

## 1

## TO CARARRE

AT MY DRESSING table, I experimented with the hottest new trend for eyebrows.

After penciling a boxy line around one brow and filling it in, I gave my mirrored reflection an appraising look. Wasn't wild about it. I compared my work to the photo of the model I'd been using as an example. Why did it look so much better on her than on me?

Grey passed by, and when he caught my face in the mirror, he did a funny little stutter-step. "What are you doing?"

"Putting on my make-up. What does it look like?"

He came closer and bent to peer at the reflection. "I'm not sure." He picked up the photo I'd been trying to copy. "That might be the silliest thing I've ever seen."

I turned toward him. "You think it's silly?" I waggled my brows up and down.

He chuckled. "It makes an impression, I'll grant you that. But if you like it, go right ahead. I'll just look at your mouth instead." He kissed it.

I slumped in the chair. "I wanted to try something new, but I can't get it to look right." I grabbed a pad, gave it a squirt of Cosmi-Solv, and wiped off my handiwork. "That was a waste of time."

"And eyebrow pencil. If that were ink, you'd have enough there to print a book." At my clothes rod, he went through my dresses as if shopping.

I made a face at him. He had a point, though. I'd already filled two pads with the dark goo and now squirted Cosmi-Solv on a third.

He pulled out one of my favorite outfits, a dark ruby ankle-length culottes suit with double ruffles on the hems. The tailored jacket, trimmed with elaborate gold embroidery, had a long tail but was short in the front.

“Now, this shows good taste. And the color goes with my houndstooth trousers, don’t you think?”

“Nothing goes with your houndstooth trousers.” I applied fresh make-up, but more conservatively.

“So I should wear them and nothing else?”

“If you’d like. Where are we going, anyway?”

He hung the dress on the clothes tree. “Have you ever been to Cararre?”

“I had a book signing there last year.”

“Oh, that’s right.” He went to the jewelry armoire. “Did you see the Zavazda?”

“Cornballs, no. They say you can spend a week of twelve-hour days in that place and not see the half of it.” I stood and slipped out of my dressing gown.

He left the jewelry armoire to help me dress. “You’re only supposed to tour a small part of it at a time. You’d go into overload otherwise.”

“I don’t know a thing about art. What are you wearing? I hope not the houndstooth. Next time you’re away, I’m getting rid of those horrid pants.”

He buttoned me up the back. “What’s the matter with what I have on?”

I put on the jacket. “Not a thing.” Standing in front of the mirror, I straightened the garments.

He lifted a necklace out of the armoire and put it around my neck.

I smiled at his reflection in my mirror. His frame had filled out a bit over the years, but that was to be expected when a man approached middle age. Despite the extra weight, he cut as striking a figure as ever in his stylish gray trousers and pleated shirt. “Nothing wrong at all. Keep it on if you want.”

He nibbled my neck. “Truly, I’d rather take it off...”

#

AFTER PACKING FOR a three-day trip, we bought a phone at a local shop and waited while a service tech transferred my codes and settings from my

mangled one. From there, we went to the Standtall airfield and boarded the family jet for Cararre.

On the plane, I pulled out my new phone and chose a code.

“Who are you calling?”

A rude beeping jarred me, and I pulled the phone away from my ear, scowling. “Seena. But she’s rejecting my call.”

He ran his hand over his face the way he did when he was trying not to show his emotions.

“What?”

“I never did like her.”

I slipped the phone back into my bag. “Yes, I know. But she’s my friend. I want to reach out to her. See if there’s anything I can do.”

He shook his head. “Let her go. She doesn’t appreciate your meddling.”

“I don’t want to meddle, I want to help.” I sagged into my seat. “I have so much, and she has nothing. Now, less than nothing.” My throat swelled with a tear-lump. “She was a good friend to me in school. I want to do the same for her.”

“She was only good to you because you were beneath her. It made her feel self-righteous to help a poor little waif. But now you’ve risen above her, and she resents it.”

I gaped at him. “How can you say that?”

“Because it’s true.”

“You don’t know Seena. How can you—”

“Think about it and you’ll see I’m right. The only thing she ever wanted from you was your gratitude. Now that the tables have turned, she doesn’t want to be the beggar picking up your scraps.”

I narrowed my eyes. “What makes you so sure?”

“I know the type.”

I snorted. “She’s not a type. She’s my sister-in-law.”

“Oh, so you admit you have a brother?”

“Glish, no.” I opened a drawer and pulled out a black silk sleep mask. “I don’t want to talk about it.” I put on the mask and reclined the seat back.

“You were in bed half the day, and now you’re going to sleep?”

I ignored him.

“You do have a brother. And you love him very much. You’ll get over your tiff before long.”

This was no tiff. The things we’d said to each other the night before, I could never repeat. Anger we hadn’t known we’d harbored for each other’s spouse, each other’s family—yes, my bitterness toward him for having children when I couldn’t—all that boiled up and spilled out like fiery acid, destroying everything it touched. The bond between us had been eaten away, never to be rebuilt.

Grey couldn’t see the tears behind the mask, and I didn’t lift it to wipe them away. I let the silk of my CFC privilege absorb them.

## #

WE DIDN’T ARRIVE in Cararre until early evening, so we took in some of the other sights that first day and saved the Zavazda for the next. Grey seemed inclined to baby me that evening, and I was inclined to let him. It reminded me of the beginning of our relationship, when he introduced me to his world.

Though the CFC lifestyle had been foreign to me then, I was so firmly entrenched in it now that I could scarcely remember living any other way. I remembered enough, though, that when I combined my experiences with my imagination, the result made for best-selling stories. By the time I visited the famous Zavazda in Cararre with Grey, my Stillwater books had made J. S. Freeman a well-known name in Centre City and across every region of the world.

In the autocab on the way to the museum the next morning, I reminded Grey I didn’t know a thing about art. “I’m not sure why we’re even going.”

He turned from the window and spoke with sudden animation. "It's about so much more than art. It's about beauty. Architecture, archaeology. Our heritage, our history. Not only as a City, but before. Our pre-history."

I pretended to look around the car's interior. "Where's the camera? Sounds like we're filming an advertisement."

"Not at all. The Zavazda is an amazing place, and I'm excited to finally show it to you. I don't know what's taken me so long to bring you here."

"Our being apart all the time might have something to do with it."

When a cloud of regret crept over his face, I hastened to reassure him. "But we're here now, and I intend to enjoy myself."

"As do I. Look, there it is." He pointed toward a gleaming mass up ahead.

The signature jumble of glittering triangles caught the sun's rays and diffused them into prismatic beams. They formed what at first seemed a lumpy frame of no particular shape. If you looked at it long enough, however, it began to make sense. I couldn't have explained the statement it made, but it seemed to represent something profound.

I didn't come to that conclusion at first. My initial reaction was amazement at its size. Though I'd seen photographs of the landmark, I hadn't imagined it to be so enormous. It was stunning.

I craned my neck to see the top of the many-faceted structure, but we were already too close. "I haven't even been there yet, and I'm already overwhelmed."

"That's the typical reaction. Some people have been known to faint at the sight."

"Then they shouldn't have skipped breakfast."

The cab pulled up to the passenger unloading area, and we got out. I couldn't keep from leaning back trying to appreciate the height of the building as we walked across the plaza, but some of the lumps jutted out and blocked my view of its summit.

Initially, I'd thought the triangles making up the walls were metallic, but now I could see they were of a translucent material in a variety of pale colors. People moving within created ghostly silhouettes.

At ground level, however, the triangles were clear glass, and the building's front was flat, like an enormous window made of a million panes. The plaza on which we walked repeated the triangle theme, with three-sided paving pieces of diverse colors. A few ornamental trees grew here and there, each fenced by the backs of a triad of benches arranged about them.

"What's with the pattern of threes?" I asked as we made for the entrance.

"Everything in the world is based on that number. Solid, liquid, gas. Animal, vegetable, mineral. Proton, electron, nucleus. The three dimensions. Three primary colors. Even time is divided into past, present, and future. You've said yourself that all stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end—"

"Okay, I get the idea." I found his bouncing enthusiasm a bit alarming. "Three is a recurring number in nature."

"It's the number everything is founded on, a reflection of the Creator's triune nature."

He completely lost me there, but I didn't ask. For one thing, I didn't care to go down that crazy religion road. But mostly, we entered the building then, and my senses were assaulted by more than enough sights and sounds to draw my interest.

One of the first distractions was that of two women in the lobby wearing koormas, each with her Kentan "arm," or consort.

I wanted to rush over and slap them senseless. It was those Stridentan zealots who'd brought about the war in which millions had died—most of whom were their own people. How dare they show themselves in the City after what they had done?

Two years ago, they wouldn't have. But a great deal had changed since Janren Stock took over the Ministry of Domestic Peace. Now we were rebuilding their cities, providing for their homeless, contorting ourselves into unnatural positions to accommodate their religious sensibilities. All this, despite the treasonous Kentan leadership's refusal to acknowledge

the authority of Centre City. They still considered themselves a sovereign nation, and the City did nothing about it.

The sight of those two well-dressed Stridentan couples made my hackles rise. I bobbed my head in their direction. "Let's follow them and eavesdrop on their conversations. They'll never know we understand their dialect. We need to see what they're up to."

He pursed his lips. "You're not in the Division anymore."

"I know, but—"

"Let it be."

"We won't be obvious about it. I'll just—"

He bent and spoke in my ear. "I said let. It. Be." Then he straightened. "I've arranged for a personal guide. We're to meet her over there." He pointed to a hanging banner saying "Guided Tours."

Though I allowed him to usher me toward the gate, a wave of bitterness rolled over me. "Your father would never have allowed these things to go on."

He stopped and gave me a chilling *don't push me* look. "I told you we will not discuss it."

I looked up at him, eyes narrowed. "What's with you today, anyway?"

"Nothing." His face softened. "We're here to relax and enjoy ourselves. So let's do that." He took my hand and moved forward.

"Sure." I let him lead me. "Let's do that." Then I almost stopped again when I realized how obtuse I'd been.

*I will fix it*, he'd vowed. And that's what he'd been doing all this time when he was away from home. Trying to fix it.

I gave his hand a squeeze. "I'm sorry, Grey."

"For what?"

"For being such a termagant."

He laughed. "That, my darling, you are not." He continued to chuckle as we approached the gate. "You are caring and concerned. And I certainly don't want to discourage that." His eyes sparkled as he smiled down at me. "I just—"

I smiled back and squeezed his hand again. "I know. Never mind. I'll shut up about it."

He smiled back. "You amaze me, Freeman."

## 2

## AT THE ZAVAZDA

OUR TOUR GUIDE, Exxie Lyth, stood only as high as my shoulder, but she was brisk and knowledgeable. I liked her instantly—even before she asked, “Are you the author, J. S. Freeman?”

When I admitted that I was, she beamed. “I just love your Stillwater books. I bought them for my kids, but I love them too. When’s Book 7 coming out?”

“Later this year, thank you for asking.”

“Tell me.” She inched closer and spoke in a conspiratorial tone. “Do Tia and Harmay get together eventually? They do, don’t they?”

I chuckled. “You’ll have to wait until next year, when we release the last book.”

Harmay, of course, was Tuu’s best friend, and yes, I modeled the character after Mayne. But if you want to know if he and Tia get together, you’ll have to read the Stillwater series yourself. I’m not giving any spoilers here.

Exxie made an exaggerated sigh. “I knew you’d say that. Are you going to give Tia’s brother a love interest?”

“Do you think he needs one?”

“Of course. Everybody does, don’t you think?” She turned a plaintive gaze up at Grey. “Is Tuu going to fall in love?”

He had been watching the exchange with smiling eyes and now raised a hand in mock distress. “Don’t look at me. I have no inside information.”

“Well, then, I guess I’ll have to wait.” Exxie gave an exaggerated sigh, then motioned for us to follow her. “Let’s begin our tour.”

#

EXXIE SHOWED US some highlights of the labyrinthine museum, beginning with a small display of early Jamaharian artifacts and

progressing through selections that reflected the uniting of the nations under the umbrella of Centre City.

All the most famous works of art were here. For each, Exxie gave the history of the creation of the piece, a short biography of the artist, and other interesting tidbits. I'd seen photos of most of these works before, but I was surprised at how moving it was to stand in the presence of such masterpieces.

Next, we went through exhibits showcasing art of specific regions. Again, Exxie's commentary gave it all depth and meaning.

Though I didn't usually appreciate art, I was affected by the commonalities in every cultures' works. Wherever the artists lived, they all struggled to maintain their people's heritage even while melding with the City in order to survive and thrive. The masterpieces touched me deeply, shouting out the truth that all the peoples of the world were united by a common humanity more than by political treaties.

I must have told Grey a half a dozen times, "I'm glad we came. I see why you brought me here."

I think the morning's tour left us all emotionally drained. To fortify ourselves, we went to the mall on the basement level, where culinary artists from around the world sold the fruits of their labors.

As we entered the concourse, Exxie turned to me. "Do you have any preferences as to cuisine?"

I shook my head. "I like just about everything, as long as it never walked on hooves."

She looked up at Grey with a perplexed expression.

He smiled. "We prefer fish or poultry over other meats. What do you recommend?"

"Have you ever had mirtositi?"

We answered together, "We love it."

Exxie grinned. "Well, then, it's settled." She hurried down the concourse like a woman on a mission. "We have one of the world's best mirtositi artists here today, Jano. It's her son Lodo's shop, but Lodo's wife

went into labor this morning, and he's with her at the hospital. Jano's filling in for him."

I'd heard of Jano, and followed willingly.

Though the mirtositi stall was closed when we arrived, Exxie called through the gate into the darkened room in the Nionese dialect, "Hello, is anyone there?"

Of course people were there. We could hear voices and see lights on in the back.

In a moment, the front section lit up, and a woman in Nionese chef's robes bustled toward us, frowning. She wasn't much taller than Exxie. "You are early, Mrs. Lyth. You come before we open." She unlocked and pulled back the gate. Her sweeping *come on in* gesture jarred against her brusque words. "Art cannot be hurried. Do not be impatient."

Exxie led the way into the dining area. "We are happy to wait, Madam Jano. We merely wanted to make sure we got a seat."

Jano harrumphed. "You have your seats. Now, sit and wait." She turned away with an air of disgust and disappeared into the back.

We sat at a long counter, and Exxie grinned. "Don't be fooled by Jano's charm. She comes across as a sweet old thing, but she's really quite disagreeable."

Grey's laugh reverberated in the empty room. "Let me guess. You're related?"

"You're onto me." Exxie winked. "She's my aunt. I love her to pieces, but mostly because of her mirtositi. She really is as grumpy as she appears."

A few moments later, two young assistants came out bearing a number of containers and utensils. They gave us polite nods as they arranged them in a meticulous order, making sure every object was perfectly straight and in a precise position. One of them opened the door and turned on the "Open" sign, then they all scurried into the back again.

Other customers came in, talking about Lodo and the reputation of his mirtositi, and how rumor had it that his mother was one of the world's premier mirtositi artists.

Jano came out with a long, sharp knife in her hand and a scowl on her face. "Lodo is not here. I am creating the mirtositi today. You not like it, you not need to stay." She gestured with a wave of the glittering blade.

One of the customers stared. "Are you Jano?"

"I am. Who are you?"

Grey and I exchanged sideways glances. We hadn't expected entertainment with our meal.

More customers had filed in than there were seats at the counter. An assistant was sent to stand at the doorway and turn people away, and Jano told those who stood around that she served no one who wasn't seated. "If you want to wait, you may. But move out there." She waved her knife toward the door.

The standing crowd left in ones and twos, muttering. But she never looked their way again. She was too busy accosting us at the counter. "You citizen?" She asked us each in turn—except for Exxie. Once she had an answer from everyone else, she addressed us all. "If you citizen, you pay three hundred fifty urexi. You who are not, it's one hundred. Pay Tremo here." She waved toward an assistant. "Everybody pay. Three fifty, or one hundred. But you, woman—" she pointed her blade at Exxie, and it came awfully close. "You no pay. Your money no good here."

Two of the citizens got up and left in a huff, apparently offended at the uneven prices. Two more took their places from the group outside, apparently willing to pay the cost. Grey seemed amused as he surrendered the funds. "I sure hope this is good."

Jano perked up. "Who said that?"

"I did." Grey raised his hand. "I've heard you're the best. Let's see if you are."

She scowled at him. "You big man think you know mirtositi? I shall show you mirtositi." She surveyed the bewildered line of faces at the counter. "Prepare yourselves. I am an artist."

She went to work. With deft movements too quick for the eye to follow, she spread sticky nionarz on a mat, arranged rows of colorful ingredients over it, and rolled it into a log. It took her two seconds to slice

the roll and put one piece on each of ten small square plates, which her assistant, Tremo, distributed to each of us at the counter, along with dipping sauces.

I'd had mirtositi elsewhere, but never like this. Before I'd worked the last delectably-seasoned grain of nionarz from my teeth, a fresh plate appeared before me with another offering. A third assistant provided a tiny, stemless glass of Nionese wine, which was potent enough that the small size of the vessel was appropriate.

For the next twenty minutes, we sat in a whirlwind of food coming and going, plates being cleared, ingredient platters removed and more brought in, all performed with military precision. As she worked, Jano kept up a constant chatter describing some of the ingredients, giving the creations fanciful names, insulting one customer or another, and praising her own skill. She never spoke to her assistants, nor did she glance at the growing audience outside.

By the time the amazing performance was over, I couldn't have squeezed another grain of nionarz into my belly.

As the assistants cleared away the last of the dishes, Jano turned to Grey. "Well, big citizen man. Was that a good lunch?"

By way of answer, he rose from his stool and applauded. The rest of us followed suit, and Jano bowed. "Thank you. You are all true connoisseurs of the art. I hope you will tell your friends." She turned and scurried into the back.

I was pretty sure she was blushing.

After sharing such an experience, those of us at the counter might have felt like close friends, but we couldn't linger. The assistants hurried us out to make room for the next group.

"Why didn't she take your money?" someone asked Exxie.

"I guess she liked my looks."

The ten of us made our way through the press of the crowd around the door and out into the wider part of the concourse, commenting and exclaiming about the experience. Some exchanged contact information so they could keep in touch.

Exxie turned to Grey. "Are you ready to go to the research wing?"

Before he could answer, the assistant Tremo came running toward us. "Mr. Big Man, Miss Freeman!" He stopped before us, breathless. "Madam Jano would like to see Miss Freeman. Please, if you would come with me?"

To the stares of the others, we followed him into the shop and all the way to the kitchen.

The fishy smell back there was delightful. Considering the artist's severity, I wasn't surprised everything was immaculate despite the frenzy of activity. I was surprised, though, to see a stack of books on a small table. My books. All six that had been published.

More surprising yet was the sight of Jano coming at me, not with a knife, but a pen, and a grin the size of Exxie's. "Miss Freeman. I am a huge fan of your work. Would you please sign my books?"

#

AFTER THAT REMARKABLE experience, Exxie took us on a hike for what seemed like kilometers into a part of the building labeled "Research." There, she turned us over to the care of a lanky man named Dr. Semilum.

His brown eyes sparkled with intelligence, but his ill-fitting clothes indicated a distinct lack of concern for fashion. The rash of crumbs littering his full beard was a bit distracting as well.

He greeted Grey politely but without interest. To me, however, he gave his full attention. "Miss Freeman." He eyed me as a scientist views a specimen. "You are an artist, not a historian. You allow your work to violate the truth."

What was that all about? In a rush of anger, I looked him in the eye. "I am no artist, Dr. Semilum. I merely write children's books. And I never claimed them to be historically accurate."

Grey put his hand on my shoulder. "My wife is an artist to be sure. But I agree that her artistic renderings may not conform to the historical record."

Grey read my manuscripts as I wrote them. His encouragement was always enthusiastic, and I never got the impression his praise was anything

less than sincere. But he had expressed reservations about the way I played on the supernatural legends and took liberties with reality.

"That could never happen," he'd say, or "The wild people of the wood aren't really as you describe, are they?" I'd tell him it was just a story. It wasn't supposed to be real.

I portrayed Freemansland the way people liked to imagine it. The way I liked to imagine it.

I took courage now from his hand around mine, and from the recent praise by Jano and Exxie. "My books are very popular. What do you know about Freemansland anyway, Dr. Semilum?"

He drew himself up. "After three decades of research, more than anyone, I should think. I have spent more time on the island—and in it—than you have."

I frowned. "In it?"

"I am sorry." Grey squeezed my hand. "I should have told you earlier about this part of the tour, but I hoped to surprise you."

I turned my frown on him. "What are you talking about? What's going on?"

Dr. Semilum answered for him. "Your husband asked me to give you a preview of our upcoming exhibit and show you some of the things we have learned. So that before the new Freemansland Hall opens, possibly next year, you might perhaps share with us some of your knowledge. Though I am frankly skeptical about the usefulness of that. We are scientists here, not given to silly imaginings."

My mind struggled to keep up. "Exhibit? You mean you're planning to have a Freemansland Hall here at the Zavazda like what you have for the other regions?"

"Of course." He spoke as if I were a backward child in need of special tutoring. "We have the same concern for Freemansland as we do for any other part of the world under our jurisdiction."

“Ah.” Things were starting to make sense now. “You’re saying you aren’t content to just blow a hole in it, but now you’re taking it apart to see what’s inside?”

The lower part of Dr. Semilum’s face contorted in what I first took as pain, but then it took shape as a slow smile. “That is one way of putting it, yes. Exactly so. The creatures clinging to the surface of that unique structure do not know all that is within. But under my direction, the City is learning. And, as always, we wish to share our knowledge with the rest of the world. That is why the Zavazda exists. To share beauty and culture and knowledge with everyone, for the enjoyment and enlightenment of all people.”

I crossed my arms and glared at Grey. “So that’s what this whole trip is about? To trick me into coming here for a lecture about what it is to be a Freemanslander? Whatever happened to being honest with one another?”

Grey put a gentle hand on my arm. “I wanted to give you a special treat. And you have been enjoying yourself, haven’t you?”

I shrugged, keeping my arms folded. “Until now, yes, but—”

“That is my whole agenda. For you to enjoy the experience. I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Semilum recently. When he told me about his work, I thought you might like to see it for yourself. If you’re not interested, we can leave. There are plenty of other things at the Zavazda we can look at instead.”

He had such a boyish, pleading look, I almost smiled. “Of course I’m interested.” I uncrossed my arms but kept my frown. “It’s the way you sprung it on me that I don’t like. You know how I feel about surprises.”

“I know. Or, I should know. But I forget sometimes.”

I glanced at Dr. Semilum, whose eyes had been darting back and forth between us with a clinical interest that reminded me of someone. “Do you know Eglor Pigeon?”

His smile returned. “My cousin. He, too, is involved in a study of your island.”

“Yes. Of the stelli that inhabit it.” I nodded. “He’s told you about me, hasn’t he?”

“Of course not. That would violate privacy laws.”

I laughed. “Privacy laws cover doctor-patient privilege, so your citing them means you know he’s my doctor. Which tells me that he’s told you about me.”

He flushed. Deeply.

I continued without pause. “But I don’t mind. He’s offended me so many times in so many ways, I’ve developed calluses against it.”

A glance at Grey told me he was enjoying the exchange. Encouraged, I went on. “So what have you learned? I’m ready for the tour through the mysterious bowels of Freemansland and a lecture about the creatures that cling to its surface.” I wrapped my arm around Grey’s, feeling ready to stand up to any arrogant pigeonhead.

Dr. Semilum stroked his beard—dislodging the crumbs, to my relief. “You are as enigmatic as I had been led to believe, and as volatile.”

“Led to believe by your cousin, with whom you have never discussed me. Of course.”

That weird smile reappeared. “Led to believe by my study of your birthplace as well as your writings.”

“Yes, I suppose your study requires you to read my silly imaginings.”

“You do have a way, Miss Freeman, of distorting one’s words.”

“We’re all friends here, aren’t we? Please, call me Mrs. Standtall.”

Grey chuckled. “I think it’s time for you to show us the things you told me about, Semilum.”

The scientist perked up at the suggestion. “Yes, of course.”

He led us down a corridor and into a room the size of a warehouse, and with similar decor. Open beams overhead, bare floor, shelves here, boxes and bins there. In the center, simple light fixtures hung down above a bank of computers, a couple of which had people perched on stools in front of them. The scent in the room held a familiar taint of seaweed, mold, fish, and hairpine, along with a hint of ersatz crim.

“Your life’s work is the study of Freemansland, but you settle for Laffcrim?”

Dr. Semilum’s eyes widened. “Why do you say that?”

“I have a nose for these things.”

He almost smiled. “It’s my employees. They prefer the flavored crims. Personally, I prefer tea.”

“Why am I not surprised?”

“I think you are a reader of people as well as writer of books.”

Grey squeezed my hand. “The one skill is useful in practicing the other. When you told me about your research, Doctor, I didn’t envision such an inventory of artifacts.”

“Nor did any of us anticipate they would tell such an interesting story.” The doctor led the way to the center of the room. “I shall show you.” At the computer bank, he said sat in front of a keyboard. “Let’s pull up a stool.”

We each sat.

After a few keystrokes, a large screen rose from behind the computer, giving us a clear view of what he pulled up. Then, with the animation of a man warming to his favorite subject, he told of his studies, showing image after image of what he described.

A shortened version would go something like this: