

ORDOVICH
PRESENTS

MERIDIAN QUEST

PART I





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MERIDIAN QUEST

PART I: MYSTERIES OF THE VOYNICH MANUSCRIPT



) Based on True Events (

me·ri·dian |mə'ridēən| noun

1. *Geometry* longitudinal circles coursing through the earth's terrestrial poles.
2. *Metaphysics* twelve pathways through which energy flows in the human body, each associated with a vital organ.
3. *Sociology* the greatest stage of human splendor.



NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

When I'm an old man, nearing the end of my time, I will look back on my life with the inability of distinguishing between what was real and what was imaginary; at which point, there becomes two conclusions:

...Everything was Real...

...Everything was Imaginary...



THE NEW WORLD

FLOATING MOUNTAINS OF DOMINICA

15.3014°S, 61.3883°W: It was Winter Solstice. I left home without ceremony or celebration. Just like any other day: I wore my dusty derby to keep the tropical sun off my nose; carried my tweed suitcase full of drugs, knives, and syringes; and bid farewell to Romeo, the resident dog, who spent most of his day chasing lizards in the front yard.

Walking down the road was burdensome during that time. December was still warm in the West Indies. Tropical winter would only unfold between January and February. And I would hardly call it a winter in that muggy marshland. Strange place, the West Indies. For all of its exotic intrigue, it's a place that can only be comfortably inhabited by folks of color. And, ironically, the men responsible for colonizing these islands soon realized how awful the tropical sun can be; later returning to their cold and gloomy motherland like little children who ran away from home. Regardless, I have fallen in love with this place. If there's any one thing to admire about the West Indies, it's the clean water. Rivers that you can drink from without fear of disease. But that blasted sun—the great tormentor—is the only curse of these lands. So yes, the long walk to town is an arduous journey. Any wise man of my complexion would seek shady spots along the road, even if it meant crossing to the other side of the street. I've seen the old leathery dogs who in their younger, careless days regarded the sun as their friend, and are now a sad sight to behold.



I was en route to class—the final day before my exam. Little did I know, it would be the last time I would ever set foot in a classroom. And thank heaven for that. I've discovered over my years of academia to regard the professor as a mere actor regurgitating the dialogue of pedagogical literature. Naturally, some actors are better than others. And today, I would be witnessing one of the most flamboyant of them all.

Dr. Fitzgerald

Dr. Fitzgerald is the direct descendant of British royalty. His father was a naval officer for the Queen. As was customary of the time, he married a beautiful African slave girl, and inducted her into a life of royal servitude. Things didn't change much for her other than the fact that she had the honor and privilege of giving birth to a legitimate child of Babylon. Many women of her class did not have such liberties and were forced to conceal their bastard mixed-breeds from the scrutinizing eyes of high society.

For that reason, Dr. Fitzgerald was granted a royal education in his motherland of Dominica, being privately counseled by some of the greatest British physicians of the day. Now, Dr. Fitzgerald is not only an excellent infectious disease specialist, but also a highly acclaimed neurologist. He did great work in furthering treatment of various aphasias. He used to say that one of the greatest things to lose was the capacity of speech. "A thing which cannot speak," he would contend, "is a thing that cannot write history." This, of course, was not entirely true. But that didn't matter. What mattered most was his wit. My personal favorite quip of his was of an insult. If somebody was being obtuse, he would like to ask whether the individual was familiar with Wernicke's Aphasia. More often than not, the person had no idea what the disorder was. "Well," he would explain, "it's a disease of the mind where an individual speaks but the words they say make absolutely no sense. In my expert opinion, you may well be suffering from this very disease."

Asides from being an intellectual ass, Dr. Fitzgerald was somewhat of a nationalist. When the Queen of England still had her firm grip on the colony, he, amongst many within the Dominican intelligentsia, found the British rule to be more stifling than constructive for progress. Considering the modern state of the island, one might argue that poor economic progress had little to do with the British occupation. The esteemed



doctor would boast during lecture about his involvement in the emancipation of his people.

It was Dominica's Independence Month. On the island, one does not designate one day for such an occasion. One dedicates the entire month. The people marinates their spirits in rum and wears the colors of freedom, which may involve a bright plaid vest, or plaid shirt, or plaid tie, or plaid dress. If it weren't for the right angles of his plaid, Dr. Fitzgerald could easily be mistaken for a polynesian rug from afar. But that was a reflection of his celebratory spirit. Every day he celebrated. Every-day he honored his history. Especially today.

He tilted his head up as he spoke, as if to display some critical aspect of his chin, despite it being concealed beneath his silly little beard. And although he spoke about Malaria, he somehow maintained the ability to tie science in with Dominican politics during lecture.

"The city of Roseau can thank it's existence to Malaria," he explained. "500 years ago, as Europeans brought their African slaves to the West Indies, they also brought their disease. The greatest of all being *Plasmodium falciparum*— Malaria. In those days, when the capital of Dominica lied in the bay of Portsmouth, Malaria struck, killing many; sparing few. The solution? Move the capital! Clever idea, otherwise we may have wound up being some ruined civilization like the Mayans."

The Doctor froze in his thoughts. I remember the room feeling awkward as a number of my colleagues shifted in their seats. "Hm," he muttered. "Speaking of which, the Mayan Calendar will be ending in precisely one year from today. Some say the Earth might be coming to an end."

A student suddenly raised her hand. Dr. Fitzgerald looked blankly at her palm. "Speak, my dear."

"Well, Doctor, what do you think? About the world ending?"

"I...I have no opinion on matters regarding the metaphysical. I am a scientist, not a fortune-teller. But, indeed, I will say this: it is now the end—the end of today's lecture. Good luck on the final exam, class."



The Voynich Manuscript



Winter solstice is a time of darkness in the Northern Lands. Historically, cultures around the world would honor both environmental and supernatural challenges with great preparation, reaching out to their spiritual guardians for assistance in their sleep. During these dark times, the veil between reality and the supernatural dimension grows thin, revealing divine energy through dream archetypes.

While on my way to the clinic down town, I had reflected on what Dr. Fitzgerald mentioned regarding the fate of the Mayan Calendar. According to legend, the Mayans of Chichen Itza spoke of a feathered serpent that, during winter solstice, would swoop down from the heavens like a holy messenger. Although I never dreamed of the feathered serpent, I did recall a very peculiar dream I had the evening prior.

Last night, I was visited by my most powerful guardian, Creedius. He had visited me before as the White Wolf. But this time, he revealed his human form and brought me to a place high on a hill where I would have the best view of the evening sky.

Before continuing, I am obliged to discuss the significance of the White Wolf. Wolves, throughout history, have been regarded with both admiration and apprehension by societies around the world. A fierce warrior with a strong sense of kinship, choosing the alliance of its closest comrades over a life of solitude, it's a creature that has sparked fear in the hearts of our species; a result of great misunderstanding. The White Wolf is a spirit that has consistently kept to my side during great periods of darkness. He is the guardian of my domain—the Gatekeeper to my World of Providence; and, incidentally, a manifestation of Creedius, the God to whom I bow.

After escorting me to the hill, Creedius brought my attention to the dusky sky, illuminated by the moon. The moon had then transformed into a triad—a celestial event that elicited the attention of most everyone that evening. Many people gathered on the hillside along with Creedius and I to witness the spectacle that was about to unfold. He stood by my side with his long white beard and hair flowing in the mountain breeze. And it wasn't long after he whispered into my ear, "You must now pay attention," that the three moons began a dance that entranced us all into a hypnotic state, whereupon, the Gods of the Three Moons emerged and spoke. It happened so fast that, admittedly, I am to this day unable to recall their important message. All I can honestly say is that I was visited by the Gods of the Three Moons. My reverie then broke.



There was a man seated at a public bench down town. He looked familiar. As it turns out, he was one of my colleagues at the university. His name was Mubashir, which translates roughly to “Bringer of Good Tidings”. He wore a necktie and stared casually into a leather-bound book. He turned as I walked by and glanced at my dusty old suitcase. “Looks like you’re in the midst of an adventure.”

“Well, not quite. I’m on my way to clinic.”

“I see. What’s in the suit-case?”

“A suit, of course. What’s in your hand?”

“A copy of the Voynich Manuscript. Heard of it?”

“No. But it sounds interesting enough.”

“Interesting, indeed. In fact, quite mysterious. It’s written in a completely unrecognizable language. It’s fully illustrated, with depictions of plants that are beyond classification and celestial creatures that depict ancient gods.”

“Gods?”

“Yes.”

“Let me see.”

He turned to the page. The image was somewhere in the middle of the book, after a long section that appeared to be dedicated entirely to botany. Then there it was. The Gods of the Three Moons. Just like I saw them in my dream. My hair stood on end.

“Where was this book from, exactly?”

“Well, nobody really knows for certain. It was procured in Italy some years back, but it might be from the Middle East. I personally think it may be from somewhere in the tropics. Perhaps Central America. I’ve seen similar plant species during my studies in Pelanque.”

“Pelanque?”

“Yes. I conducted field research as a botanist in the Yucatan Peninsula some time back. That’s what turned me on to this book in the first place—I’ve actually managed to positively identify a few of these plant species. I’m doing my best to work on the rest.”

“So you’re implying that this book could have been produced by someone of Mayan decent?”

“Precisely. This section on celestial entities is particularly fascinating. They appear to be both solar and lunar gods and goddesses. Mayans are notorious sun-worshipers. As a matter of fact, Pelanque is the location of the Temple of the Sun.”

“And where is the Temple of the Moon located?”

“Hah! Good question. Perhaps you’ll run into it on your adventure.”

Lord Varunka

It was Saturday and I was to meet my most trusted companion for the first time. It happened in the town's market place. Every Saturday, in the main square, farmers, artisans, and fishermen throw a lively affair with colorful foods, peculiar fragrances, and exorbitant streams of capital. Everyone is looking to be a part of the transaction, even if they have nothing to offer. A man, salty as a dried up mackerel, will invariably approach you with a few grumbling statements and ask for a couple "Elizabeths". Everybody here loves the Queen, even if she no longer reigns in this region. Somehow, she managed to keep her face plastered on every form of currency and everybody wants a piece of her. This is not necessarily a problem. The flow of "Elizabeths", or any currency for that matter, is crucial in the stability of a country. No one man or institution should ever be the bearer of all wealth. However, the non-transaction is what bothers me; when a creature of vice resorts to others for contribution to their rather unfortunate cause. I was in the midst of a non-transaction when I met the creator of my new companion, Lord Varunka.

In the square, sat a man carving diligently. He was in the process of putting the final touches on my companion when he spoke to me without looking.

"You late, mon."

"Excuse me?"

"You late. S'posed to be here sooner. But that's no consequence. Hadn't completed my work. Until now."

"I...think you might be mistaken. Perhaps you were waiting for somebody else?"

"No. Ordovich. Is you who I's waiting fo'."

I stood speechless. I did not even bother to ask how he knew my name, and thus he continued.

"I been working on Lord Varunka for the past three nights; no sleep; no food; no water. The eve of the first night, I received word from Jah in my sleep. Urged me to make Lord Varunka. To introduce him to you. Jah said your name was Ordovich."

"How is that possible? And for what reason?"

"Concern not with realm of possibilities. Am merely a disciple of the Creator, Jah. Jah know what I mean?"

The man put down his tool and held Lord Varunka with admiration.



Lord Varunka came out of the woodwork in perfect form. The mystic slowly closed his eyes and touched his forehead against Lord Varunka's forehead while whispering something unintelligible. And suddenly, a brilliant sheen came upon the staff, anointed by his magical incantation. The mystic then turned to me with a fiery expression on his old, weathered face.

"Here. Meet your guardian, Lord Varunka. The tree from which he come was old, harboring great wisdom. Excellent guide fo' a voyager. Fear not if you happen to find yo' self in the midst of discussion with yo' new friend. You not losin' composure. You is simply discussing matters with a very wise, ol' creature of the earth."

That is when I held Lord Varunka in my hands for the first time. He was surprisingly sturdy; the sort of wood that would falter to nothing. Wise, perhaps, but an excellent weapon, indeed.

Whilst admiring my new friend, the old mystic gave me further instruction. He explained that in his dream, his guardian spoke of jade stone. "Jah suggest," he continued, "that you be needin' jade fo' yo' immanent voyage. I truly do not know the meanin' of this suggestion; however, I feel lil' reason to question its importance. Thus, I happen to know a woman who you can seek. Name's Makeda. She owns an inn up North. You must go to'er. She'll be wearin' a blouse made of fine silk. What you want lies beneath her blouse."

Makeda

The old Jamaican mystic spoke of Makeda as one recalls a great tragic tale. The blood that courses through Makeda's veins is that of royalty. Many generations ago, her ancestors reigned over a vast kingdom of Eastern Africa. The time of darkness throughout the European lands was, contemporaneously, a Golden Age in Africa. The land, during those years, was fertile, the resources rich, and the waters pure. The queen, a direct ancestor of Makeda's, was a great ruler—a Goddess of the Feminine and a temperer of the great feline, a creature worshiped during those days as a conduit to the Gods. It was a time of peace in what is now a land tarnished by war.

Things turned as the Africans of the West, armed by the armies of Europe, waged a ten-year war against the empires of the East. Many were killed. Those who survived were sold into slavery to the Europeans who were in the midst of a conquest to the New World. It is strange how people of a continent can sell their own kin for something as simple as a spool of fine fabric. And so they did, selling thousands



upon thousands of human cattle to be shipped off to the distant shore. The entire royal family of the East faced this tragic fate, being stripped from their prosperous empire and hurled into a life of misery.

And now Makeda is the last of her bloodline.

"She," the old man continued, "carries the jade, once worn by her ancestors 'round 'er neck, concealed beneath 'er dress. Now, she falters fo' nobody. She's the blood of royalty; managed to maintain it's stature— if not in power, then jus' de way she carries herself. And, mind you, she grants no requests. However, wit a simple gesture, you may win yo' way to her heart."

"And what gesture might that be?" I asked.

"Upon introducing yo' self, kneel an kiss the back of her hand. She be royalty, after all. Must be treated as such if you are to make yo' request successfully. But beware; she tricky. With that, I must bid you farewell. I sure Lord Varunka will give you great council."

It suddenly dawned on me that Lord Varunka must cost a small fortune— perhaps more than I'd be able to conjure. And, as I have learned, nothing is free in the West Indies.

I thus inquired, "How much do I owe you for Lord..." but as I turned to face the old man, I quickly realized that I was standing alone on the sidewalk. And that was the last I ever saw of the old Jamaican mystic.



Lord Varunka and I sought out Makeda that very afternoon. It took only one hour to reach the north end of the island by caravan. And tracking down the precise location of her inn was no difficult feat. She was a highly reputable woman in the region, for as much as she was desired by every man, she was equally despised by every woman.

It was nearly dusk and I could hear the shore approaching. We entered Makeda's inn without reception, for not a single soul roamed the property.

I tried to break the strange silence with a simple "Hello?" Yet the only voice that responded was the sound of the waves. And so, we entered further towards the only friendly voice. And then, as we were about to reach the back of the inn, I saw her, seated on a bench, idly pondering the golden sun hovering over the silver sea. She looked familiar, like somebody I had known from the past. But, of course, this was the first time I had met her. She broke her reverie.



"I've been expecting you."

"You knew I'd come?"

"On this tiny island, word has its way of getting around."

"I see. Well, you might have heard that I traveled many miles to pay you a visit."

At that point, she turned around to face me. She was strikingly beautiful, and very young. She wore silk, just as the Jamaican mystic predicted.

"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ordovich." I then proceeded to kneel down and kiss the back of her hand as I was instructed. "And you must be Makeda."

"Indeed, I am. And, I presume, you're visit is not without reason."

"Right. I have received word that you—"

"Have jade stone of which you seek. It is true, Ordovich. I have what you want." She came close, whispering into my ear, "And what you want is right here, beneath my dress."

It began very gradually. So gradually that it was difficult to tell whether or not I was imagining it. Her voice had transformed into something ethereal and the world around me grew hazy. Her words echoed through my head. At first, I felt uneasy; like a man who had passed the point of being reasonably drunk, only to become a creature incapacitated by his own vices.

"You don't remember who I am, do you, Ordovich?" The way she said my name seemed so familiar, and I was comforted by this sense of familiarity. In fact, the familiarity of her voice drove me to an immensely amorous state of mind. To the point where nonsensical words of love began spilling from my tongue.

"I do not. I have tried for so long to recall. But all I could remember is that I love you, Makeda."

"If you love me, then take me away to the forest. Come dance with me in the trees, with the creatures of the mountain. Oh, such beautiful melody that behooves one to waltz with the white wizard. You have enchanted me, Ordovich. I, too, am in love."

"Oh Makeda—this tree! It speaks to me. It's seeds are the seeds of love! The Voynich! That's why the Voynich was written! For this...Tree of Love! And this tree upon which we dance grew from a single seed! And now, I have finally found it!"





I arose in the same forest that I had imagined. Except this time, I was alone, save the scurrying reptiles and squawking bullfinch. It was dawn and I could scarcely move my head without it throbbing in exquisite pain. I slowly regained composure and searched frantically for my belongings. But, to my relief, they were mostly accounted for: Lord Varunka who stared severely at me, as if disappointed in my faltering to Makeda's spell; my hat covered in twigs and moss; and my leather satchel. I rummaged through it to see if everything was intact. Then I looked into my wallet only to find half of my money missing. There was also a note, written by Makeda. It read:

"Ordovich: From now on, I trust that you will be more wary of kissing the back of a woman's hand. You must have noticed by now that after poisoning you, I took half of the money in your wallet. I imagined that you would need the other half for your journey. But worry not; the exchange was indeed in your favor. Merely look around your neck..."

I felt my neck and the stones that hung around a delicate string; little cubes and spheres of jade, at least what I presumed to be jade. I had never actually seen the stone for myself until that morning. The letter continued:

"In our brief encounter, you spoke eagerly of some sort of seed. I imagine you were referring to seeds of influence, in a metaphorical way. I am afraid I cannot help you, for I hold no place of power. But I do know of a farmer who lives in the Middleham Valley that will be able to guide you in such matters."

In her note, she explained how to find this mysterious farmer, an illusive character who lived upstream of the Middleham Falls. His name was Omptie.

Omptie

Omptie was a farmer of the reclusive sort, preferring the company of his crop in Zion over the city dwellers of Babylon. His home was high in the mountains and, for a man unfamiliar with the terrain, gaining access to his estate through the forest was impossible. Trails came meandering out of nowhere and disappeared into thin air. The only reasonable rout was following the Laudat River up through Titou Gorge and continuing until reaching the heart of Middleham, the greatest waterfall on the entire island.

After being lost for most of the day, I reached a clearing in the forest. A tiny, wooden hut lay in its center. There was smoke billowing out of a little makeshift chimney in the rear. Somebody was home. Then I heard a terrible voice from behind me, followed by the feeling of something sharp pressed tightly against my back.

“What business you have here, Babylonian?” Besides from him breaking the silence, he snuck up on me without a sound. A true wild man. It must be him, I thought.

“Omptie, I presume?”

“Yes-I.”

“Then you must be acquainted with Makeda.”

“How you know my cousin?”

“She sent me here. Said you could help me.”

“Why would I want to help a Babylonian? Zion is no place for a white mon. You turn round or die.”

“She said you were a farmer.”

A woman then emerged from the little wooden shack. She looked frightened and didn’t say a word. I greeted her with a nod.

“Who’s your friend?” she finally asked.

“This white devil ain’t no friend of mine. He come here looking for assistance. Come here to find trouble.”

“I want no trouble. I’m looking for seeds. Special seeds from a tree that grows in your forest. A tree of love, I believe. I saw it in a vision last night.”

“Tree of Love?” The farmer laughed and put down his cutlass. “You lookin’ to find Bois Bandé? Ha! You hear that Avanel? The white devil says he needs Bois Bandé!”

“No. I’m not looking for an aphrodisiac. I’m looking for a tree of the spirits.”





“You could have just told me you wanted Bois Bandé. I grow it all over my garden.” Omptie then put his hand on my shoulder and pointed towards the edge of the clearing, and, indeed, it was barricaded by a thick wall of *Richeria grandis*, the notorious aphrodisiac.

“Come, white devil,” he said nearly comforting, “Avel is making bush tea.”

He had me seated in his home on the floor upon a dusty rug. The rug sat on a ground of patted dirt. He handed me a half-shelled coconut containing a spot of Avel’s steaming beverage. I waited for it to cool down before taking a sip, but Omtie insisted that I tried some. Feeling like a prisoner, I did as he requested, trying my best not to burn my lips.

“Good bush tea,” he said while taking his down without hesitation. He sat on a wooden stool and held a large vase that contained dried plant material. He separated the buds out very diligently and without a word. They had a very powerful yet pleasant

fragrance. He soon produced a thin sliver of paper and rolled the plants into it. The act was done so masterfully, and it appeared to be one of his favorite preoccupations. He lit the end of the cigarette and took a deep breath. He passed the cigarette to Avel who replicated the gesture. She passed the cigarette to me and so I obliged my hosts with a puff. It was nothing like the tobacco I was accustomed to and resulted in an effect that rendered me indisposed.

He noticed my disposition and smiled. “Too much for the white mon,” he said while rising from his seat. He walked to the other side of the room and rummaged through a chest that leaned against the wooden wall. He stopped as he found what he was looking for.

“I won’t need to give you the seeds of the Bois Bandé, although I know its what you have been searching for. But it grows everywhere in these parts. Instead, what I will give you is this.” He handed me a glass vile containing several tiny, maroon-colored seeds. “A carpet-maker from Syria gave me these seeds many years ago. He’s the man who made the rug you’re sitting on. Said something about making red dye with the crushed seeds. I have no use for such things. I did try planting them, but they didn’t take to our tropical soil. So here, you wanted seeds.”



I didn't notice the effect wearing off, for I had fallen asleep. And when I awoke, it was night. The space was dimly lit by a single candle at the opposite end of the room. I heard what sounded like an argument between Omtie and Avanel. It apparently woke me from my drug-induced sleep. I arose and waited until my eyes could adjust to the darkness. I saw an empty bottle of rum on the table near his bed. Then I noticed Omptie hanging over Avanel as she cowered amongst a filthy sheet.

"Stop yelling at me," she cried in a quivering voice.

"You need to learn to control yourself! You disobey me! Nobody disobeys me!"

Omptie rose his hand high and delivered a blow to Avanel that made the whole house shudder. I immediately rose from where I slept and lunged at Omptie. He was a large man, towering over me by nearly two feet, and so I did little but anger the beast. He fell to the floor for a moment but sprang up quickly and ran over to his cutlass. Avanel looked at me with terror.

"You must leave, Ordovich! Leave now!"

I did not hesitate. I grabbed Lord Varunka and my bag and bolted out the bamboo door and ran as fast as I could into the deep dark forest. I could hear Omptie yell from his doorstep. He was belligerent. "You white devil! If I ever see you again, you're dead!" Thankfully, that was the last I ever saw of Omptie and poor Avanel. And thus, my voyage began.