pressed himself close against the massive granite barrier. Groping with his hands and feet for solid footing, he inched his way up the side of the debris, climbing part way up the rock, still calling out frequently. But this only reaffirmed the extent of his isolation from the main chamber.

Clutching his backpack and lantern for security, he climbed back down to the floor of the passageway. He sat down to think, as his early panic gave way to reason. First, he decided to stop yelling so much. This could trigger another rockslide, or use up what might be a limited air supply. He sat on a rock and turned off the lantern to conserve its batteries. Sitting thoughtfully in the darkness, he considered his options for survival.

Possibly Alan and Lee could go back for help and dig him free. With a morbid chuckle, he wondered if Lee would even permit Alan to try.

But it might take days for them to get back to the nearest village, and even longer to bring back enough men and equipment to dig through all the rock and dirt. His stomach still felt weak. He had no way of guessing the extent of damage, if any, in the main chamber. He could not even be sure that Alan or Lee had even survived the rockslide. He could not depend on the remote hope of rescue aid from them.

He was a businessman. He would take action himself! He took a deep breath. His only hope would be to go further down into the passageway, where it might connect with other caves that could open up to the outside. He knew that the possibility of such an escape route was slim, but looking for it would allow him to keep physically and mentally active. Nothing had ever stopped him from taking calculated risks before.

He opened his backpack and shined his light inside, taking silent inventory of its contents. There was his basic first-aid kit, sandwiches, canned solids and liquids, and some junk food snacks. Closing up the pack, he stood up to make his way down into the tunnel.

Turning away from the boulder-locked opening, Darrel squeezed his way through the narrow corridor of stone, and started downward. As he moved deeper into the Earth, he was amazed at how straight and parallel the tilted walls remained, and how quickly he was descending along its plunging floor.

Hardly aware of time, he pressed his way down between the stone walls a few feet at a time, hour after uncounted hour, until overpowered by sudden exhaustion. He relaxed himself against the slanting walls to rest for a moment. He was so tired. The pain in his arm throbbed relentlessly. "God!" He wished it would just stop. He tried to ignore the dust and grime clinging to the stubble of beard on his sweaty, miserable face. His sandy hair, usually washed and blow-dried, felt stringy and greasy.

He wondered how long he had been descending. Pointing the lantern's steady beam at the bare spot on his sore left wrist, he remembered that he could no longer monitor the passing of time. How far had he strayed from the blocked-off opening of the cave? Did it really matter?

He was a businessman! He was rational and resourceful. He had found success by looking at problems just a little differently than anyone else, and seeing solutions that others might have overlooked. He depended on nothing but his own gutsy independence. *Ha!* Somehow it didn't seem the same. Suddenly he didn't feel so rich, so smooth, so powerful any more. There was no one around to "provide input" for a "game plan" to get out of this mess. There were only cold, empty, silent stones. He felt like a helpless little boy who had gotten lost. His business mind told him to think of ways to get out. But his body just felt like crying.

Gasping for breath, he just wanted to rest for a moment. As he pressed close to the stone wall—panting, sweating, almost sobbing—he imagined that the rocks might still be shaking from the slide. The slightest slippage

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of Earth movement could send the narrow separation of stone walls crashing together, crushing him into anonymous death deep inside the mountain.

He was haunted by other fears. His mind conjured up visions of creepy organisms crawling toward him through the darkness. What about larger mammal life? Could there be a bear or mountain lion nesting in the dark recesses of this cave, angry at the disturbances within its home? Possibly aroused by hunger?

He was tired, but too apprehensive about the dangers of the darkness to rest for long. Mechanically, he shoved himself away from the rocks and forced himself to go on.

The hours wore on, uncounted. Eventually, exhaustion outweighed apprehension, and Darrel Swift drifted off into the refuge of sleep.

Chapter Two

Light

Alan and Lee sat in front of the unmovable pile of granite. They had tried frantically to do something, *anything*, to move the rocks and debris and find a way through to their companion who had disappeared beneath it all.

“We’ve got to do something,” insisted Alan.

“There’s no way we can dig through it by ourselves,” responded Lee. “Anyway, there’s no way any human being could have survived underneath all those falling rocks.”

“*If* he was under them,” answered Alan. “We don’t know how far he had made it into the cave, or how far the rockslide extended into the cave. As long as there is any chance he could have survived, we have to at least get in there and find out what happened.”

“Well, we’ve tried everything we can do from here,” cautioned Lee. “We don’t have the kind of equipment to dig through such a rockslide. We’ll have to go back to town for help.”

Alan shook his head in reluctant acceptance. He knew that it would take *days* to get back to the nearest village outpost, and every moment they delayed reduced the chances of his cousin’s survival.

* * * * *

Awakening some time later, Darrel sat up in the cave’s dark silence. He started to resume his course through the dark, interminable corridor, but hesitated.

Rested, he was no longer just responding mechanically. “What’s the use...?” he mumbled. “I’m going to die here.” He quickly reconsidered. The same survival instinct that had motivated a successful career drove him deeper into the cave. Despite the hopelessness, a struggle to the end would keep him active and provide a sense of purpose. And, no matter how remote, it was still his only chance for finding a way out. And he was still concerned about how he would handle business deals waiting for him back home.

He felt hungry. He did not know how many hours he had been groping downward, nor how long he had slept. He longed for some knowledge of time, and wished his timepiece had survived the rockslide. He pulled a sandwich from the backpack. He had been pretty well prepared for a long trip, but his supplies had not anticipated such extended isolation. He could make several meals if he rationed the items thriftily. He ate the sandwich and resumed his journey.

The descent became increasingly steep. Even with the lantern, Darrel could see no end to the plunging crevice. He forged his way downward for hours, feeling greater frustration as his efforts produced nothing more than the same old footage of tired granite.

He thought of Alan and Lee on the outside. He wondered what, if anything, they might be doing to dig through and come after him. He wondered if they were even alive. He thought of various friends and business acquaintances, and how they might react to his disappearance. He even thought about Linda Ferret, the ex-girlfriend he had left behind. He had wanted to get away from an unpleasant situation, but this was certainly over-doing it.

He pulled a small sack of potato chips out of his pack and ripped open the bag. Quickly devouring its meager contents and washing it all down with one of his last Diet Dr. Peppers, he still felt hungry. Wadding up the potato chip bag, he tossed it blindly away. He picked up the empty soda can, and tossed it as far as he could down the passageway ahead. The clanking echo gradually faded as the can bounced further down the cave, reaffirming the constant steadiness of the plunging descent ahead.

He got out a roll of cookies and loosened the wrapping. He paused. He could no longer afford to disregard limitations. He would have to be more cautious in rationing his precious nourishment. He forced himself to twist the wrapping shut. He returned it untouched to his pack and he turned to follow the beam of his lantern deeper into the cave.

The descent continued.

He rested again, and resumed his further descent. The cycles of sleeping, waking, eating, and climbing were repeated over and over, as the dreaming, wakefulness, and nightmares blurred together in a timeless confusion of darkness. He forged his way deeper and deeper into the Earth. The dusty air of the caves took hold of his sweaty body and caused him to feel dirty and unpleasant.

Darrel marveled at the Forces of Nature that could slice such a vast, straight fissure so perfectly through a whole mountain. Was it the fault-line remnant of some ancient earthquake? ...or maybe not so ancient? He shuddered. If the mountain were to move again, another rockslide or quake might send the fissure walls crashing shut, squishing him like a trapped bug.

Sleeping intermittently against the sheets of rock that imprisoned him, he pressed on through the warmth and darkness of the interminable cave passage. And the temperature inside seemed to be rising.

As the heat increased, he sometimes imagined that the tunnel would eventually open up into a great furnace. At other times, he was haunted by that recurring fear of the walls crashing in on him. One way or another, it would take him to Hell.

Eventually the passage leveled off and opened up into a vast cavern. Darrel was weak and tired, and sick of the heat and darkness, but was relieved to be out of the narrow corridor that had imprisoned him.

He stretched his legs. He searched the vast hollow with his light and was unable to see the end of it. Perhaps there would be new passages extending from this chamber. Perhaps this was the end. Darrel stumbled forward, then staggered to the cavern floor. After so long in the slanting walls of the tunnel, this was the first time he could lie down, fully extended.

He shifted the loose rocks into the most comfortable possible arrangement, and sprawled out in his stony nest. Guarding his wounds, he experimented with every position denied him during his uncounted days in the narrow passageway. This wasn't exactly the Ritz, but at least he could finally get some rest, and he lapsed dreamily into sleep.

Awakening later, Darrel was awake and refreshed. His pains seemed less acute. It was the first good sleep he had enjoyed since the rockslide. He wondered how long he had been asleep. He didn't even know what day or week it might be! But at least he felt better. He renewed his determination to find a way out of this dark, sweaty oven, or die trying.

Out of nowhere, Darrel imagined a distant sound.

He sat up. It sounded like the faraway dripping and trickling of flowing water. An underground spring? An opening to freedom? Darrel jumped to his feet. On this level floor, Darrel could move faster. But the uncertainty of odd cave formations also required greater caution, and Darrel had become deceptively sure-footed through long hours in the plunging sameness of the narrow passage.

As Darrel scanned eagerly ahead with his light, he became increasingly excited, and did not watch closely enough the cave floor immediately in front of him. He failed to notice a wide fissure, and suddenly found himself stumbling into empty space.

He let out a yelp as he plunged down through the darkness. He somersaulted in air, and came to rest with a sudden thud, sitting upright in a pile of soft, loose silt. He had lost a little wind, and was shaken up, but was amazingly unhurt. He stood up to walk, and felt a slight limp, but was relieved to have landed so well in such a long fall. Even his sore arm, still bruised and aching, was no worse off than before.

His relief turned to sudden panic when he found he was no longer holding his lantern. Groping frantically around, he was not able to locate it. Perhaps it was smashed on an unseen rock. Perhaps it was intact and hidden very near in the darkness.

Even with his lantern, the darkness had become an oppressive burden. But now it was not only dark, but *completely black* everywhere! He could see nothing at all.

“No! No! No!” he sobbed. Wasn’t it bad enough to be trapped under a mountain in the middle of nowhere? Now, with an almost-empty knapsack and not much else, even his limited ability to see was taken from him.

He could do nothing. He was isolated thousands of miles from his California home, and thousands of feet into the Earth, helpless and alone.

Trying not to face the hopelessness of his situation, he returned his attention to his struggle against the caves. The whole thing seemed so pointless now, but he couldn’t just lie down and die. He thought of the thousands of sightless people who had learned to live and work through lifetimes of darkness. He did not have the same special training, but he would not go down without a fight.

Unable to see, he focused his power of hearing to the cave’s silence. The sound of flowing water was now very near.

He stood up, and waved his good hand through the darkness, groping for obstacles. The sticky softness of a cobweb gathered around his fingers. He shook his hand with sudden quickness, banging it painfully against the top of the cave. “Dammit!” he grimaced, pulling his smarting fingers close to his body and writhing with the sharp, sudden stinging.

He regained his composure and listened again for the water. Inching toward its rushing sounds, his first blind step was into a rocky depression, causing him to stumble. He picked himself up and searched timidly with his hands for any low barriers of stone or stickiness.

He took another wobbly step along the uneven floor, but was so overcome by the uncertainty of total blackness that he had to stop. He felt so blind. So helpless. So *scared*. “Damn!” he muttered, squatting down into a safer position.

On all fours, he crawled toward the sound of the water. He was dirty and thirsty. While the pervasive Darkness had broken him into fearful submission, still he wanted the water so bad he could feel its freshness on his dry tongue and sweaty brow.

Darrel groped blindly forward, following the rough, stony textures that passed beneath his fingertips. Bumping into the cave’s hidden formations and seeing nothing but what he could imagine, he finally stumbled into a shallow stream flowing down through the caves.

He shrieked with hysterical ecstasy and splashed in the water. The feel of cool wetness excited him. He washed his face, and rubbed the water in his hair, and drank it. Gently bathing the bruised tenderness of his arm, he savored the coolness of partial relief. Even in the totality of darkness, he imagined the water to be sparkling with beauty. This was the first hopeful development in a long chain of frustrations. Refreshed with new enthusiasm, he resolved to follow his course along this subterranean

stream. It would give him a sense of direction — possibly lead to a way out of the caves — but in any case, provide security.

In this canyon carved by the cool flow of water, a pleasant breeze broke up the oppressive heat. Most puzzling was that the cool air seemed to rise from below, contrary to what he would expect. This was a relief, but still there was the darkness....

After a little while and some practice, Darrel could make his way a little better, without stumbling and bumping into things so much. He could even stand up and feel his way through the darkness in an upright position. Hour after uncounted hour, he made his way with increasing tactile proficiency. Still, he longed for even a dim glimmer of real light.

After descending gradually along the stream for some time, drinking often but eating only little of his fast-disappearing food supply, he could hear that there was a sharp drop and a waterfall up ahead. He was apprehensive about climbing down through rocks and cliffs in darkness too thick to allow visibility, but he had nowhere else to go. He approached the edge of the rocks. Remembering his earlier fall, he groped through the darkness one slow inch at a time, feeling for the unseen cliff. Backing over the edge, he climbed slowly downward over the dry rocks at the side of the falls.

As he pressed cautiously downward, he was amazed at how well he had learned to maneuver with just his sense of touch. He quickly realized that the distance down was greater than he had first imagined. Resting where possible on ledges, he maintained his course, unable to measure time or distance, but hoping the rocks would level off soon. He became increasingly concerned as the plunge continued with no end in sight.

Finally, as he was resting on a flat sheet of rock, his foot slipped on a wet spot, and he rolled into a cool spray of water as it streamed across a wide area of the broad, smooth surface. As he sped quickly down the steep waterslide, unable to see, he imagined with panic that this was the end. He could smash into an unseen boulder at any moment, or topple over the side of another deadly cliff.

With mixed relief, he was eventually washed to the side of the main flow and slid to a halt on the smooth, dry rock. In one sense, he wanted to end this terrible nightmare. On the other hand, he was still alive, and not badly hurt for all he had gone through. His clothes were torn, and his side was scratched almost as badly as his arm. But it could have been a lot worse, and he was able to keep going.

As the stream leveled off somewhat, though still downward in a steeper incline than where he had first found it, Darrel paused to rest, and let himself sleep. He awoke much later feeling refreshed, except for the sharp throbs of pain in his side and arm. He ate a little, and washed his face and wounds. The cool water stung with relief.

His attention was abruptly captured by a tiny object from across the stream that made his heart leap. He couldn't tell what it was, except that it cast a gentle, continuous glow of *light!*

Darrel splashed across the stream and stared at the object. It was a small, unevenly rounded fluorescent pebble casting an eerie glow. The tiny stone was not really enough to relieve the ponderous darkness, or even to really allow a clear glimpse of his surroundings, but it was the first time in days that he had been able to see anything at all!

He reached to touch it, but stopped. What if it were radioactive? Or poisonous? "What the hell," he thought, quickly weighing risks against possible benefits. "I'm going to die here anyway. If they ever find my body, this little light will be with it. I won't die in *total* darkness."

He touched it gingerly. It was not warm to the touch, as he thought it should be. It was a phenomenon new to Darrel's experience. He didn't even know what to call it! Scooping it up in his hand, he gathered up the rest of his belongings and resumed his trek down through the caves.

Strange thoughts filled his mind to while away the eternity of the caves. He had taken this vacation to sort out his life, and now he was face to face with death. What good were all the buildings he had ever sold? Where was all that money he had hustled out of his land deals back in California? Who would even miss him? He had never really taken the time to develop close relationships, or cultivate the simple pleasures of everyday living. Friendships had either been casual tools of business, or shallow acquaintances, and family ties were generally remote. Romances had endured only until the novelty wore off. He thought again of Linda, who he had left behind. What would she do when she heard what had happened? Who would even care? "Oh God!" he screamed, clasping his good arm to his throbbing wounds. "Just let me die!" But he was really just beginning to realize how badly he wanted to salvage his life.

* * * * *

Emergency search and rescue crews were quickly assembled in the small Canadian mining town, while Alan took care of the unpleasant task of notifying friends and relatives back in California.

Even so, more than a week had already passed since the cave-in. Even if Darrel could have survived the initial rockslide, there was increasing doubt that he could also survive an extended period of time underground without adequate food, water, and light.

Darrel's old girlfriend, Linda, took the news particularly hard. "He's buried under a *what!?*" she shrieked. "Well, you just better go in there and get him out. You knew damn well he didn't have enough experience to go digging around in caves. If he hadn't been around to bankroll your little trip, you never would have been able to talk Lee into letting him come along. What the hell was he doing wandering off alone? If

anything happens to him, I'll hold you two responsible. It might even be criminal negligence...."

"We're doing everything we can," Alan assured her. "We'll find him."

As soon as the rescue party was ready, Alan and Lee led them back over the mountains. With helicopters, mobile equipment, and the latest in available rescue equipment, the journey back to where they had discovered the small entrance to the cave was much faster than their slow, tedious hike from the cave to the town.

* * * * *

Darrel followed the cool underground stream deeper into the fractured layers of the Earth's crust. Climbing, swimming, groping through the darkness, Darrel combined uncharacteristic personal courage with the same drive that had built his business empire, fighting against the odds.

At the base of one small waterfall, he noticed a little cluster of seven small fluorescent stones, which combined to cast the first real sensation of light since he had lost his lantern so long ago. He picked up each little light and set it in his pack except the largest, which was about the size of a misshapen baseball. This stone generated just enough light to let him see the area immediately around him.

In the dim light of the glowing stones, he became aware that the cavernous tunnel branched off frequently into many narrow passageways, away from his cherished stream. He chose to continue following the security of the water, but with growing curiosity about his new environment.

Throughout his cycles of climbing, resting, and sleeping, he remained aware that hours and days must be passing, but without any real knowledge of time or distance. Eventually, his supply of food was exhausted. He cast his empty backpack aside and went on alone with just his little glowing stones.

As food ceased to be available, the fluorescent stones were gradually becoming more numerous. Before long, Darrel was no longer keeping count of each stone, and only carried one large stone. The totality of darkness gave way to the eerie glow of the scattered little stones. To Darrel's eyes, long accustomed to complete darkness, even the dim shadows of these faint little stones were enough to make him feel comfortable. He no longer expected to find a way out of the caves, but as he plunged deeper into the bosom of the Earth, he was motivated with awe and curiosity for each strange new discovery as his descent wore on.

Time continued uncounted. Days passed. Possibly weeks. Darrel forged down through tunnels, through caverns, across underground plateaus, climbing down cliffside waterfalls, swimming across pools of water when the cavern walls closed in too narrow against the stream — moving, sleeping, and hungering in the dim light of the pale glowing

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stones. Darrel pressed his way deeper into the mountain, hungrily and wearily, with pains in his side and his arm. His clothes and shoes were wet and tattered, and he had only water and pale light to lead him on. Against Time's relentless erosion of his energies, his hungered body steadily felt its strength being drained away.

Desperate with hunger and fatigue, Darrel began to confuse reality with his nightmares. He missed his office. He longed for the security of its hectic pace and more familiar pressures. The noises of crashing, tumbling boulders still resonated in his mind, and he often imagined a sensation of shaking in the now-silent cave. Sometimes he imagined the busy voices of employees at work in his office, and the steady clatter of typists playing percussion to an orchestra of ringing phones, piped-in Muzak, and the hum of office machinery. Sometimes he wasn't completely sure whether it was a cave he was trapped in, or if he was just stuck back in his office. It was only when he turned to answer a question from one of the office girls, and banged his face against a head of stone, that he realized how desperate he was for human conversation — if not the exchange of great ideas, at least a little idle gossip — any kind of involvement with a living, conscious mind.

He stumbled onward, down through the caves. He staggered into the side of a cavern wall, bumping his sore arm. He was weak and hungry. His body throbbed with pain. He felt that death was finally near. He had struggled a long time, but Death would finally win. He sobbed into the stones. He had fought hard for Life, and he had struggled with determination but....

He looked up. Down one of the caverns leading away from the stream there was a huge fluorescent boulder, not more than a thousand yards away. He wasn't imagining it, it was really there. No, it wasn't one of the glowing rocks; it was a break in the rocks, with a flood of bright light pouring in. It was not the dim light of small, scattered little stones, but a bright light, like the outside world. He jumped with renewed energy! Had he defied impossible odds to find a way out of the caves?

Darrel was still aching from pain and hunger, but the bright glow of light gave him hopeful, renewed energy. He stumbled toward it with great effort. Sweat and dirt dripped across his unshaven face, and he splashed through shallow puddles, groping half-crazed with a blend of hopeful energy and the desperation of fatigued starvation.

He pulled himself to the lighted opening, and slithered through the narrow breaks in the rocks. He shielded his face with his hand and flinched with momentary blindness as his eyes reacted to the sudden brightness after uncounted weeks imprisoned in darkness.

As his eyes adjusted to the light, he perceived that it was not the same intense brightness as the sunlight of the Outside. He had not found his way out of labyrinthine caverns. He had stumbled into a vast under-

ground canyon. Millions of huge fluorescent boulders were packed tightly together along the uneven ceiling of the cave, casting a pale and gentle light throughout the Great Cavern.

The pale, shadowy light created a magical aura of otherworldliness. He could see that this expansive cavern extended down into a great valley of rocks, plants, and waterflows. The rocks spread down through many levels of fractured caverns, canyons, and plateaus.

Far below, the cavern floor was broken into layers of caves and grottoes, adorned with gnarled cave-trees, and generously dressed with a lush spray of tropical foliage, nourished by the fluorescent light and watered by crisscrossing streams and ponds that seemed to fall in gentle cascades everywhere. There were rocks and plants of every type — smooth boulders, ragged fractures, oddly-shaped limestone formations and quartzine crystals, covered with every kind of greenery — which seemed to blend with the twisting roots and branches of the cave-trees growing out of them.

Near the waterflows, light from the glowing stones passed through sprays of watery mists and prismatic crystals to generate fantastic patterns of rainbows and shadows around the ponds. Darrel beheld with awe an underground world that seemed to stretch for many miles beyond him.

Darrel's heart sank in not having found a return to the outside world, but he stared in amazement at the panorama of light and vegetation. Not too long ago he would have been seeing the raw materials from which to develop new investment opportunities. Now, the light, water, and vegetation offered nothing more than a chance for survival.

With a hopeful optimism bordering on insanity, but still physically weak, he staggered down into the valley. He straggled over a rocky boulder, lumbered across the knotted, low-hanging branches of surrounding trees, and sloshed through the shallow, cascading ponds. He quickly found his mortal flesh aching again. He stumbled repeatedly, fighting to maintain consciousness. The hunger and exhaustion had been only temporarily relieved by the euphoria of hope.

Slowing his pace, he eased himself onto a rock to rest.

He was startled by a nearby noise in the brush. He looked up. It must be another hallucination.

Through eyes blurred with pain and sweat, he caught the images of two small men, not more than four or five feet tall, with shaggy-hair and smooth, brownish-gray complexions. They were standing a short distance across the brush-covered rocks, staring at him with big, round eyes. One of the little men gave a nimble leap, and landed in a semi-squatting position nearby, staring at Darrel with great curiosity. The other little man hopped into the lower branches of a sprawling, twisted tree, and scrambled out to a position almost directly over Darrel.

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Darrel waved his hand at them, to send these new nightmares away. The images did not disappear.

The two small men were pointing toward Darrel and chattering excitedly.

Retreating, the slender, wiry figures moved quickly over the rocks. Dressed in loosely-fitting outfits fashioned from a light, delicate fabric, the two men danced with great agility across the layered grottoes, like barefoot pixies, while Darrel slipped quietly into unconsciousness.

Chapter Three

Discovery

Darrel Swift's eyes fluttered open. The world was a dizzy blur of motion. He could see strange faces hovering over him, staring. Strange sounds swirled in his ears and his head. He felt tired. Weak. He started to sit up, but his body just fell back into sleep.

Some time later, he again awoke. His eyes drifted slowly open, to a dim awareness of granite overhead. He no longer felt any distortions or lapses of perception. He turned his head to the side. Where was he? Around him was a confusing blend of impressions — of cold, rocky firmness blending with gnarled branches and delicate tropical foliage; of colored fabric softness; of delicate fluorescent stones — in bizarre and exotic patterns of arrangement. But for the delicate sounds of musical chimes and gentle woodwinds playing softly in the background, a quiet stillness filled the room. He could hear and feel the steady rhythm of his heart and lungs. His body was surrounded by softness. He patted around with his hands. Someone had placed him in a pile of soft bedding. After a moment, he realized that the incessant throbbing of pain in his arm and side had somehow been made to disappear. But he was not entirely without discomfort. There was a rumbling uneasiness in his belly — a gnawing hunger. That was a good sign. His healthy body, now rested, demanded sustenance.

Darrel was annoyed with himself for having gotten into such a mess. His eyes darted around the cave “room,” looking for any clue as to how he might handle this strange, new situation. He groped for his backpack and lantern, but found nothing. He quickly recalled that these had been lost in the darkness of the caves. He felt weak and helpless. But at least he had *made it!* He was *alive!* While he wanted to get up and be *doing* something as soon as possible, still he didn't feel like pushing himself quite as hard as he used to. He would take things a little easier.

His gaze drifted across the new surroundings. He was alone, in a small cave lit by glowing fluorescent stones. Brightly-colored fabrics were draped across the cave-room “walls” in geometric patterns of golden orange, pastel violet, and brilliant lime, blended with a generous spray of delicate primeval foliage growing from the stony sides of the cave. Each perception raised more questions than answers. Where was this place? Who were the “benefactors” that had brought him here? What did they intend to do with him?

Glancing up, he saw one of the little cave-people poke a curious head into the cave. It was a young female, tiny and slender. He guessed she might be about his own age or younger. Her soft brown eyes sparkled with curious delight, and she began to chatter unintelligibly when she saw that he was awake. "Cute chick," he thought, suddenly conscious of just how superficial his reaction seemed. His most immediate concern was in trying to stay alive in this strange place, and in answering the thousands of questions that were flooding into his brain.

As the girl approached Darrel timidly, continuing her strange monologue of foreign sounds, two older men and a little boy followed her into the room. The three stayed back out of the way, in protective readiness.

Darrel studied the cave-people intently. They were clearly human, but did not fit into any of the racial or ethnic stereotypes with which he was familiar. They were somewhat small in stature, like slender pygmies. They were wiry and agile, and moved easily over the rocks and foliage of their cave environment. Their distinct half-gray, half-golden complexion was neither white nor brown nor yellow. Their wide-eyed facial features generated an impression of childlike wonderment.

The girl drew cautiously nearer, talking in soft, reassuring tones a language that Darrel could not understand. She was slender and pretty, with silky brown hair that fell down around her shoulders, and big innocent cave-people eyes. In the pale light, her skin coloration appeared in one moment a golden brown, and the next moment a soft tone of gray. Her pixie figure was accented by the delicate garment that she wore, similar to the knee-length tunics that the men wore, except that her feminine form projected a different image. Darrel noticed that, like the others, she wore nothing on her feet.

When Darrel sat up suddenly, the girl jumped back a step and squealed. Darrel placed his feet on the stony floor, and noticed that his shoes had been removed. The girl turned and whispered to the others, who remained quiet and motionless in the background. Cautiously, she turned again toward Darrel and slowly drew closer to him.

Darrel was still plagued by a persistent sensation of hunger. Back in the outside world, he could have enjoyed the finest meal available, in the finest facilities on the West Coast. But here he was no longer a big shot. In the Outside, he could have anything he wanted. Here, he couldn't even order a cheap snack. He was a helpless stranger, at the mercy of these exotic little cave-people.

But at least he was still alive. And the girl's friendly demeanor made him feel more at ease. He could no longer concern himself with luxuries of the past. He was a progressive, forward-moving person. He must look ahead. As he had done in his own world, here also he would do whatever was necessary in order to make it. He would learn to get along with these cave people and understand them.

The gentle melody of chimes and woodwinds still floated in from somewhere in the background, as the girl continued her unintelligible monologue. What could she be saying? He wanted so badly to know what she planned to do with him. He wished he could just say something, anything, that she would understand from him. Still, he had to try to communicate.

Coming from an outside world of many cultures and nations, Darrel understood the simple problem of a language barrier. Not knowing to what extent, if any, there might be cultural diversity within the caves, he feared the possibility that this civilization may have existed in isolation for centuries, and might have no concept of differing languages. They might consider his babbling to be that of a crazy person.

Darrel looked at the girl and pointed toward his mouth in awkward gestures. "Food," he said.

"*Foodah?*" responded the girl, uncertain of the strange sound.

"Food," repeated Darrel, motioning to his mouth again, and continuing to make gestures that would convey the idea of eating.

"*Food!*" laughed the girl, as she understood his meaning. She turned to the trio behind her and babbled something in her own strange language. She returned her attention to Darrel, speaking very softly and slowly, as if her exaggerated enunciation would make him understand. As she spoke, the little boy brought in a stone-hewn dish filled with a light brownish paste. The girl dipped a flattened wood utensil into the paste and lifted a small taste of the stuff to her lips.

"Food!" she exclaimed. "*Zatah!*"

"*Zatah!*" repeated Darrel, not sure if the word meant "food" or the specific paste-like substance which had been brought to him. The girl placed the stone dish and the same utensil she had just used firmly into Darrel's hand and gave him a broad smile. Darrel accepted his hostess' gracious offering.

He scraped the wooden instrument across the gooey stuff and held it up to close scrutiny. He pinched off a sampling, and rubbed it between his thumb and forefinger. He had no idea what it could possibly be made from. He gingerly melted a little of the brownish paste onto his tongue. He found it bland, but not unpleasant. Desperate with hunger, he wolfed down this "*zatah*" and an additional serving, and found it very appetizing. As he was finishing the paste, the little boy brought the girl some water for him in the same kind of stone dish.

Darrel dipped his hand into the water and sprinkled some droplets on the girl's arm. "Water," he announced.

"*Watah?*" puzzled the girl. "*Metah! Metah!*"

After his meal, Darrel felt much better, and his thoughts were filled with curiosity about the people and places of this strange underground

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environment. But he was unable to verbalize even the most simple of his thoughts and questions to his foreign “hosts.”

He looked at the girl, and at the others who were still behind her. He wondered what her name was. He wondered if cave-people even had names. “My name is Darrel,” he said, speaking slow and clear. “What is your name?” His only answer was a puzzled stare.

He decided to try again. “Me, Darrel,” he said, tapping on his chest. “Me, Darrel.”

The girl quickly got the idea. “Zhana,” she said, pointing to herself.

“*Medarrel*,” she said, pointing to Darrel, very pleased with herself.

Darrel tapped his chest again. “Darrel. Darrel. Darrel.” He pointed to the girl and repeated, “Zhana,” and then to himself, “Darrel.”

The girl smiled.

She took Darrel’s hand and led him over to the two men, who were almost as tall as Darrel’s shoulder. As they walked, Darrel noticed that the stony floor of the cave was smooth and polished against his naked feet, yet cool to the touch. The girl pressed his hand against her own chest and repeated, “Zhana.” Touching Darrel’s hand to the first man, she announced, “Rimani,” and to the other man, “Laros.” Touching Darrel’s hand to the little boy, she said, “Jamak.” Darrel repeated each name, clumsily aware that it did not sound the same as when Zhana pronounced them.

Standing alongside the others in the tattered remnants of his American clothes, Darrel was ragged and unshaven, and felt dirty all over. Zhana sensed his discomfort. Still holding him by the hand, she led him through a veiled doorway into another cavern “room.” There was a shallow grotto pooling with water in the middle and steaming with heat from a natural hot springs, fed by a gentle cascading waterfall, and surrounded by a lush garden of plants set among quartzine crystals and limestone formations. Light from the fluorescent stones filtered through the misting watersprays and prismatic quartz crystals, causing gentle rainbows to shimmer over the pool’s surface.

Feeling the firm but gentle grip of Zhana’s little hand around his, Darrel at least felt a sense of reassurance that he was not among barbarians who might be waiting to tear him apart. Yet he was still apprehensive. Was he to be a slave? A plaything for the girl? An object of public curiosity?

Zhana brought him a fresh robe, and some strange tools hewn from rock with which to groom himself. With gestures and foreign words, she tried to demonstrate how to use the items, but couldn’t make any sense to Darrel. The girl called in the two men, and left.

Back in the outside world, Darrel had no reputation as a prude. But in the uncertainty of this strange place, he turned to make sure the cave-girl

was out of sight before undressing. He slipped out of his dirty, ragged jeans and set them carefully beside the small bathing pool. He looked up at Laros and Rimani who watched his every move with intense fascination. Darrel felt somewhat uneasy standing in front of the two cave dwellers without his clothes on.

Stepping down over a small, round stone, and slipping between the feathery blades of silky, tropical ferns, he dipped a toe into the pool to test the water. It was moderately hot, not too far from the preference he would have set for a hot bath at home. He noted that this kind of natural mineral spring might make a good “hot tub” for his use while in this strange land.

He stepped fully into the water and immersed himself. It felt warm and refreshing. He rubbed the water over himself to melt away the dirt and grime, and wished for nothing more than a simple bar of soap. As he bathed, Laros used the odd stones to shave Darrel’s face clean like the other men, while Rimani tried to arrange the shaggy locks of his sandy hair.

When the job was completed, Darrel dried himself and put on the robe Zhana had given him. He glanced again at his old, tattered rags. He noticed his wallet hanging out of the back pocket. It held all the money, credit cards, and identification that had ruled his life in the outside world. What use would they be here? Still, after long years of habit, he could not discard such treasures so easily. Certainly he would be able to find some unobtrusive corner where his clothes and effects could be tucked away for safekeeping.

He looked at his reflection in the pool. He fitted the cave-style robe around himself in different poses, to see how he looked. Apart from his height and his fair coloration, he now fit right in with the other people in this strange place. But he was not like the others. He didn’t know the people, the mannerisms, the language, or the customs. He paused and grimaced. “What the hell am I doing here?” he thought to himself. He should be modeling a tailored suit from Pierre Cardin and hand-crafted shoes of the finest leather, instead of bare feet and simple garments from these natives. Still, he was alive. And he would have to learn to get along — and get ahead — among these primitives.

His concern lessened somewhat as the girl returned. She made it easy for him to feel optimistic. She looked Darrel over closely, playfully tousled his strange sandy-blond hair with a big smile, and said something that sounded like it was meant to be complimentary. Darrel smiled back. Cleaned and fed and rested, he felt refreshed and truly alive for the first time in recent memory. The last vestiges of his long nightmare had been washed away.

Zhana continued to question the Stranger in her unintelligible language. She spoke slowly and carefully, trying to make Darrel understand.

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“Agu dikol enteh ongut?” Getting no response, she repeated the question, with even greater emphasis on each sound. Darrel felt helpless. How could he expect to get ahead if he couldn’t even understand the simplest of phrases? He quickly decided that survival and success depended on learning to communicate. And, he wanted the girl to know just how badly he wanted to understand.

Zhana’s expression grew suddenly alive with new enlightenment. She excitedly led Darrel into a small cave-room off to the side of the place where he had first regained consciousness. This new room was quite small. In the center was a massive granite workbench that dominated the tiny chamber. The surface of the huge table was polished to a smooth, almost glassy finish. An arrangement of shelves, containing strange artifacts new to Darrel’s experience, was cut out of the stone walls. Zhana motioned him over to the workbench, while she went over to the shelves. She presented to Darrel a rigid but tissue-thin sheet of a metallic substance that he could not identify. He set it on the workbench. With a jewel-tipped stylus, Zhana etched a sequence of exotic characters from right to left. Pointing to the foreign script she repeated her question, again with careful emphasis on each sound. *“Agu dikol enteh ongut?”*

Darrel gently took the stylus from Zhana’s hand, and pressed it into the thin sheet of metal. “My name is Darrel Swift,” he printed in careful, orderly figures. “I am from Santa Barbara, California.” He slowly repeated the words aloud in English. He repeated the name “Darrel,” which she had already learned, and carefully printed “D-A-R-R-E-L” on the metallic page. He then repeated the name “Zhana” and carefully printed the girl’s name next to his own.

Zhana stared at him quietly, with pensive understanding. Then she broke into another wide grin as she recovered the stylus and scribbled her own strange characters below where he had printed his own name. She pointed to her writing and said, “Darrel.” She etched a circle around the two words to show that they referred to the same name. She did the same with her own name, reviewing from right to left the sound of each character.

Darrel pointed to various objects and gave their names in English. Zhana repeated each name in her own language, as Darrel listened carefully. Finally, he pointed to one of the little glowing stones. He did not have an English word for the object. Zhana was quick to provide her own vocabulary: *“Kibih. Kibihni.”*

“Kibihkibihni?” puzzled Darrel.

Realizing that she had confused Darrel by giving two words for the same object, she tried a different approach. She took one of the fluorescent stones and held it in front of Darrel. “Kibih,” she said. Gathering several more of the luminous stones from around the room, she set them in a row behind the first. She pointed to each stone individually and said,

"Kibih" to each one. Scooping all the stones together, she motioned to the whole group and said, *"Kibihni."* Darrel understood that she was referring to singular and plural forms of the same word. At any rate, he now had a name for the wonderful little lights which had brightened his world when life was at its darkest moment.

Darrel would soon come to learn that Zhana would be playing an important role as his teacher, and he would learn that her selection for this position was not accidental. Despite her youthful age, she was an important figure in developing and coordinating programs to work with the social and educational problems of children or adults. Back when Darrel was found half dead near the rocky opening of the great cavern, it was under the direction of the highest authorities that he was taken to a little suite of caves near the cave-home where Zhana lived with her parents, Rimani and Lena. Thus, Zhana would be near the Stranger to give personal attention to making his life comfortable and developing communication.

* * * * *

The rescue team continued its digging and excavation efforts. They had to move slowly, inch by tedious inch, so as not to cause another rockslide, and so they wouldn't dig right through the remains of Darrel Swift if they should encounter them. By now, weeks had passed since Darrel's disappearance, and there was little hope of finding him alive.

The group paused for a break and passed around a six-pack of beers. Alan was in one of his more philosophical moods. "Darrel was an okay guy," he reflected. He had grown up with his younger cousin, and they had gone through a lot together. "Linda? Well, that's between her and Darrel. Who knows how a person is going to react when something like this happens." He finished his beer and resumed digging along with the others. "Oh well, she's paying us to try to find him ... at least it's a job."

Suddenly, the massive resistance of the granite barrier fell limp as they poked through, to the emptiness of air on the other side. Alan called excitedly to the others as he chipped away at the opening, widening it enough for grown men to pass through. After long weeks of tedious labor up on the mountainside, they had finally tunneled through the rockslide. But the real task was just beginning. They still had to find whatever might be left of Darrel.

Alan and Lee and the others crawled through the granite tunnel and were amazed to discover the same slanting passage that had intrigued Darrel so many weeks ago. Pressed between the narrow walls of stone, they followed downward along its plunging floor.

"There's no sign of him," noted one of the men.

"Maybe he's buried somewhere under the rockslide," suggested Lee. "We can't dig through all the granite in the cave!"

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The beam of Alan's lantern caught the reflection of something further down in the passageway. It was an empty can of Diet Dr. Pepper, with junk food wrappers scattered loosely around. It was clear that Darrel had at least made it as far as this slanting passage.

"Let's go a little deeper," Alan decided.

* * * * *

After Darrel's brief initiation to the problems of language and literacy, Zhana led him upward through several levels of cave-rooms whose arrangement was too orderly not to have been carved out by deliberate human hands. Finally, they ascended through a short inclined tunnel and out into the floor of the great cavern that Darrel had first seen from its cliffside opening far above.

Outside the carefully carved out cave dwelling, the stony surface was no longer smooth and gentle against Darrel's bare feet. He felt the prickling and poking of each rocky point. He wondered if his feet would toughen through time, or if he should try to find his discarded footwear.

Now, down in one of the valleys of that Great Cavern, he looked out across the multi-layered plateaus and canyons, covered with foliage and extending out to the endless reaches of the expansive grottoed cavern. He was amazed that such a place could exist thousands of feet into the depths of the Earth, and wondered silently how many other tunneled homes might be below the visible surface.

Far above, millions of fluorescent kibihni combined to generate an unending profusion of light. The light, rainbows and generous flows of water created a lush subterranean garden.

As Zhana pointed descriptively toward the scenery, explaining everything in beautifully unintelligible phrases, an agile figure leaped over the rocks and plants, landing barefooted on the rocks, and gripping the stony formations with his toes as he crouched nearby. The man was promptly joined by a woman, and followed quickly by others until a small crowd had gathered on the nearby rocks and in the lower branches of surrounding trees. News had spread fast, and they all wanted to see and touch the Stranger.

The little cave-people crowded around, pointing towards Darrel and chattering noisily. Darrel looked into the excited faces and pointing fingers of the gathering crowd, frightened and embarrassed. His first impulse was to run, but where could he go? Remembering his resolution to take things easier and get along with the natives, he tried to relax. He turned to Zhana for reassurance. She was busy holding back the crowd, while taking obvious delight in babbling the whole story of her experiences thus far with the Stranger. Darrel chuckled at the humanness of his hostess.

He again looked over the faces of those gathered around. This was no “angry mob,” and he felt there was nothing to fear. They still chattered noisily among themselves, with curious fascination. But they meant no harm. There was a festive air, as if they all knew each other.

As additional people gathered, a small band of musicians settled into the group, playing their simple melodies of chimes, woodwinds, and with the accompaniment of simple percussion instruments. There was a simplicity in the technology of their music, yet a graceful, melodic elegance in the patterns of harmony that they created. This was a happy people. They did not seem to threaten any harm. More than ever, Darrel was certain he could survive well if he could learn their customs and get along with them.

While Zhana was describing her account with wide-eyed enthusiasm to a still-increasing crowd, the people suddenly became very quiet, and backed off slightly in unison. The musicians stopped playing. Zhana stopped speaking and looked up. Darrel turned to see what might have caught the attention of the cave-people so completely.

Carried on the backs of four husky youths was an open carriage with a shriveled old man capped with a brilliant flash of white hair. The Old Man bubbled with kindly enthusiasm for the crowd, smiling eagerly in all directions as if to touch each face that drew respectfully near. He wore a simple tunic of pastel green, and received total reverence from the hushed crowd.

Darrel, standing and watching in silent awe, felt the strong presence of a person who was clearly a figure of great prominence.

The youths cleared the crowd back enough to open a space near Zhana, and set the carriage down on the ground. The Old Man motioned her to come near. She squatted down next to him on the rocks. He smiled gently as he spoke, and radiated a sweet feeling of peace to Darrel. As Zhana and the Person continued talking back and forth at great length, Zhana finally beckoned Darrel to come closer and sit down with them. He did.

The Old Man stared at Darrel for a long moment. His round, piercing eyes broke into a sparkle of delight as he smiled softly and gave a little laugh. Darrel felt a greater sense of reassurance from the presence of this man than at any time since he had come into the caves. The Old Man spoke some words that Darrel could not understand, and his wrinkled face again bubbled over with compassionate joyfulness. He seemed to smile so easily. A murmur raced through the crowd as the Old Man touched Darrel’s face gently, and then drew the Stranger close with both hands in an affectionate embrace.

Darrel followed as Zhana resumed a standing position, and the Old Man was carried quickly away. The music again flowed, and a pleasant chatter again rippled through the crowd. More than ever, Darrel wanted

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to know what kinds of thoughts and feelings motivated this strange community of beings who had never seen real daylight. Zhana was still talking to Darrel in her unintelligible chatter. She led him back into the maze of underground rooms, and the crowd outside slowly dissipated.

We hope you have enjoyed these sample chapters.

**Chapters Four through Twenty-two and
Two Appendices are available only in the complete
book.**

Table of Contents shows accurate page numbers for the remaining
content of the book.

For more information:

<http://www.wordwiz72.com/dazhan.html>

Cover art for back cover follows below

Dazhan

Secrets of the Cave People

Dazhan — From mystery-shrouded caverns deep within the Earth emerges this fantasy encounter between two divergent civilizations.

One is rich in technological wonders, but is plagued by violent terror and social injustice.

The other is industrially primitive, but thrives in a harmonious community centered around cheerful, happy "compassionate joy."

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Dazhan — presents the simple secrets of "love" and "peace" that go beyond outdated rhetoric or moralistic obligation. Enjoying the people around us should be a cheerful and natural process of spontaneous delight. The power of practical compassion in **ACTION** and the people around us are our greatest treasures.

This parable of the cave people demonstrates **HOW TO** overcome interpersonal frictions (including those from "difficult" people; to embrace people but not behaviors, without becoming enablers) to achieve the happy feelings of "compassionate joy" that we want to enjoy, but which are often so elusive in the hectic pace of day-to-day realities and pressures.

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