

# **RISE OF THE PHOENIX**

**Lucifer, the Thunder Rider**

**By Clayton R. Douglas**

**An Original Television Series written for HBO**

by Clayton R. Douglas

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## **The Future Past Segment**

**Word Count 8,039**

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*This segment deals with the history of Lucifer, in the beginning, at the first passing of Planet X and the destruction of the highly advanced race called Atlantians. This segment occurs right before he walks into the bar, "Hell's Half Acre". He has just found the most powerful force on Earth that has been hidden from him for 5000 years. There he meets the rest of the cast. Only "Pappy" suspects something a little out of the ordinary about this "Lucky Lou". In a conversation at the end of this segment, Lou takes Pappy into his confidence.*

*The lawyer already works for Lucifer, but without his knowing who his mysterious, unseen, immensely wealthy client really is.*

**The Earth Ship in this segment is called "Heaven". In this Treatment I am using the "Phoenix", described by the ancients as the Rainbow Bird". Theme song attached. This segment will be broken up into short segments of Lucifer's past to be used throughout the series**

**Lucifer's Discovery of his ancient ship**

The dry desert wind whipped my oilskin. The damn helmet's chin strap was rubbing a raw spot on my neck and my sunglasses did little to prevent the dust from filling my eyes. The Harley softail was squirrely on the loose packed, rut filled dirt road. I was alone, as usual. This mountainous, deserted terrain is not the kind most riders, or tourists, would take to for a Sunday ride. . . Even fewer on a Wednesday. Besides, how could I explain to other bikers what I was looking for? For the millionth time, I cursed . . . God, for putting me through this. I wished I could just forget about my quest, lay back and enjoy the pleasures the world had to offer. I still had my health but my youthful, devilish good looks were lost long ago. Gray now streaked my mustache and goatee. My hair, tied tight in a ponytail, contained more silver than black. Still, the search consumed me.

I was following one more obscure lead; UFO reports in the early sixties; A demented old man in the mountains; Indian tales of spirits in these mountains and the ancient white man who lived forever. I had followed rumor and legend through the rain forests of the Amazon, through the jungles surrounding Angkor Wat, into the mountains of ancient Tiahuanaco, an island on Lake Titicaca in Bolivia.

Revisiting the ancient sites had been the hardest on me. In my mind's eye, I could see the happy populace at play in what had once been a resort. I could still see the statues and arches and massive buildings as they had been. I could see the old civilization as no one else on earth could see it!

Reality came rushing back in as the front wheel of my Harley hit a loose rock. I fought the handlebars to regain control and felt a small surge of pride at my mastery of the simple machine. I should have bought a jeep but I had grown very fond of this machine and the society within a society it represented. I was at ease with the coarse, rough, good hearted men who lived the last free lifestyle in an increasingly oppressive world. I have always gravitated to these kind.

Unconsciously, my fingers fondled my stash, the hollow key chain containing the tiny pills that kept me alive, and wondered how much longer I would continue to take them. Maybe my time had finally come. I did not like this new world order and the limitations it placed upon me.

I sensed that the object of my obsession had already departed. Maybe the slogan in the sixties had been based on fact. Maybe God really was dead!

His presence was lacking in this era. The children no longer feared him, respected their elders or life itself. There was no honor, no responsibility, no fear of retribution. Religion was reduced to feeding the poor and there was no fear of God or Devil in man anymore.

Just as well, I thought. I am tired of the whole thing. Lucky was my nickname but luck had not been with me in my quest.

There were still a few miles to go before the road ran out. I thought of the rash of UFO sightings. I was convinced that the government must

have stumbled onto the secret of the magnetic drive in its research or found an alien craft or one of the ancient ships that once plied the skies of this planet. The vast number of sightings had made my search far more difficult

Until now.

Around a turn, high up in the mountains and there was the lake I knew would have to be there. I felt a chill run up my back.

Could this be the home of God?

I felt like Indiana Jones seeing the Holy Grail for the first time!

Deep in the desert of Nevada, there is a secret base which is said to house the US version of UFOs. It is a massive structure built 16 stories under ground. Giant doors open to allow helicopters and saucers access. I know the base exists because I have met people who flew supplies in to it. The place I was looking for would not be that elaborate. It would be far off the track beaten by civilization. It would have to have a large body of water. It would have to be high in the mountains. It would have to be deep enough to hold the mystery that had held mankind in its grasp for the last ten thousand years.

I parked the bike at the water's edge. No one but a few disappointed fishermen and some four wheelers had ever come this way. The lack of fish in this lake was one of the reasons I was here.

The lake with no name and no fish was about a half a mile across. I slowly walked the shoreline, watching for something only I would see. My eye was drawn to a large rock formation that rose from the depths of the lake. The massive rocks reminded me of those scattered about the shores of Lake Titicaca but these were still rough and uncarved. The smallest of the boulders would have weighed more than two tons. No one would have thought of them as being moved by anything short of a volcanic eruption but, to my eye, they appeared to have been carefully placed and stacked. There was no natural outcropping of this type of rock for miles.

My lifelong search was over. Here, on the banks of a lake in a tiny mountain range in the middle of the Mojave Desert lay the answer to mankind's greatest mystery.

I ran shaking fingers over the hairline seams in the rocks until I found the hidden latch. The one ton, solid granite door swung open to reveal a staircase leading down under the lake itself as I knew it would. The air felt cool against my wind-burned face and I unsheathed the small maglight from my belt. There was no cobwebs, rats and few insects, so tight was the seal. The tunnel had been burned through solid rock and ran fifty feet beneath the lake bed. The tunnel ended abruptly. I directed the flashlight's beam upward and it reflected off a mirrored, seamless metal surface with five indentations in the center.

I reached up hesitantly, all of the things that could go wrong running through my mind. The best scenario being that my touch would not do anything. The worst, that there was nothing above my head but tons of mud and water, both of which would come crashing down on my head

before I could escape down the tunnel and find the inside trigger to the stone door.

This was no time to turn back. I had invested much more than a lifetime searching for this. I reached up and placed my fingers in the depressions. Like magic, a tiny circular crack appeared in the metal skin. The circle slid inward and over. A metallic ladder slid out silently. I became aware I had been holding my breath and inhaled deeply.

I climbed the ladder and knew instantly I was the only living being aboard the ship. Life support was still functioning and would continue to do so into infinity. It had been built by a society that was not based on planned obsolescence.

I followed spotless corridors unerringly toward the control room. The dust from my windbreaker was swiftly sucked up by automatic vacuums before it hit the nonskid, soft metallic floor. The door slid open to reveal the control room. Here were the only signs of clutter I had seen since on board. A cup here, a plate there, a robe cast over a control panel that would guide the great ship no more.

The room was dimly lit by instruments. As I entered, the movement triggered a brighter set of lights and I saw him in the corner, leaning over a charting table. His long white hair flowed over the edge of the table and his head rested on the book he had been writing in.

In this sterile atmosphere there was no decomposition. He looked as though he was merely asleep. I half expected to see his eyes open and a smile to shine through the snow white beard as he saw me.

Before touching him, I removed my jacket. I didn't want to soil the spotless white robes. Even in death, he was massive. It took all my strength to lift him from the chair and carry him into his cabin off the control room. Laying him in his bed, I stared at him for fully five minutes as silent tears ran down my cheeks. This was not the ending I had envisioned. I felt none of the hatred that had welled up in my soul in the past. The quest that had driven me was over. I had found my grail but no joy or satisfaction. I had found the foundation of every legend, of every religion. I now possessed the greatest secret in the universe. I now held the key to power beyond mortal man's comprehension. I had access to knowledge forbidden man for centuries. I had won the greatest game ever played. Yet I felt nothing but emptiness and loneliness.

Returning to the control room, like misty ghosts, the almost ancestral memories flooded my consciousness. Sit down in the throne-like Captain's chair, touch this and the craft would rise, silently, responsively, immediately, to an altitude above the highest satellite. Touch there and a laser beam would carve the greatest stone into an engraved portal. Another touch and it would be lifted, transported, and transplanted with micro-millimeter accuracy. The same button would part seas, smash walls and destroy cities.

I touched nothing. Instead, I walked over and sat down in the seat he had died in. I opened the book he had been writing in. The entries were

a combination of pictographs and runes no modern man had ever seen. There were no more than two or three archeologists could have translated.

Opening the book, I read:

"I was mad once."

Only now, after so many years, can I see clearly. I am afraid it is too late to undo all I have done. I hope that someday someone will be able to read this chronicle without their being blinded and prejudiced by the chain of events I, in my madness, started.

Under the circumstances, I suppose any man might have made the same errors, followed the same paths. Still, I do not record this in an effort to seek forgiveness or even pity. By the time anyone is capable of understanding, truly understanding, the world I came from, I will have been long dead, my bones dust, hidden from all eyes in a tomb that contains all the knowledge of the most advanced civilization in the world. A civilization that died in spite of all our technological skills, all our mental achievements.

I am not a scientist. I am an old man, alone with my memories. My younger days were spent in the same pursuits as most men. Women, travel, excitement. I was one of the fortunate ones born into a world rich in the material things so treasured by men. A world without war. The secret of near immortality was ours.

Yet from my birth I knew the shadow of fear. A fear I did not feel as strongly as my father and his generation because of its ever present nearness. In fact, after adolescence, I spent my life preparing for impending doom..

My scientific colleagues had other names for it. The celestial conjunction. The Conjunction. But the members of my crew simply called it The End. The end of the world, as we knew it. For over two hundred and fifty years everyone had known the exact day that the end would occur. It really began for me a week before the day of conjunction.

I had just left Isi, my wife, at our home to do some last minute packing. I had one last meeting to attend at the Temple of Higher Learning before we left. I was in no hurry. This was, quite possibly, the last time I would be able to walk the shaded paths of the most beautiful city on Earth.

Long ago we learned to live in harmony with nature and I breathed in the fragrance of a hundred types of blooming flowers. I can still remember the chattering of the monkeys and squirrels in the trees lining the way. Through the thick growths of shrubs and flowers I could see the vacant, desolate looking homes of my neighbors. Most of whom had already left.

There were not more than thirty thousand of us left on Earth.

There were our more unfortunate neighbors, of course. I had spent over fifty years before the end trying to educate them and prepare them for the coming holocaust but I had been unable to convince myself we were all of the same origin, that we were all Homo Sapiens. I imagine if

their ancestors had been the ones to discover the longevity drug five thousand years ago instead of us, they would be the ones leaving for the stars today and we would be the poor frightened savages left behind to take our chances.

I strolled by the spaceport in time to see the last of the ferries taking off with its load of colonists destined to spread the seed of mankind to the far reaches of the galaxy. A one way trip. A last grasp at the survival of the race. Up above were the gigantic interstellar liners. At two o'clock today they would activate the drives that would push them to speeds near that of light. If only we had a little more time, I feel sure that we would have learned the secret of Faster-Than-Light travel. Then it would have been possible for the colonists to turn around in the event that, after the conjunction, there was still an Earth.

But we hadn't. We couldn't take the chance of letting the ships stay in the neighborhood of the solar system. There was no way we could predict whether the sun would go nova in a chain reaction.

Nobody has ever recorded the effects of worlds in collision.

The silver ship floated gently out of sight into the clouds. Not really sure of my feelings, I turned my eyes toward the four mighty ships left on the empty looking fields.

Shining, silver, circular ships. Each of them measured several hundred feet across. They had been jokingly called the missionary missiles and, to my chagrin, the Chariots of the Gods, referring to the way some of the natives deified us.

For the last fifty years we had been traveling all over the globe in an attempt to prepare the neighboring peoples for the coming cataclysm. We violated five thousand years of isolation from our fellow members of the human race. We had been forced to endure the ridicule of the people who felt nothing but contempt for the less advanced races our globe.

In the final analysis, we had pointed out we could not be sure who would survive, therefore, it was our duty to try to ensure that the knowledge we had gained would not perish. We could not let the human race sink into savagery. We also did quite well financially trading our technological knowledge and assistance for a variety of agricultural products grown in the other regions of the world.

It was a noble cause but I remember wondering at the time if I had sacrificed the lives of my wife and crew by choosing to remain on Earth.

My crew had volunteered to stay with me to the end. They were in the ship now. The balance of the population had decided to remain on their home planet and sat huddled in their homes, held by the territorial imperative, hoping against reason that earth would survive and in doing so, spare them.

I was counting on it also but I had the advantage and safety of a craft that was impervious to gravity or the elements. I had every edge our technology could give us.

Reluctantly, I tore my eyes from my ship and walked briskly across the broad plaza separating the spaceport and the Temple. Normally people were bustling to and fro, lovers sitting on the park benches. Today, only two figures were on the mile square plaza. They were setting a course to intercept me.

As they came closer, I recognized them as the two natives that had come with us from our last trip into Egypt. The tall, broad shouldered one we called Gil, was somewhat of a celebrity among his people. Gabe had met him and been so impressed that he had requested permission to bring him back. It seems that his people thought that Gil was the one of the "Gods". As a matter of fact, he did bear a striking resemblance to Luce but no one had the nerve to suggest such a thing and Luce wasn't about to admit to anything.

Gil's mind was exceptionally quick to grasp concepts and he had all the qualities of a born leader. He and Gabe had become fast friends. They both appeared to be about the same age but Gabe was two hundred and eighty while Gil was only twenty. I was a little concerned that Gabe had let him wander off alone this close to take off time. His companion was his friend/servant named Enki. A short, stocky youth typical of his race. Enki followed Gil around like a little puppy, although he could be transformed into a raging bull if he thought that Gil was in danger. Near me, he always seemed to be in a state of religious ecstasy.

Although I was running late for the meeting I stopped and accepted the proffered pipe that Gil always carried. He kept it filled with his personal stash and when I inhaled I wondered if perhaps his people were keeping the best for themselves and giving us the part they would normally throw away. Maybe they weren't as stupid as most people liked to think. Gil faced me with respect but with none of the awe that was prevalent in Enki's attitude. "Captain Lord." he said after I had passed the pipe back to him and completed the little ceremony. "I would like to request permission to join you in the last days, sir. I will promise not to be a hindrance and I will do my best to be useful".

He stood straight and tall, his eyes only an inch or two below my gaze directly, a thing that most of the members of the backward races are unable to do. I suppose that I do present a rather unnerving sight. My hair and beard are long, bushy and snow white tops off at six foot four inches. Makes me look old, wise and terrible when I am angry.

I'm not. At least I wasn't. Not back then. That was over five thousand years ago. I was only three hundred and thirty. I was just prematurely gray. I was still sane and not terrible at all. . . then.

I put my hand on Gil's shoulder. Not only did it seem like a good gesture to make, it helped to steady me. I find it hard to believe that he could smoke that stuff all day long still be able to stand up. Although he has not mastered mind to mind communication, I almost felt as if he were one of us.

"I would be delighted to have you on board my ship, Gil". I told him.

He beamed at me and stammered his thanks. I told him to rush back to the ship to aid Gabe and the other "angels", as I call the ones that have earned their wings, in the last minute loading. I braced myself as he ran back to the ship and turned back to the meeting.

I got more than a few dirty looks from the other Captains and Archie, the resident scientist, when I finally entered the conference room. My best friend and co-captain, ( The only member of my crew who wasn't afraid to stand up to me) Luce Arch, eased the tension.

"Tet Lord, the only man who would dare to be late for the end of the world!" He said it with a smile. It didn't get much of a laugh but it did allow me to slide into a seat next to him quietly while everyone gave him a dirty look for his poor taste.

Luce didn't care. He always had a smile on his face. He and I had grown up together. I was only a year older than him but he was one of the lucky people that would never have a problem (not that I consider it a problem) with his hair turning white. He sported a mustache and a goatee. He had never married but he always seemed to have a flock of women around him whenever we were in port. How he is able to find such beautiful creatures among the plain, dumpy native women, I'll never know. That's why we nick-named him, "Lucky".

Old Archibald, the chief archivist and the last real scientist left on Earth, resumed his speech, throwing me one last look. I tried not to look bored. I'd heard it all before.

"Harump, I was saying, Tet, that we are counting quite heavily on you four men," nodding his head to include the other three captains and their mates," to preserve the knowledge we have accumulated over the years. We have known for two hundred and fifty years that the planets Mars and Venus would approach Earth's orbit in the week to come. We know it will be close but we do not know how to calculate exactly how close. The resulting contact may completely destroy our world. Escaping that, we can be sure that the ensuing upheavals may destroy most of the sentient life on this planet. We have provided for you and the men and women of your crew the optimum survival craft for a collision between planets. It is your task to survive and lead the surviving population of the world along the paths of civilization".

His eyes scanned the table. "If some of you should survive but your ship is lost, have been three libraries established in structures calculated to survive the catastrophes". He pointed out the locations in Tia, Egypt, and the one in Asia. "It will then be up to you to make your way there and establish yourself as the keepers of the keys to civilization. It is hoped, of course, that with a miracle, we will survive here, also".

"Even now the destruction has begun. We have reports that the expected meteor shower has started. The space station has been destroyed. I can only urge you to get to your ships as soon as possible". We stood as one man. Old Arch looked at us, his face struggling to retain

its stern countenance. "I hope, one day soon, we will meet again, gentlemen. Good-bye and good luck".

He turned and was out of the room quickly. We were out of our chairs and rushing to our respective ships. Luce fell in step with me and explained that there had been a little more and waved an envelope containing more detailed instructions and suggestions.

"I think that old Archie just wanted to say good-bye to us, the products of his brainchild". Luce said with a thought. Archie had been the man that had started the program.

It was late afternoon. Out of habit, Luce and I looked up. Even in the evening light, you could see him plainly. Mars. To the primitives, the bloody God of War. Odd how well the name seemed to fit. The god of war bent on destroying Earth in his battle with the planet Venus.

Venus would make her grand entry into the ballroom of the skies (or battleground, if you prefer) from the west a little later. Tonight they would both be there. Two huge unwinking, unrelenting orbs in the midnight sky. Mars, a bloody, glaring red. A piercing, unwavering eye bent on destruction. Venus. Cloudy, mysterious, her gases trailing behind her like a silvery, shimmering gown. Changing her appearance often, like a woman. Sometimes she appeared in the skies as a serpent breathing fire.

The night skies were indeed a wonder. Even the brightness of our own moon paled in the face of the unearthly beauty of the hurtling, celestial spheres. A beauty that masked the death and destruction that the heavenly messengers brought.

We were walking back towards my house to pick up Isi when a sharp thought from Luce turned my eyes upwards again. Even in the light I could see them plainly. Meteors. Eight of them in rows of two. In perfect geometrical procession. They were close, probably just reaching the upper reaches of the atmosphere but in the vastness of the sky, they gave the illusion of a team of firing steeds pulling Mars across the sky.

The phenomena lasted for about fifteen seconds before the pattern deteriorated and the meteors hit the thicker gases. Then, like a team of horses whose traces had broken, they came rushing earthward in disorganized confusion.

The display must have been seen by the whole northern hemisphere. I wondered what kind of explanation the natives would have for it. The awe inspiring exhibition had so caught our eye that we did not notice the rest of the sky for almost a minute. Dimly, like fireworks set off in the daytime, we began to perceive thousands of fire flecks in the afternoon sky. We were almost hypnotized by the advance bombardment of our planet by another until the results exploded around us.

The concussion caused by a white-hot meteor meeting the two foot thick stone slab, the kind that covered the huge plaza, knocked us off our feet and jarred us back to an awareness of our danger.

Fortunately we weren't injured outside of some minor bruises from the resulting debris.

The meteors were striking all over the city now. We could hear the explosions as they struck houses and the flames were already springing up in various wooded spots. The terrified cries of the arboreal animals reached our ears.

"Get to the ship', my thought rang out but Luce was already heading toward the spaceport at a dead run."Turn on the repellor field, stay inside until I get back with Isi". I added needlessly, as I ran in the direction of my home. Luce is the most competent officer I have ever known. If there had been another ship, he would have had the command of it.

I mentally cursed myself for leaving Isi behind and wishing that mind to mind was effective over longer distances when a huge meteor came screaming down to strike somewhere ahead of me with a terrible explosion. It seemed as if a piece of it had exploded in my brain.

I stumbled, almost fell but didn't. I kept running but there was terrible emptiness inside of my head. I knew what had happened but I would not let myself believe it until I saw the burning wreckage of our home. I refused to let myself believe that she was dead until my frantic digging in that smoldering rubble turned up a ring of hers that had been given to her by the ruler of Egypt. She had vowed never to take it off. Said it was the least she could do for a man that addressed her as a Goddess.

She hadn't. Her hand and a part of her arm was still attached to it, burned beyond recognition as a part of a human being.

I believe this was the point that I went mad.

Oh, it didn't show. Not right away. The routines of command were too strongly ingrained in me to let me go all the way. Perhaps it would have been better if I had become a catatonic or a screaming madman. At least, then, my crew would have known. As it turned out, only Luce knew for sure and, in my madness, I ruined him.

Madness and power sometimes go hand in hand.

In a state of shock, I found my way back to the ship. Luce must have picked up my anguished thoughts because he met me at the ramp, cutting the repellor field just long enough to allow me to get on board.

Gently, very gently, he took the burned, bloody remains of my wife from me, while placating me with soothing, calming thoughts. I didn't even sense the medic until he hit me with a tranquilizer. I followed Luce quietly as he led me to my cabin.

I awoke later to the unmistakable hum of power of a scout ship in motion. I lay on my bed for a while, keenly, agonizingly aware of the absence of my beloved Isis, who had been a part of my life, my mind, for over fifty years. I might have withdrawn completely into a catatonic state if Luce hadn't come in at that particular time.

"Come on". He said, his thoughts scathing. "You can't allow her death to affect you like this. You have got to realize that there are going to be millions of lives lost in this before it's all over. Regardless of the fact that she was your wife, she is just another one of the casualties now. You have got a full contingent of men and women that are depending on you to

get them through this alive and to lead the survivors. Now are you going to lay there and feel sorry for yourself or are you going to act like a leader? If you're not, I'll take over as Captain. Somebody has to do it".

Looking back, I can see now that he used the words and tone that he did to shock me back into action and sanity. It did not have quite the results that he had hoped. He succeeded in bringing me out of my apathy but he aroused the irrational anger in me that lasted for thousands of years.

I felt that he was conspiring to take my ship away from me and my anger surged out at him. His deeply tanned face paled at the vehemence of my thoughts. I don't think he expected that kind of a reaction.

"You will not take over my ship". I declared. "Nor will you try to undermine the crew's respect for me. I will lead and you will follow my orders. We will survive, but as for them," I waved my arm to indicate inhabitants of the lands surrounding our country, "I could care less. All of their lives put together could not be worth the life of Isis".

With that I left him standing there and strode to the Captain's chair. He followed me into the control room and everything took on a resemblance of normality. Underneath, the tension remained.

Luce had already instructed the navigator to plot a westerly course for Tiahuanaco, our largest base on the western continent. We had decided to weather the holocaust there. It was built on one of the highest spots on Earth and was virtually inaccessible by land. It had served us for thousands of years as a refueling stop on our journeys across the great ocean to obtain our meat and the immortality drug. After we learned the secret of anti-gravity and magnetically powered flight, it was no longer necessary to stop there for fuel but we maintained the base as a resort, letting the natives take care of the facilities and trading with them for the fabulous coca extract that was so popular back home. The natives used the leaves to keep up their energy for work in the rarefied atmosphere. Under our protection and with our trade, they were the most advanced people on their continent.

For the last fifty years we had been doing quite a bit of building at Tia, strengthening the already fantastically strong buildings in order to ensure their survival and that of their contents, as this was the site of one of the libraries.

When we arrived, a thunderstorm was in progress. But what a storm! The rain came down so hard that if it were not for our instruments we would have been unable to see the landing field. I doubt if we could have seen the gigantic signpost we had made to point the way to Tia for our ships coming home over the great ocean back in the days before we had instrumentation.

The lightning flashed and crackled constantly. The thunder could be heard inside our sound proof cabin. It sounded as if we were under bombardment by explosive projectiles. My normally jovial crew stared at the view screen and through the portholes in silence.

We hovered over Tia for a full day before the rain let up. When we landed we found the people huddled fearfully in their villages outside the base in superstitious terror. Though we did what we could to reassure them, there was nothing much we could say. They thought it was the end of the world and they were right. All we could do was walk around and try to look confident and even that backfired.

Who else but gods would be unafraid when the world was coming to an end?

Who else?

We decided not to risk the wrath of the natives so we hovered above the mighty stone city. That night we were treated to a display of the forces present in the universe that was unequaled by anything in our five thousand years of recorded history. May no one ever be forced to witness such a spectacle again!

The clouds had dissipated, leaving the sky a dark black that looked like night. But the blackness was only a background for a display of power and beauty that even the natives risked the occasional meteors to watch the battle of the Gods.

The upper reaches of the atmosphere were being wrenched and distorted by the forces of the two Planets bearing down on us. They had caused an Aurora Borealis effect that sent streams of blues, purples, reds and yellows shooting across the skies.

The tensions running through the crew at the mounting gulf between the popular Luce and I were momentarily set aside to watch the display of cosmic forces. Bloody, desolate, vengeful Mars dominated one side of the sky and claimed it as his own. So close was the planet that we could make out its canal like markings, giving it the appearance of a scarred, battle tested warrior.

On the other side of the sky was the beautiful planet of Venus. Mysterious behind her veils of bluegreen gases letting them trail behind her regally, covering millions of square miles. The flickering, colorful skies were only a small part of the two planets effect upon our atmosphere. Though the clouds had dissipated, the lightning bolts still crackled and crashed across the brilliant battlefield of the sky.

Ball lightning floated across our field of vision. All personnel were confined to the ship by my orders and all were crowded into the control room to watch the spectacle. We could tell from the glow around the ports that the exterior of the ship was bathed in a brilliant, blue fire caused by the charged atmosphere. We could see some of the blue, crackling balls bouncing around the ground. I knew that the natives were terrified and that we would have hell trying to convince them afterwards that we were not in league with the terrible "Gods" that were fighting with terrible weapons of fire.

If there was an afterwards.

Everyone was tense and thought shields prevailed. No one wanted the others to know just how scared they were. Of course, that added to

the tension and the feelings of hostility that was growing between Luce and myself.

The communications of ficer brought me a message. I read it out loud although I realized it was a bad time to inflict bad news on the crew, but if I hadn't, the grapevine would have spread the news in less than an hour.

"Scout ship number four has been disabled. Capitain Osiris was torn to pieces and most of his crew killed in their efforts to aid the natives of two major cities near Egypt. The natives blamed them for the disturbances. The last of the survivors activated the self-destruct mechanism out of anger. Both Sodom and Gomorroh were destroyed in the blast. As far as we know there were no survivors, either in the ships complement or the native population". I could feel their shock in spite of their shielding. I knew that my anger at the ignorance of the people we were trying to help was shared by more than a few.

"From now on," I said, my voice tight, "there will be no more intermingling with the natives. All contact will be supervised and will require my order as well as maximum security precautions."

I felt Luce's irritation and Gil's uneasiness. Luce spoke up as I knew he would.

"We are assigned to aid these people, Tet. We can't allow one incident like that to destroy the rapport we've worked for the last fifty years to build. We walked among them for years. They trust us!"

"No more! Such rapport has cost the lives and may endanger the knowledge contained in this ship". I answered in sonorous tones that conveyed the finality of my decision.

Luce subsided but I knew that he would not readily yield to my authority if he disageed with my decision. He was far too intelligent to obey orders without question. I began to consider him a threat.

Gil and Enki retired to their cabin, trying to stay out of the way. I knew he had made many contacts with the natives on many continents. One he had even given instructions on how to build a boat which would carry his family and local fauna to safety should the seas rise.

We maintained our position over the mighty mountains until the next day. By that time the tremors had begun. High above the tallest pinnacle, we saw mighty rocks that we had carved with our lasers, tossed about like pebbles. We saw the buildings and monument constructed so lovingly with our tractor beams, shaken until they collapsed like an anthill under a boot.

The planets seemed to fill the entire sky now. We knew that we would know soon if the world was to survive. The waiting, the unending lightning and crashing thunder had set our nerves on edge. It was then that we got the message from Archibald at home.

With all of the free electricity in the air, it was almost impossible for us to hear the garbled message in its entirety, but we managed to grasp the terrible implications. "...earthqua... loosened the founda . . . continent is. . .crumbling. . .water. . .everywhe. . .help us...coming apart..."

I snapped orders at the pilot and we headed back home at top speed. It took us only two hours to get back. In that time we also heard the last transmission of the scout ship number two from the northern reaches.

"..have been hit by meteor too large for the force field to handle. Will sit down among the natives, those of us that are still alive. The Asgard is almost totally destroyed. Captain Odin is injured. We have not been able to save the library. Good luck to the rest of . . .!"

Two ships gone and the worst not even on us yet. My madness grew. I blamed the natives for the loss of the ships just as they blamed us for the destruction of their world. If I had not been mad at this time, the very sight that met our eyes as we hovered over our home would have driven me over the brink.

The very rock on which our homes and factories were built was buckling and boiling like a heated mud bath. The homes were no longer visible. The ocean that surrounded our land was lapping at landmarks that had once been hundreds of miles from the sea. Waves a hundred feet high were devouring our mountains and fields. The Temple had succumbed to the ravenous water in the three hours that it had taken us to get there. A thousand years of knowledge had died with Archie.

Within the next twenty hours we saw the death throws of the mightiest nation on Earth until, beneath us, all that could be seen where our proud people had lived and worked was the terrible raging ocean.

The End was upon us. In a little less than a day, Atlantis had sunk beneath the waves.

The next day brought us the news of our remaining companionship. A mile above the surface they had been hit by a tidal wave and forced to land.

Communications were broken; We hoped beyond hope that the ship might still be intact and the knowledge it contained, safe.

It is impossible for the mind of man to cope with catastrophes of the magnitude that we witnessed: the burning sky, as tons of flammable material poured on the Earth from Mars; the walls of water that covered over three quarters of the land masses, including the tallest mountains on Earth that happened to be on the side pointing at Venus; the horrible roaring of the wind and tortured Earth as the magnetic fields of the three planets met.

The Earth's rotation ground to a halt, stopped by gravitational forces beyond our wildest imagination. To us it appeared that the sun had stopped in its path. When it finally started again it was going in the wrong direction... from East to West.

The Earth tilted on its axis causing the temperate northern climate to freeze over, killing our herds of mammoths and wiping out the fields where we grew the immortality drug. Yet we survived.

We watched the rains come. Almost as if the tortured Earth was trying to cleanse itself after the battle. After the rains stopped we found that we were not alone.

So tenacious is the thing called life, that not even the collision of planets can destroy it. In Egypt, people and buildings that we had helped to erect, survived. We let Gil off near there. He was a natural leader as I have said and he took full advantage of his trip with the "Gods" to establish his prestige and leadership. Luce was quite proud of King Gilgamesh.

I will not elaborate on the final showdown between Luce and I. I fear that my rejection of him and the long feud we carried on, even after I had forced him and his followers out of the ship, caused his name to be tarnished, his record of service to be blackened. It was so needless, too.

There were enough people left, and we had enough of the longevity drug to watch the natives multiply, that we could have shared the world and our theories. Maybe his way would have been better. I don't know now. I was so sure once.

But, I was mad. I let the natives convince me that I was a god and I forced them to address me as such.

And I, the Lord...God...threw the Rebellious Angel, Lucifer Arch, down to the hell that was Earth, forever banning him from my ship, Heaven.

I gave the people commands. No longer did I suggest. If they did not do as I said, I simply destroyed them. My "Angels" were blood stained demons.

The years passed and so did the lives of my faithful angels. I let some of the more advanced natives have access to the immortality drug in reward for the loyalty, but none had the will to live forever.

Soon, they too were gone.

Because the people thought that only Gods could work miracles they never developed the latent powers of their minds and I was lonely. I knew that Luce was somewhere on Earth trying to convince the natives that I was a false god. In my clearer moments, I wished him luck.

So much time has passed. Venus came by once more, before she settled into a safe orbit, as did Mars but they did not come as close and did little damage.

Once upon a time, I could see what I had done and felt I must make one last try to set things straight.

I found a beautiful woman in whose veins ran the blood of the Atlantean and, though married was yet a virgin. I abducted her and utilized my sperm to impregnate her. I let her bring my only begotten son into the world. Though I talked with him often and through him, let the people feel the love I once had for them, they were still barbarians. They killed him. I tried to save him with every advanced piece of medical knowledge at my disposal. I succeeded in only in reviving him momentarily. He died soon after from the severity of his wounds.

I could take it no longer. From afar, I watched the slow evolution of mankind. I no longer communicated with them nor cared.

For the last 2000 years I have been lost in madness. A hundred years ago I landed here in my final resting place. Sometimes I go out to

walk in the sunshine but the last person I saw was from a tribe of red savages not much different than the natives who had lived around Lake Titicaca.

I have stopped taking the drug that prolongs my life. Age has caught up with me. I find myself thinking more and more of my friend Lucifer the Lucky and wonder if he still walks the Earth. He cared more for mankind than I ever did. I wonder if he ever thinks of me? I wonder if he can ever forgive me?

I'm sorry, Luce!"

The passage ended. I closed the book and sat in silence.

Lucifer had returned to Heaven. The Lord and his angels were dead and the fallen Angel had returned to claim his birthright. God was dead and the "evil one" reigns unchecked on Earth. Ha. Men still seek to demonize that which they do not understand.

I really could take over. The mightiest armies on earth would bow to the power of Heaven. Heaven would respond to my touch. With the aid of my pills, I could live the next ten thousand years as a God instead of a mortal. I could live the rest of my life isolated by power, slowly going mad as my old friend had.

I slid into my duster as I silently said good-bye to my friend and enemy, Tetragrammaton Lord Jehovah. He would remain here forever. I would not return unless the world ended once more. Even then, I am not sure I would make the same choice we had before. My future no longer lay in the past.

"I forgive you, Tet," I told him, my voice echoing in the great ship's empty chambers.

The mighty stone door sealed itself behind me. I cranked the Harley and rode toward the setting sun.

Unconsciously, I hummed my favorite Rolling Stones tune into the wind.

"Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste. Been around for many long years. Laid many a man's soul to waste"

END

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Conversation with Pappy outside the Bar.

Working on it. This will set the tone of the Character in biker circles.