PICTURE PICTURE

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You ever take a moment to think, what makes pictures so magnetic? When you look at a photo of someone you love that's no longer here, you see them again, their eyes, almost reliving the time as it happened, they restore those faded memories.

A picture, which gets to me, is of my old best friend, my first dog. He lived for seventeen years. Took me from preschool to real world. "*Loved that dog"*!

Never forget the day my mother took him to the vet, to be, as we so nicely say, put down. I hugged him with a lump in my throat. Did the man thing, walked away. Couldn't go to the vet and come home without him. To this day I can't hold back a tear, I wasn't man enough to go with my best friend to his final lap. I look at his pictures from some thirty years after he died, and I still see the same thing, my best friend! *Miss that Dog*!

On my desk there's a picture of my dead Mom, Grandmother, and Grandfather. What I enjoy most is telling them, "I love them." When I looking at their faded memory, it's better this way, seeing their eyes. (Even if I know they're not looking back.)

There's something about a photo. A first love, images of nature, the Grand Canyon, some bring a memory with a smile or a tear.

It's amazing, with no words, that a still image tells a book's worth of thoughts, captures a moment that'll freeze a volcano erupting, and the damage it leaves. How without a sound it catches, and shares the brutality of war. It can show the most beautiful sides of life, or reflect the horrors of a Hitler!

Speaking of photos. I want to speak about two guys, John and Al. John, a big man, six-foot six, cool-headed and always knew what he was doing. And then there's Al. Never in control, stood about five-foot five. Believed he was ten-feet tall. Kind of a person if there was a fight in a room, he'd be at the center of it.

The thing that bonded their friendship was fishing. As much as they loved to fish, they liked picking berries. This is what kicks off this entire thing.

Driving home early didn't have such a great day with the fish. The weather was hot. Walking the Delaware River between Pennsylvania and New Jersey was a heck of a way to beat the heat. The guys had a last stop. So they packed up their gear and headed out

early. That's when they got lost and found the greatest gift ever given to man, maybe from the hand of God, the ability to travel into pictures! Finding this passageway, as old as time, older than "The Big Bang" and in a fit of blind rage they destroyed it. Which led to where Al's at today and why John's no longer his friend.

Al doesn't speak about it. He feels a bit of heartbreak over the stupidity of what he did, with his immortality, and what he traded it for. This is what happened, way back, when Al used to be able to travel into pictures!

Al's been locked up in prison most of his life for the murder of John. To this day he swears his innocence. After over 50 years in isolation he's been moved to a nut house for his final days. Which have turned into a few years. Old, worn but his mind still functions. He has a few loony friends (to put it mild), which have become big fans his story. Al, truly being sane, is saying to himself, "Please don't let them ask." (He's thinking this is how it starts, every time.) The rest of the guys are fidgeting.

Inside the Saint Ana Mental Institution, it's once a week mail call. They all gather to see what pictures people have sent to Al. Sitting on his bed with everyone looking at him, he

says, “You’d think after all these years, people would’ve forgotten. And the pictures would stop coming.”

Charlie, looking out the window says, “Bummer, it’s the fourth day in a row with rain.”

Ed, sitting in the padded chair, dressed in all white, adds clapping, “I’ve got an idea.”

Jake cuts him off saying, “You want to hear a story?”

Ed stands, “Did I say anything about a story?”

Charlie mumbles, “What matters, is, what Al will say.”

Ed asks, “You wouldn’t mind telling us the story?”

Al replies, “You don’t want to hear that again.”

Jake says, “We’ve got plenty of time.”

“There has to be something better to do?”

Dave says, “Can’t think of anything. Tell us how you ended up with a bunch of nuts like us.”

The guys give a nervous giggle. Al folds his arms and his elbows crack as he slowly sits up. Knowing the guys aren’t going to let it go. Looking at them, he sees desperate eyes

looking back. The guys see they have a chance and desperation fades to comfort.

All eyes glued to Al, and he says, “Every time I tell it, the whole thing, it gives me nightmares. Why don’t you guys tell how you ended up here? What’s so great about my story?”

Mickey in disbelief, “Don’t you get it? We all love pictures. And I like hearing about John.”

Mickey licking his lips, Charlie laughing says, “Mickey wants to hear all about John.”

George walking in says, “Mickey hitting on John again?”

Mickey raising his voice, “No!”

George looking at Mickey says, “You lick your lips every time you hear his name.”

Charlie says, “How tall was he? About six-foot-six, isn’t that right?”

Jake throws in, “Big broad shoulders, isn’t it so Al?”

Al’s wrinkles doubled their size as he smiled, seeing the guys teasing Mickey. Jake looks at Al. It’s a long piercing stare into a man’s soul. All the guys in the room echoed out there last laughs, as Jake asks, “How about it Al. We’re asking can you dig up this story

one more time? Look at us, what else do we have?"

Using his knuckles, Al slides himself to the edge of the bed. With each move there's a grimace of pain.

His first step is unsteady and Jake offers a helping hand. Slowly, after getting stable, he looks to his wall of photos. His eyes gingerly work their way to his picture of John. John had this look. If you knew him his eyes were as inviting as a homemade apple pie.

Al leans to his picture, touching his cheek. A moment so intense it sticks in time, and everyone went silent. You knew this was a special moment. There was something in the air, and it wasn't a home baked pie!

Everyone's eyes stuck to Al like a tick to a dog. Following his every move. Watching as he turned from the picture of John, glancing to the heavens, saying, "This one's for you old buddy!"

He looked down, smiled, and faced the guys. Al usually had the same start, the same disinterested look, and the same movements. But this time, all was different. Although his body posture was small, for this moment, standing in front of John's picture, he held

himself proud! He turned to face the guys. At that point all knew he was going to tell the story, maybe his hundredth time.

There was something in the room. God had come-a-calling. The pain in his body, right then, didn't matter. That split second when he touched John's cheek, his old broken-down body stood tall like a soldier saluting his fallen comrade. He stiffened that old spine, and spoke like an announcer introducing the Guest of Honor, "You guys really want to hear this old story again?"

"Yes." The guys cried out.

"All right. I'll tell the story!" All the guys let out a cheer! Al, looking at each of them, all went so quiet you could hear a butterfly land on a flower.

Walking along the wall, all eyes from the pictures seemed to stare back to him, and Al said, "Fish weren't biting. John yelled from upstream, "Let's get. Might as well leave early and score some brownie points with the wives."

Walking out of the water, towards the car. John drives and Al's saying, "We're almost to that bush. Let's stop and take a brake."

“I have dinner with my wife’s family tonight. Think we can skip it this week?”

Al brushed it off saying, “We left plenty of time. Come on John, it’s the last week and then they’ll be finished for the season.”

“You want those berries bad don’t you?”

Pulling into a parking spot, pointing, Al says: “Look. It’s been posted private property.”

“We’ve been coming here for years don’t think anyone would care if we parked here a few minutes.” The guys lock up the car, walking towards the woods.

Eating the last berries off the bush Al says, “Let’s walk to the other field.”

“I think we’ve ate enough.”

“Five more minutes.”

“Five more minutes, but no longer. Some time passes as John follows Al through the woods asking, “It’s been longer then five minutes, what’s going on?”

“I thought we’d be there by now.”

“Can we leave before we’re late?”

“We need to walk this way. It’ll take us to the road.”

Walking about an hour more John says, “We’re going to be late!”

“Not by much. That’s if we hurry.”

“We still haven’t found the car.”

“Stop nagging me, this isn’t helping.”

“You’re lost, aren’t you?”

“I think... Not sure.”

“It’ll be dark soon. My wife’s going to flip. She cooked this big deal dinner and my chair will be empty!”

“I will swear it was my fault.”

“It won’t work. She thinks I should be a grown man. You taking the blame won’t help anything.”

“Instead of complaining, maybe you have some ideas?”

“I wasn’t paying attention. You went off on this wild berry hunt and came up lost.”

The sun’s setting. The trees are casting long shadows and John’s saying, “You’re lost, aren’t you?”

“I can’t believe it! Sorry.”

“It’s not all your fault. I didn’t have to follow.”

“That’s what I was thinking.”

“You’re saying it’s my fault?”

“I take full blame for getting us lost. It’s your fault for marrying you’re wife. This is the only reason you’re in trouble.”

John shrugs, “Had to do the right thing. I got her pregnant.”

Walking on, the night leaves the guys in darkness. Al leans towards something in the distance, points saying, “John, there. Look. Maybe we can get help?”

“I see it. There’s someone there.”

“We got lucky. My wife’s going to be pissed too, let’s hurry.”

“Thanks for reminding me. I’m dead. She’s never going to believe we got lost in the woods.”

“Tell her the car broke down?”

“Going to tell the truth. The heck with her if she gets mad.”

“Like that’s going to help you.”

“I’ll worry about my wife when I see her. Now can we stop talking, pick up the pace?”

Following blind, the cool glow guides their steps through the invisible shadows. Walking towards the guiding light, it’s clear it’s a candle. Their eyes follow the outline of a shack, lit by a rising moon’s silvery haze, hi-lighting the dew dampened slate shingles, chimney, and the tilt to the old building. Softly approaching the window, they peek through.

Al grab's John's shirt, tugging it, saying, "I've got a sick feeling. Let's get out of here."

"Where else would you like to go, a Holiday Inn?"

"Anywhere's better then this place! It gives me the creeps."

"Hope you're not forgetting, you've got us lost?"

"I've got bad vibes John!"

"What's wrong? There's a candle lit. Someone's home."

"That's what scares me. Who'd be out here, at this time of night? I couldn't think of a worst place."

"I can. I'm on the outside looking in. For me, whoever's in there, they're in a better place then us! Lets eat more. It's only five minutes."

"Even lost John, I don't want to step a foot closer."

"I say we ask for help. I'm not going to spend the night aimlessly roaming through the woods, because you got us lost and were too chicken to ask for help. It's probably an old hick. Otherwise we can be lost forever. No thank you! I'm going to take my chances with

whoever's in there. I've taken enough chances with you."

"John, let's leave. Nobody's home."

"There's a candle burning. Someone lit it. If they're not inside, maybe they're out here with us. Who knows, maybe their watching us, trying to watch them?"

"I don't think you're funny. I say we make a run for it."

"What? I'll give you five steps before you hit a tree. I say you follow me. I've been following you enough. You're going to walk with me to that door and together we're knocking."

Walking from the window, John heads towards the door, knocking, pushing it. Al looks over his shoulder watching it creak open, revealing the flickering candle lit shack inside. Al whispers, "I wouldn't go in there if I where you." Leaning through the door, John looks towards the candle. The room of the shack shows itself with the warmth of the flame. All is lit with a golden inviting glow, brightening and dimming. There's a table and chair sitting a few feet from the fireplace. Next to this is an old wood-burning stove, not much else is in the room.

Al looks down to the floor, seeing footprints in the thick dust. Following the prints they lead to and from the candle to the door. It doesn't sit well with Al. He can feel the hair standing on the back of his neck.

Al watches as John walks across the dusty floor to the candle, picks it up from the mantel and walks around the shack. He finds a thin door, which blends into the wall. It's slightly hard to see, other than the handle. John walks to the door with Al stuck close behind him, saying, "Whoever's here, is either behind this door or is gone."

Opening the door, both look down the steps, John yells, "Is anybody there?"

"Can you tell me why anybody would be down there?"

"Watch your head," (John starts to walk down the steps).

"I'm not going down there. Not a chance!"

"If we're going to sleep here. I want to know what's down there."

"I'm not sleeping here. We came here for help, there's no help."

"Would you rather spend the night in the woods?"

“No doubt. I’d rather look for the car then sleep here.”

“I’ll sleep here and wake up fresh in the morning. We’re not finding anything tonight!”

“Maybe you can sleep here yourself.”

“What! You’re going to walk alone, in the dark. I know you Al. You’ll never go out there. So don’t even try it. Follow me down the steps, if you like. In the morning we’ll try to find the car.”

“We can sleep here. But I see no reason to go down those steps. Meet me half way. How about we don’t go down there, pull up on the floor, at first-light, we get out of here.”

John walking away from the door is saying, “I’m never walking the woods again, where you tell me five more minutes. Told you we should’ve headed right for home.”

“I said I was sorry.”

“It doesn’t matter. There’s not much else to do but fight or sleep.”

“John, I’m worried whoever lit the candle might come back.”

“Whoever lit it is long gone. The way I see it, we’re lucky we’re not sleeping in the woods. (Sitting on the floor.) I’m beat.” (Al watches John blow out the candle saying), goodnight!”

In the morning John's up first. The shack's lit from the sun shining through the window. He stands. Walking over to Al, still sleeping, shakes him, saying, "Wake up, its morning."

Al opens his eyes, stretches his arms, yawns, saying, "John! I thought this was a dream."

"Sorry to tell you. No dreams here."

"I can't believe we're lost."

"Take a look for yourself."

"It all seemed, so unreal, (Al stands looks out the window). It feels like I've been sleeping on that floor forever. My whole body hurts."

Al walks to John who is already at the cellar door. Their eyes follow the hand cut wood railing down the worn steps, seeing the dark wooden floor, and the wear from the endless years of use. It's almost haunting how the steps leave a faded trail of someone else's past.

"Come on Al. Let's check it out?"

Al takes a step back saying, "Don't see any reason. It's morning, time to get."

"We're here. It'll only take a minute."

"Go ahead. I'll wait here. Make it fast!"

"Man, what's your rush. We're already a day late. As far as I'm concerned there's no hurry anymore."

Al watches as John places each foot on the next step, leans down ducking under the ceiling, as he makes his way. The cellar is lit by a small window near the ceiling, as he walks off the last step, he looks around pausing, yelling up to Al, “Wow. Come down here! This place is filled with books. There are thousands of them!”

With a bit of hesitation, Al walks down the steps and looks around saying, “Wonder how they got here?”

John opening one says, “They’re not books. They’re pictures!”

Al takes another album, looking through it, says, “This ones filled with photos from the First World War. There not copies. They have to be worth a small mint!”

As Al says the word mint, both look up from the album and John’s says, “Al. I say we bring them home!”

“That’d be stealing.”

“I don’t see it as stealing. Think for a moment, this is a discovery, an agrological find, and we found it!”

“We’re not taking these. Someone must own them. What about the candle last night?”

“Al, what about the candle?”

“Someone’s coming to this shack. We saw the footprints in the dust upstairs. We saw the candle. What more proof do you need?”

“What proof is it that the person that lit the candle owns the pictures? Maybe it’s some one like us. They found the shack. We have no idea. If the real person who owned this was around, you think the door would’ve been locked?”

“John we’ve been gone for a day. Let’s get home!”

“Speaking of which, think, if we bring these pictures home, how this could change things. What do you think your wife would do then? She’ll see you worked all night, slept in the woods. She’ll get excited like me, not mad.”

“I don’t know?”

“I know one thing. These pictures dig me out of a deep hole. Or we can go empty-handed and face the facts. We both may be getting a divorce.”

Looking at the albums, Al says, “Well, maybe take a few. Can’t take them all. It’ll take to long for us to carry them back to the car.”

“Before I’d say that, I’d at least know where the car is. Remember you lost it?”

Al walks around the cellar coming to a stone pedestal, between a set of cases. On top is a closed book, with a dark, almost black leather cover. The pages are faded yellow, worn and fragile. On the top cover written in bold, raised, gold italic capital letters are the words, Picture Picture. Al points saying, "John, look, it's a book!"

John steps next to Al, looking over his shoulder. Al's drags his fingers over the cover, following the letters. A shockwave goes up his spinal cord to his brain, sending images flashing in his thoughts too fast for recognition. "I swear. There's something familiar here. Don't know what it is. But…"

"But what?"

"We've been here before!"

"If we'd been here, we wouldn't forget this place. I couldn't. You don't forget a treasure chest filled with gold."

John, while looking at the book notices an old camera, behind the pedestal. Taking it he says, "It's a Polaroid. The kind that takes instant pictures. I bet it's from 1960's. There's film left. Wonder if it works?"

John takes a picture, as Al looks at the book. At the symbols on it, saying, “Strange. What’s this?”

John knocking on it, “It’s metal.”

“It looks like a planet here. And five moons across a horizon. (Moving his finger.) This seems to be two setting suns.”

Al takes his hand, opens the cover, and the symbols stay at the center of the book. Both look through the square hole in the cover, as it’s laid completely open. Taking notice of a large embroidered gold and black bookmarker between the cover and the first page. John takes it, looking at it. Both sides have the same markings as the box. On one side of the marker it looks like day, the other night.

Al takes pages of the book, turning them by the handful, flipping them over, reveling more of the box. It has markings surrounding it and Al looks closer, saying, “What do you make of it, the book?”

“Not so important. Want to get the pictures and get.”

“Been here. Know it. There’s something...”

“Where. Where have you been?”

“Here. In this shack, I know it!”

“Here Al. Or maybe you’ve been on this moon.”

Al flips the pages back to the first. Looking, centered, are the words, “The power to travel into pictures!”

John responds, “The power to do what?”

Both look at all of the albums, containing thousands of photos, and Al says, “That would explain the candle being lit, and nobody here.”

“What!”

“Whoever was here, maybe they’re traveling in pictures, now!”

John, snapping free from his ridiculous thoughts, cracks up, laughing at Al, saying, “Are you crazy? This is what you think happened? Someone lit the candle and jumped into a picture.”

Not enjoying being laughed at, this sets off his short fuse and Al says, “I’ve had enough. Don’t care if you think the pictures are worth money. I’m not taking any.” Al walks up the steps.

“Where you going? You have to give me time!”

“John it’s morning. You said at first light we find the car. Well its first light. Let’s go before someone finds us, and we get in bigger

trouble then with our wives. We don't know what kind of person lives here. But I'm sure he won't be happy to find us stealing his photos."

"We should take as many as we can. It's a once in a lifetime find. How can you walk away?"

"When I walk into a bank there's lots of money, but I find a way to resist. Sure I think, wouldn't it be great, but I don't!"

"This isn't a bank. I don't see any guards, or for that matter anyone telling me I can't take these pictures, but you."

"Fine, do what you want! I'm not taking any blame!"

"If we get caught I promise I'll take the blame. Now, would you mind grabbing some?"

"I'll be upstairs. Don't be long! You have a couple minutes. Otherwise we'll both be lost in the woods alone."

Al, outside the shack is thinking about getting away. The longer he waits, the more anxious he becomes. He walks back in and yells down the cellar, "What are you doing?"

"I'll be there in a minute." (John comes walking out of the cellar barely able to carry

the albums piled in his arms.) We can sell these easy."

"You can sell them!"

"You can carry some. This would be a help."

"Don't want any part!"

"We can come back to the shack, take everyone."

John sets the albums on the table, while Al's saying, "You can't take that many. You'll never be able to carry them."

"You're not going to help?"

"No."

"But, but, I thought you we're going to carry..."

"You haven't heard a word I'm saying?"

"Al. This is my early retirement. My pension. My P.I.M. Pictures into money, this is how I plan spending my future."

"I see you spending your future in prison."

"You won't carry any for your poor, about to be rich friend?"

"You're on your own."

"I was sure you'd carry two or three of the albums. I could carry the rest."

“Not carrying anything. Jesus. Would you hear me? I don’t steal. And I don’t think you should be either, they’re not yours to take!”

“Mind your business. Told you, I don’t see anybody telling me I can’t take these, except you. So back off. I’ll pack my pockets. Stuff my pants. Everywhere I can stick one, I’ll stick it!”

“That’s fine. Take what you want. But if you’re coming back to get more you better cover your tracks, and put the ones you’re not taking back where you found them.”

Down in the cellar placing the extra albums back John’s saying, “Please carry a few. What if we never find this place again?”

“Out of here! You’re on your own. The only thing I care about is finding the car.”

Al picks up the candle walks up the steps, John’s following saying, “Thought I’d ask one last time. What could it hurt?”

Once upstairs Al starts walking across the floor, and John asks, “What are you doing?”

“I’m putting this candle back where we found it.”

Setting the candle down, Al takes a long wood match from the box, lighting it, leaving three. Waving his hand the match is put out

and tossed into the clean fireplace. Al walks back towards John, saying, “Let’s put as much distance as we can between this place and us!”

Al stops at the door. Takes a look back. Pauses. The moment he looked at the floor, the dust and prints! Al calls to John, saying, “John. Here. Come!”

“Here. Come. What Al?”

“Look at the floor!”

John looks. Scanning asking, “What is it? I don’t see anything?”

“Last night when we entered the shack, I watched you walk across the floor, to pick up the candle. I noticed the footprints. Remember? I spoke about them. Look at the prints now!”

John’s eyes break their contact with Al. Turning his head, he follows Al’s pointing finger, to the prints. John pauses to think about what he sees. To be clear before he says anything, and mumbles, “There’s only one...”

“Yes! The ones I just left putting the candle back. Where are ours from last night?”

“The ones that were here, where are they?”

“That’s not what I’m talking about John. Last night the very first set of footprints on the floor, I said they struck me as strange.”

“You kept repeating it.”

“It’s not that! I know what’s bothering me about last nights’ prints. They were mine!”

“What Al?”

“The prints on the floor. When we first got here was mine. I’m sure of it! Look at my shoeprints. It’s the same from last night. My prints were here before us!”

“No way. Can’t be.”

“Look at them. It’s the same as the ones I left putting the candle back. Step-for-step. I’m telling you, this place seemed like I’ve been here before and this proves it!”

“This only proves you’re a couple steps closer to that nut house.”

“We’ve been here before John!”

“No we haven’t Al!”

“Last night when we got here, …they were mine!”

“Impossible. Before last night we’ve never been here.”

‘Think back.”

John remembers seeing the two are identical. Not convinced, he turns to Al saying, “We’ve never been here. How could last nights be yours?”

“Can’t answer that. But you answer this. There’s one set of prints. We know they’re mine. What happen to the ones from last night?”

John walks out of the shack loaded with photos, Al follows asking, “What?”

“Yes, about those footprints. Okay. I agree. Last night looked like yours. But that’s as far as I’m willing to go.”

“I think the further we get from this place the better!”

“Alright, lets go!”

“See, I told you.”

“Okay, there’s something about it. Let’s get away.”

“I’m with you. Finding our home’s and a nice warm bed sounds great.”

“Maybe you’ll have a bed. I’m hoping for the sofa. Probably have to stay at a hotel for a few days.”

Walking from the shack at a jackhammers pace, Al says, “It’s all woods. I don’t see anything.”

Walking through high noon, the steps they take lead through dusk, searching, the sun’s setting and John says, “You couldn’t go right

home. Well I hope you're happy. We're lost for a second night!"

"I can't walk anymore. My feet are killing me."

"Your feet are killing you. My feet are about to be killing you! I'm about to kick your butt. It's your fault my wife's going to lay some heavy heat on me. I'll be lucky to be married by the time we get back. I'm sure there will be a yard sale with a sign with his things must go cheap, is on already the lawn."

The last bit of light trickles away as darkness fills the air. Leaving their tracks through the forest, John stops walking, asking, "Okay, now what?"

Al points, and John looks, seeing the lit window saying, "You walked us in a circle. How could I be so dumb, to follow you two days in a row, right back to the same spot, lost! Tomorrow I lead. You'll follow me for a change."

Getting closer to the shack Al asks, "Do you think the candles the same one we lit this morning?"

"I don't know, its getting cold, clouds are rolling in, I'm sure it'll rain."

Inside the shack they find the candle by itself. They make their way to the floor, falling asleep. In the morning when Al awakes, John's missing. Al jumps to his feet, walks to the cellar door yelling, "You down there?"

"Yes. Here. In the cellar."

Al walks down the steps to find John standing at the book, and asks, "What are you doing?"

"Trying to figure something out. Where'd we leave the bookmarker last night? Do you remember?"

"We left it under the front cover, where we found it."

"Look at this, somebody was here, and is using, or reading this book! Look at the marker. This is where I found it this morning!"

"You didn't move it?"

"No. Can you imagine? It would be great traveling into pictures. Think of it!"

"Look who's scaring who now."

"If it wasn't for you, we wouldn't have ever have found this place! I saw you sleeping. Thought I'd come down and take a look around."

"You scared me. For a second I thought you were reading."

“Now that would be crazy.”

“You think even crazier then traveling into pictures, John?”

“If this books real, from here…”

“Wow! There you go again. What do you mean if?”

“If we could travel into pictures. We could explore the world from here!”

“I think we need to explore you head.”

“Al, we could go back in time and explore history!”

“Yep, that’s what the doctors will do, explore your history.”

“If we can travel into them, we could relive life’s greatest moments!”

“I’m living one now.”

“Think about it Al?”

“Thought about it. Always believed I’d flip first. No John. You think about it. But hearing you saying these things, it’s out of your character. You’re conservative, reading between the lines. You see things with certain logic. All your logic is out the window here. You’re getting excited about traveling into pictures.”

“Wouldn’t you be?”

"I'm sure of one thing in life, and that's you're having a mental breakdown, right here before my eyes. I think this shack, those woods outside, along with these pictures, all mixed in with no food for a couple of days, has you thinking crazy thoughts."

"You love animals, right Al?"

"What does that have to do with anything?"

John walks around the room reading the backs of the books. He walks over to Al holding an album saying, "How about crawling with the Tigers of India? How about hopping in Australia with Kangaroos? I know! Let's go get sun baked with the Lions in Africa! What more could you ask, look at all of the pictures?"

Al starts looking at each bookcase with the albums, thousands of photos! Thinking it would be great. About as great as a man flying from here to the moon kicking his feet! Reaching his hand, taking down an album John watches, as Al walks the cellar evaluating the situation, and John's saying, "We should read the book. I mean what do we have to lose?"

"Time!"

"It wouldn't take much."

"We're a couple of days late John, think we should consider this."

"What difference does a couple more hours make?"

Al looks, there's something that sucks him in. These seconds in thought were enough for him to look ahead, forgetting what he has behind, and suddenly he thinks, screw it, saying, "I'll read a few pages." Al takes the cover, opens it reading, "*My name is G.L. I discovered the box in 1877 as a young man!*"

"Al if he found the box back then. Then I don't see how traveling into pictures was possible, there weren't any then."

"Not only this. How'd he collect all the pictures that are here now?"

As the words blend into many, the pages of the book are turned. Al reads on, "*The first step is to snap a picture*. (John aims the camera, takes a picture of the book as Al reads). *The only way to return to the time you're leaving is by taking a picture of where you are. With this picture you create a window back. Other wise you may find yourself lost forever.*'

Reading all day, the sunsets outside. Inside the book, like an addiction has them hooked,

by candlelight Al continues, "*You can only travel into a true picture, if it's a copy nothing will happen. Once you have chosen a picture, open the box, center it, and close the lid*."

John reaches, opens the lid, both lean in looking. At its bottom is a picture. John lifts it to his face, saying, "It's a black and white of the shack. It must be a hundred years old!"

"Maybe whoever wrote this is serious. Maybe he's traveling right now in pictures. Do you think while we're here, he's there?" (Al points to the picture.) Reading on, "*After the picture you have chosen is in the box, close your eyes before the moons are pressed, or blindness is certain as you pass through.*"

John looks at the albums taking one saying, "Let's see, maybe we can go to Paris. (John grabs a picture of the Eiffel Tower, placing it inside, closes the lid.) Okay. Let's press the moons."

"Don't you think we should finish reading?"

"Not going to work. We've been reading for hours."

"Let's finish reading before we travel."

"Travel? We're not going anywhere but back up those steps."

"John…"

“Try one, nothing’s going to happen. Think, when we leave here in ten minutes, pockets filled with these little jewels, at least we’ll know this stupid thing doesn’t work.”

Al looks at the Polaroid picture John took, their passageway back to the shack. He takes it, placing it in his pocket.

John watching, asks, “Why are you doing that?”

“It’s our way back.”

“You don’t believe this?”

“John, for a crazy reason, when we open our eyes and we’re not in this room. I want this picture in my pocket.”

John counts three as both close their eyes, and simultaneously press the moons. There’s a snapping hi pitched sound, like a shutter of a camera. Than there’s a shocking feeling through their fingertips and this explodes over their bodies.

Slowly John opens his eyes, looks through a camera, snapping the picture they traveled into of the Eiffel Tower!

John looks at Al. His eyes are squeezed tight, holding his own camera. John looks back to the Tower, glances in a circle at the streets of

Paris, gulps, he grabs Al's sleeve saying, "Not going to believe what's before you!"

"I felt something, and if it's any indication, I won't."

"Open your eyes Al!"

As John says this, he gives him a kick and he stumbles, opens his eyes, and sees the coble stone streets passing. As Al steps ahead, looking down he knows he's not looking at the floor of the shack. Al catches his balance, looks up. His stumbles turn into tiny steps. Thinking thoughts faster then a tornado's winds, Al says, "It can't be?"

John walks several steps, spins and yells, "Al, we're in Paris!"

"Like in the book, we go back to the moment the picture was taken. We have to be careful with the cameras. We use them to return to the shack."

"What about the shack Al? I'm worried about Paris right now."

Looking at the old cars on the street Al asks, "What year's that picture from?"

John starts running, Al yells, "Where are you going?"

"I've always wanted to climb the Eiffel Tower. Come on Al, I'll race you to the top."

“No, look at our clothes. We’re not dressed for this time. I think we should get out of here.”

“Just got here. Not going anywhere.”

“Let’s go back to the shack and rethink this.”

“Thought about it. No thinking needed.”

“We know it works.”

“No doubt!”

“We should go back. Read the entire book, from cover to cover.”

“Al, do you ever take a moment to enjoy life? Look around, we’re in Paris, and because our clothes are a bit out of fashion, you want to leave.”

“We’re not out of fashion. We haven’t come into fashion.”

Walking backwards, John turns. Running, Al follows. Beginning to climb, Al says, “Slow down. I can’t keep up with you.”

“You’re not in such great shape, look at you.”

Walking the rest of the way, they’re both beat. Standing at the highest point, the winds blow, and a gray cloud covers Paris. Al looks to the skies, and says, pointing, “Are they birds? Over there?”

Looking to the horizon, Al shields his eyes. John leans towards where he's pointing and says, "No. Not birds. They look like planes."

"Planes. I wonder. Are you thinking?" (Both say), "Hitler!"

A siren's heard. John's saying, "Don't know. It could be. I think we need to get out of here!"

Al reaches and John says, "Get that picture. Hurry." Looking back to the plains.

"What do you think I'm doing? Can't find the damn thing."

Al reaches in his pockets, feeling for it, and John yells, "If those planes are Hitler's, you better hurry. Come on!"

"I have it!"

"This thing better work. When we open our eyes, if we're still looking at each other here, and those are bombers, we're so screwed!"

Al turns to see the planes, John grabs at the picture. Al pulls back. Both jaws drop, in reverse their eyes open as the pictures drops, floating it tumbles towards the street. Watching as it falls from sight, they look at each other, and Al yells, "What you do that for?"

“I’m not the one that yanked the picture from my hand.”

Al getting mad thinks about being stuck in the bombing of France. He walks up to John and pushes him with both hands in the chest. Al watches in disbelief, and sees John heading over the rail, doing all not to fall. He’s lost with empty hands as he grabs at air, and begins to go completely over the railing of the tower!

Al dives, slamming into John’s up swinging legs. Al isn’t sure, but he feels he’s flying. Looks at the planes overhead. John kicked him in the air. Upside down, backwards he hits the ground.

Looking at John, Al sees him standing straight, with one hell of a surprised look on his face, screaming, “You lucky son-of-a...!”

Al leans up from his back and says, “Who’s what?”

“You almost killed me!”

“You’re forgetting something. Almost. I almost…”

“You didn’t almost do anything, you pushed me.”

“I also saved you. I think you should be indebted to me.”

“We’re stuck up a tower without a picture!”

John takes off for the steps. Al follows. Overhead the whistling sounds of bombs falling, fill the air. The blast's that follows rocks the ground. Trying to keep their feet, running towards where they believed the picture might be. Al's doing more gasping then running. John's a block a head on the street.

John looks to the city. The streets. Fire and smoke are blasting into the air. Seeing the picture, John runs and picks it up. From below the bomber hatches open. Al sees John running towards him, holding up the photo saying, "On three. We snap our pictures."

The bombs are heard falling above, and John counts to three. Looking at each other a last time, they both close their eyes, each snapping their picture.

Back at the shack, hands shaking, both back away from the book. Looking at each other John asks, "You okay Al?"

Al with a look of shock, with a dash of terror, is looking down at himself, and back to John, saying, "Don't know. Maybe this is a dream."

"What dream? The shack. Being lost. Paris. Picture traveling. The book. I have no

idea which one you're speaking of. Wow! (John grabs Al shaking him like a cocktail, screaming.) What the hell was that?"

"What was, the hell, when, …did you John?"

"Did I what?"

"Didn't you read the year? Here under the picture?"

"No! Didn't think of it. Will from now on!"

"Hitler was about to cook our American butts."

"You're forgetting something. My pusher friend."

"It was an accident John. I swear."

"Each time you get mad, you lose it. This time you almost went too far. If you ever look at me funny, your butt will be bouncing off the ground. You got it?"

"We shouldn't mess with this anymore!"

"Did that really happened?"

"Nobody's going to believe us John!"

"Would you tell anyone?"

"For me, this is going to be pretty damn hard to keep a secret."

"What would you say? I hopped into a picture. Climbed the Eiffel Tower. I was there and I don't believe it!"

“Maybe this is one I shouldn’t tell anyone?”

“That’s smarter then running down the street yelling, I can travel into pictures.”

“I didn’t say I was going to do that.”

“What’s the difference? You whisper a word of this, you might as well run down the street yelling it!”

“Word of this would travel fast.”

“That’s right Al. We need to keep this to ourselves. The pictures. The book. Everything. We come here whenever we want, to the shack.”

“John!”

“Don’t you see it? If we tell people about it we’ll never get to use it again.”

“You’ve forgotten something? Can’t tell anyone, if we can’t get out of these woods. Can we?”

“When we do Al. We say nothing!”

“Let’s worry about this when we find the car.”

“Promise, it’s our secret, this includes the wives.”

“I’m not promising you anything.”

“Promise me you won’t tell anyone.”

“You’re unbelievable! We haven’t even come back to earth about this, and you’re

already trying to keep it from the rest of the world."

"If we let others know, it's only a matter of time before the rest of the world takes it from us."

"If it'll make you happy, I promise. I'll keep it a secret."

Both sitting on the floor, reality sinks in. Neither says a word for a long time. John mumbles, hops to his feet, and looks through albums, Al says, "I want Africa!"

"Africa! No problem. It's in my hands now."

"No?"

"Yes! That's right. Are you ready to look, close up."

"No!"

"You're not ready?"

"Yes!"

"Where in Africa do you want to go? After what happened in Paris, I think we need to be careful. Here's a picture from 1896 of the Serengeti. Look at the size of the herd of elephants."

Al, looking at the old black and white picture of Africa thinks for a moment, and says, "What are we doing? We have families.

It's like we've forgotten them. Forgotten who we are. How could I be so caught up, I could forget my family? What time is it, do you know John, or what day it is?"

"What's up? I can see something's eating you?"

"What if something goes wrong, if we get stuck in time? I want out of this!"

Al takes the candle and walks up the steps. John follows. Once upstairs Al says, "Don't move! John, the footprints, they're gone again! (Al walks across the floor setting the candle down.) Any of this looks familiar to you?"

"What's going on?"

"I have no idea. Only know I don't like it. I'm beginning to think we'll never find a way out!"

Seeing the box of matches on the mantel, Al looks inside. There are four matches, taking one, striking it. Relighting the candle. While he's doing this John asks, "What do you thinks going on?"

Al tosses the match into the fireplace, saying, "No guessing, lets get away from this place! I think we're already lost. It's done. To late, this is what I think! The last match I used, it's back."

“What you mean.” John walks to Al looking at the three remaining matches.

“I left three matches last time I was here, tossed the one into the fireplace. Remember? Look. (Showing John the match in his hand, he tosses it to the fireplace.) Can’t believe it! Went to pick one last berry and never found our way out of the woods again. Sounds too stupid.”

“Normally I’d be sure we could find a way out, but that was before we traveled into a picture. Now if you ask me. I’m not so sure.”

“Don’t like the sound of that.”

“I’m not sure about finding anything anymore. Think about it, how long have we been here? For all we know it may have been an hour, or maybe even years!”

“I’d know if I was lost for years Al!”

“Who knows for sure? We don’t have a clue. We may be walking in circles the rest of eternity, stuck in pictures. Remember what the book said?”

“You’re nuts.”

“I told you I had bad feelings!”

John heads outside walking fast from the shack, Al follows, and John says, “I don’t want to hear anything more about being lost forever.

Don't want to do anything forever, and this includes being lost!"

"Too late. I feel it!"

"Stop! I don't want to find myself every morning trying to walk out of these woods, and for all of time, you complaining how we're lost! This isn't how I saw my future. I don't believe for a second, we're lost forever."

"How many days you think we've been here John?"

"Three, four, but it surely hasn't been years."

"Did you shave since we've been here?"

Rubbing his hand to his chin, and thinking for a moment John stops walking, and replies, "No."

"Don't you find this odd? Look at our faces. Baby smooth. Another thing. Are you hungry?"

"Haven't given it any thought."

'John if you didn't eat for three days, you'd be thinking about it, time isn't moving."

John stops and looks up at the sky through the trees, and says, "We're that split second caught on film. What do you think we should do?"

"I'm not sure. But if we find the car, we find our way out. And if I'm right, our wives

won't even be mad. You see. We're not missing, or even late. We're repeating time."

"We've slept on the floor of that shack, how many times? You really want me to believe time isn't moving?"

"In the end, we'll see what's going on!"

"I sure hope you're right. Because a few hours I can explain, but years, I'll need some help with that."

Walking, determined to put distance between themselves and the shack. As night comes, John's screaming at Al, after he's done Al says, "I'm sorry!" John looks at him saying, "We'll get out of this."

"Well, which way you want to walk?"

"It all looks the same. So it doesn't matter, this is how lost I am Al."

"Don't you think its crazy we can't find our way?"

"In my heart, I hope we find that shack again."

"You're only saying that because you think you can retire on what's there. Tell your boss where he can stick it."

"Don't make me think about my job, and what those pictures can do."

“I’m never laying foot near this mountain again.”

“That’s fine. This way when I leave my wife, there’ll be plenty.”

“That’s what this is all about, isn’t it? You think you can leave your wife and quit your job?”

“I wasn’t thinking of it exactly that way, but now that you mentioned it. Could you see that? Walking to my wife, kissing her on the cheek, go to my boss, kick him in the ass, and out the door I go, a picture salesman.”

Walking side-by-side until total darkness, the woods take on a distant feel, like being suspended in water not sure which way is air. Both can feel a bit of panic.

The moon scrapes the horizon, dieing, leaving no trace of its face. The woods, with the light of the moon gone, all go hollow, and John says, “This is the darkest I’ve ever seen it. I’ve been walking the woods a long time. But this night, it’s like my eyes are closed. Strange, Al, not a cricket.”

John reaches with his hand to see where Al is. Feeling John’s hand touching his arm Al says, “Not a star. No clouds. Only endless black.” Al looks down from the sky and sees

the flickering flame of the candle bouncing its reflections through the trees.

"Which way? I can't see my next step."

"I think you can, John, behind you. There's no way out. We're trapped!"

John turns and sees the window of the shack, and says, "The candle, this is crazy!"

"Even crazier. Then traveling in pictures?"

"No one, and I mean no one has cheated time. What makes you so sure we're cheating time Al?"

"I never said we're cheating time. It's more like it's cheating us. We're stuck. I mean really we're…"

Al is unable to speak another word, due to the force John's applying to his throat. Al tries to breathe, and John says, "I told you to shut your mouth! I can see all that's going on. You always knew which directions the berries were. Well, I'm about to make you black and blueberry if you don't stop going on about this lost stuff!"

John shoves Al back, releasing his hold. Al holding his neck says, "I'm scared. What do you want me to say?"

“Don’t say anything about being lost. If you want to keep harping, let’s remind ourselves why we’re in this mess in the first place!”

“I didn’t mean for us to get lost.”

“It’s the results that matter!”

“We shouldn’t fight anymore. We need to get out of this without killing each other.”

That’s the last word. After days of walking the same woods, doing the same things, they’ve had enough of each other. Once back inside the shack, John crosses the floor to the candle. They both sleep on the floor.

In the morning, John opens his eyes and hears rain. He looks towards Al, who’s sleeping against the wall. Walking down the cellar steps, he takes an album. And he thinks about the power of it, how he’d like to use it. Hearing the door to the cellar open, Al yells, “You down there again? (Al walks down the steps and sees John.) What are you doing?”

“Killing time. It’s raining. Saw no reason to wake you if we’re not leaving.”

“I don’t care about a little rain.”

“Did you look outside?”

“Yes!”

“It’s not a little rain. You still want to walk those woods?”

“What do you have in mind John?”

“I don’t want to walk all day, to end up here. Why even bother?”

“Kids, wives, responsibilities, we can’t stay.”

“We’ll get out of here. Think about it. Hours in the cold, wet, where will this get us? We haven’t been able to find our way out on nice days, a few more hours won’t make a difference.”

“I hope you’re not thinking about using the book again.”

“If we’re waiting, let’s travel.”

“I see where you’re going with this John. Let’s go up stairs. There’s no reason for us to sit here. I think the temptation’s to great for you.”

“Okay. Have it you’re way!”

Back upstairs both sit, Al on the chair looking out the window, John on the floor, twirling his thumbs, starts to speak a few times.

Hours pass and the rains pour down. John’s leaning with his hands on his chin, elbows at the table, staring at Al. Al hasn’t stopped looking out the window. Standing up from the chair he yells, “God John, what’s going on?

It's like the rain doesn't want us to leave. Everything's against us, there's no way out!"

"Yes there is!"

"Well, don't stand there. How, how do we get out?"

"The pictures!"

"Can't you see, by entering them we're digging deeper?"

"But Al, we're stuck until it stops raining, so what's the big deal if we travel? I see no reason to sit here."

"If you want to travel, go. When you get back, I'll be here."

"You know I won't go without you."

"Then it's settled."

"We should do it Al! It's a once in a life time opportunity."

"I don't know. I think we could get in big trouble.

"Come on Al."

"By noon, if it's still raining, maybe we'll use the book."

"I think it's already too late for finding the car. We'll be lost again, this time all night. You need to face the facts. This day's lost and we should make the best of it." (John, walking

the room, grows inpatient), “lets not just stand here looking at each other.”

Time is passing and John has talked Al into moving from upstairs to the cellar. It’s getting dark again and the rain’s pounding. John picks up the album of Africa saying, “Look! Kenya, and there’s a Cheetah?”

“Guess we’re already late.”

“We’re not making it home for dinner Al.”

“Oh what the heck. Lets go to Africa to see a Cheetah!”

Placing the picture in the box John says, “What a change. A moment ago you where sitting all bummed, now you’re jumping up and down looking excited.”

“You ready John?”

“I’m with you.”

“I want this so much I can’t say no!”

After pressing the moons, both are lying in tall brown grass. The sun’s low, its morning, the air’s baked dry. It’s hard to take a breath without feeling the heat burning your lungs.

While their senses adjust to the surroundings, their focus comes to the Cheetah, which has lifted from its stalking position, and is gliding into full flight. Eyes glued to a Gazelle, like an arrow cuts through air, the

Cheetah cuts through the grass. Al points in the direction to the left of the Cheetah and whispers, “Look Hyena’s.”

But what catches Al’s ears is a low growl behind him. Turning to see in full stride a massive head of a male Lion charging them. The mane, tipped black, to a deep golden blond at the body, how the entire mane with each pounding paw rattled from shoulders to the ends in waves of reflected sunlight.

“John!” (John, looks at Al, turns and sees the Lion barreling down on them.) “Too late, hide!” (Al yells.)

Both drop to the grass. Covering their heads with their arms. And the sounds of the plains ring out. The snarling Cheetah slices. The Hyena’s giggle, the paws of the Lion is heard thumping out a rhythm echoing back into their heads.

They lay in the grass, squeezing for all the life they have. The Lion’s closing steps, its madding growls, are heard fractions away. Knowing the Lion’s upon them, each braces for the attack, as the Lion passes.

Al’s first to uncover his head, looks up and sees the Loin’s butt running away. The Lion

turns the table on the Hyena's, taking the attack to them.

Both sneaking away from the action, explore the untamed plains. Seeing elephants to baboons. Resting under a tree, John says, "You know. The last few hours, I've been thinking about leaving my wife, and becoming a world traveler. Who needs her yelling at me every time I come home a few decades late?"

"John."

"We can travel the world, every inch of it! We can walk on the sandy beaches of Hawaii, and stroll the streets of New York, all in the same minute. We can move through time, go back and watch the Babe point over the wall. See every super bowl. What do you think, let's live forever in pictures?"

"What about our families?"

"We're free! Can't you see it? Forever we're free, of work, time, and money!"

"John, you hear yourself?"

"Loud and clear."

"You're letting this get to you. I say let's get back to the shack. I'm in the mood for Chinese food."

Back at the cabin the rain continues. In the cellar John and Al have been doing a little site

seeing. They had authentic Chinese food in Asia. Ate some pasta in Italy. Pigged out at a pork roast in Hawaii. Fed on fresh fish in Finland, and skipped stones, while snacking on swizzle sticks in Switzerland. Back in the cellar of the shack, both are looking at an album. On this cover it has the five moons. Opening it, they notice only one picture. Taking this picture it is placed into the box.

After pressing the moons, both are facing what looks to be an identical book. It's a sealed chamber made of massive gray stones, with a torch mounted on the wall. Walking the room John says, "We're sealed in."

Turning in a complete circle both see more cases with albums, Al says, "There's no way out here."

"Yes there is."

Al watches as John walks towards the book and the box. The lids open. Seeing a picture, taking it, John holds it towards the torch. Studying it and says, "There must be a mistake. Grass with trees, even a few rivers. Everybody knows the Pyramids were in a desert!"

Al says, "Give me that picture. (Looking at it.) When the Pyramids were built, some believe it was a rain forest."

“What are you saying? We’re looking at a three thousand year old picture of Egypt.”

“For me picture travel would’ve been impossible. I’m not sure, but who knows. Maybe it’s a real picture!”

John takes the torch in hand, and begins walking. He holds it out so he can read the back of the albums. As each overwhelming title’s read, John reaches for a breath saying, “Al you’re not going to believe this, Atlantis, Rome, Greece, Napoleon, Alexander the Great, Henry the Eighth, The Egyptians!”

John pauses looks at the titles, speechless. Al walks up asking, “No way. You’re joking?”

John reads name after name, towns and cities. Stepping in front of a case, waving to Al saying, “Jesus Christ!”

Al sees the albums are of biblical times. John takes one saying, “Jesus Christ!”

Al takes an album and says, “Holy Mosses! I mean, Jesus Christ. It’s Mosses!”

“Jesus Christ, holy shit!”

‘No shit, holy shit, John!’

Both walk in a few tight circles, focused on the albums each is holding. Sitting on the floor John says, “I didn’t believe in that.” (Pointing to the album.) “You mean it really happened?”

“You’re asking me? Open your album.”

“You first.”

“Jesus Christ, John.”

“No, you open Mosses first.”

“I wasn’t saying Jesus Christ, I was saying, Jesus Christ!”

“How about we open the albums at the same time? You go first.”

Looking at the closed albums, wondering, each opens to their first page. There’s no contact between the two, until each have looked at every photo in their respective albums. Flipping the cover closed John says, “I’ll swap you. Jesus for Mosses.”

“No way! What did Jesus do, walk cross-country nailed to a cross? Big deal. Mosses parted the Red Sea.”

“I’ll throw in the Virgin Mary.”

Swapping albums, after finishing viewing them, Al asks, “What’s next?”

“We could go to Rome, watch a chariot race. Or we can witness Jesus Christ being crucified. You ask me what’s next. I have no idea!”

Al picks up the Pyramid picture shaking it in his hand saying, “I wonder if these are real, if this isn’t a prank gone to far. But mostly I

wonder what it'd be like to walk with the Egyptians!" Al grins.

"Are you saying?"

"What do you think I'm saying?"

"I think you're planning a little trip, Al?"

"Could be a little trip in my future."

"Could it be, maybe to the Middle East?"

"John, you're getting warmer."

"Maybe, let's say, back three thousands years? You wouldn't happen to have an extra ticket, for a good old friend would you?"

"Maybe, have to check. But more important, did you ask your wife if you're allowed to go to Egypt without her?"

"Yes, I asked my sweat little angle if I could travel all of time without her. She said it'd be fine. Just don't be late for diner!"

All of the humor leaves the room and Al says, "The only way we're going to find out if these pictures are real, is by travel into one. But I'm not sure about going back that far in time."

"What's the worst thing that can happen?"

"I don't want to find out John."

"If it isn't a genuine picture it won't work. But if these pictures are real, then it'll blow the socks off the scientific world!"

“I have to know. This book’s already unbelievable. We’ve come this far. There’s no turning back right? The suspense is killing me!”

After pressing the moons, they’re looking at a green jungle. But most obvious, there are two pyramids, and a third is being built. The Sphinx stands covered in gold and jade facing them.

Al sits on the ground, sees the camera he’s holding, and says, “Look at the cameras! They’re not from Earth. They have the moons.”

“What do you think it means?”

Al whispers, “Spaceships! They’re real. And have been visiting us for thousands of years! Not only that. But they’ve been taking pictures. My God! What have we found?”

“Al, you really think we found, their pictures?”

“We’ve had enough close calls. I say we leave, wouldn’t make such a good slave. Anyway, not much into hard labor.”

“I want a few artifacts. Something, anything, this way we’d have proof we were here.”

“Are you crazy John?”

“Can’t see what bringing back one little thing can hurt. Even this stones amazing. (Picking it up.) It’s from when the pyramids were being built. We need to take something back, that says, look we where there! It has to be something that’s clearly from the time of the Egyptians!”

“The only thing you’re thinking is how you can make money.”

“What’s the big deal? I see an opportunity to have a better life.”

“What I want most is to walk away from this, and find home!”

“We tried. Remember? So what should we do? Walk the woods forever?”

Face-to-face Al yells, “Yes! We walk the woods until we find a way out. We never stop searching. There has to be someway. We keep following the candle. Why not go in the other direction, away from the shack?”

“Great, we walk the woods all night. I don’t think so.”

“Damn you John! You’re always taking things further then I want.”

“You took the first steps. I was happy to go home. But it seems things have changed.”

“You don’t need to bring anything back. We know the secrets of the Pyramids. For us there’s no wondering. We know Aliens have been visiting us. And more then this, they’ve been taking pictures!”

“Al, I think we should travel into every picture. I’m collecting a few things for show and tell.”

Back at the shack, both begin to speak at the same time. John takes the picture of the passageway, holding it in his hand and says, “This picture’s a time link. It’s our destiny! We’re meant to travel in pictures!”

“Listen up, we can’t get out of these woods, and we always end up here.” (Al reaches for his wallet.) “We should use this. I could go back, let my wife know we’re lost, she could help us.”

“You’re in this picture. What’ll happen when you show up? You might be snapping a picture of yourself.”

“What else can we try?”

“You’ll be there, both your wife and you. This is where it gets interesting. Imagine after you say cheese, I see problems.”

“It’s our wedding. There are lots of people. I could snap the picture and leave. I could make a call later. Let her know.”

“Could you see you answering that call? You’re trying to explain to yourself, it’s you? You’d hang up. Even if your wife answered, and let’s say you’re standing next to her, do you think your wife’s going to believe a word? What are you going to say? Help me honey, I’m lost? I went fishing and I’m lost. Can you send me a map? Heck, you could draw a little shack with a big arrow pointing at it, saying, we are here and mail it to her!”

Al looks at the other picture in his wallet, drops to a knee. Sticks a hand on the floor and catches his emotions, saying, “My God. I was nine when this was taken. It was early night. Parents went out. Phone rang. I answered. It was a nut saying he was from the future. He was saying he was me. Hung up. Called begging me to listen, hung up again. He called back, and said I’ll remember this call. This would come back to haunt me!”

“You never told me that.”

“I forgot. My baby sitter left the phone off the hook. Which means, I could’ve never gotten through. I was a kid, how could I

know? The only thing for sure is we parked the car, and found this shack, now we're lost forever!"

"Great, there you go again. Normally I'd be mad about being lost forever. But part of me says try to get home. The rest says, took a wrong turn, make the best of it!"

"But…"

"But nothing Al. We can go back to our junky lives. Or except the utopia we found. I say forget where we came from, and go everywhere we've never been. See all of time through an outside source, the pictures! Or I can go back to work in a factory sanding off rough spots on sheet metal. Look at my hands, at the scars. What do I have to lose by being lost in pictures? I'm not going anywhere in life anyway."

"That's not true. You never know what'll happen. You're always looking for something."

"I'm sure I've found it!"

"I don't think you need to make your millions this way."

"Where you going at you're job? A time clock that counts how much you're worth Al. Why should we even try to get out?"

“Family. I say we retrace every step.”

“We’ve tried, a few times. You have any other bright ideas. Like starting a Roman coin collection?”

“The only thing I know is, I’m scared.”

“Can’t say I blame you. I have those feelings, but…”

“I don’t want to lose control John.”

“It’s too late. We’ve lost control!”

“I don’t want hear that!”

“Think Al. You told me about that call you had as a kid. How many years was that? If you made that call as an adult back to then, this means we’ve already been lost in pictures for over thirty years! You had the time needed to grow from a boy, until now. We’ve been here a long time!”

“Suppose I never pick up the phone. I don’t make the call. Your theory went out the window Einstein.”

“Hey Sherlock, where did all your elementary go? You make the call!”

“Not if I don’t want to. I haven’t made it to this point.”

“Hello. Is anyone inside? Al you make the call. You answered the phone, it happened already!”

“This sucks. I just aged thirty years.”

“How do you do it Al? Keep yourself looking so young, while aging so fast?”

“What a stupid thing to say to a person that’s lost for all eternity.”

“But, we don’t seem to age. We’ve been here for over thirty years, and we haven’t changed. Al, if we’re not aging, you know what this means? Look no beards. If my face isn’t growing hair, then I’m dead. I don’t feel dead. Maybe this is it. We died on the way home from fishing, and this is our crazy after life. Or two. We’ve stopped ageing. Which sounds more reasonable. We died, or we’re frozen in pictures?”

“We have to try to get out.”

“I say we go forward, this is what we should do.”

“Forget about or lives. Wives. Kids. Everything?”

John picks up the first picture that was in the box saying, “Let’s enter this picture of the shack, from a hundred years ago. Go back to find the person who wrote the book. If you really want out of this maybe he can help. But I’m not sure I want to leave.”

“Do you think it’ll help?”

"I don't know. But this is one way we haven't tried."

"Are you ready Al? Lets see if it helps us get out of this. I figure if we get to speak to this guy, he'd have some answers. Not for you to get out so much, but how I can return and keep returning. This way we could travel whenever we wanted. If we had control of this, think of the riches we'd have. Even if I collected every coin in Rome, what would it be worth if we can't walk away from this shack?"

Pressing the moons they cross back in time a hundred years, to the shack. Right away they notice it's different. The paint's fresh, all the woods strong, the roof's slate shingles are in place. The thing that sticks to their thoughts most, are, there's a fire burning. Smoke is rising from the chimney.

Walking up to knock, the door swings open and a shotgun comes out. An old guy says, "Don't move. Hands up. You guys trying to rob me?"

Al replies, "No. We're lost. Need help finding our way out of these woods."

"Help. Lost? Stop, before I shoot. And if you think you can get to me, after I shoot him, just try it. This here baby packs two. I don't

miss rabbits, and you're a heck of a lot bigger then a rabbit."

John says, "We mean you no harm. Need a little help."

Al adds, "We feel uneasy with that gun. Think you could put it down?"

The old man walks back a few steps, scratches his head thinking what to do, and says, "Lost you say." Holds the gun up and looks down the barrel!

Al takes a step back saying, "We've been lost a couple of days now."

John follows up, "It's the truth."

Lifting his head from the sight, the old guy asks, "I don't know. I think maybe I should shoot."

With his last words he aims at John. Al steps in front, the old man says, "You want it first."

His finger slowly squeezes the trigger. John closes his eyes and ducks behind Al, waiting to hear the bang. Al stands on his toes and yells, "Wait!"

John, with his hands over his ears, and all six-foot-six stuffed behind a five-foot five bag of Al. Poor Al. Eyes as big as pancakes, watching the trigger finger, trying to swallow

after yelling. Is now waiting, to see if the half squeezed trigger's pulled, and yells, "Did you find a box?"

The moment freezes. As the seconds brake free they begin flowing into time again. The old man has taken the rifle down to his hip, points the shotgun at Al's chest saying, "Box. What kind of box?"

Al says, "It has strange markings surrounding it."

John squeezes his eyes waiting either for a reply from the old man, or his rifle, and the old man udders out, "A box?"

The old man seems to have been caught off guard. He's stopped pointing the rifle. Waiting for his reaction, John says, "Sir, we'll leave. You'll never see us again."

"Maybe I did, (rubbing his beard), find such a box. But what's it to you?"

Al takes his arms down slowly saying, "We're lost, and we think the box is the reason. You see we traveled through it."

The old guy, with no hesitation, picks the rifle up to his eye, pointing it at Al's head. Al and John's hands jump over their heads so fast, they yank they're feet off the ground. The old

man yells, “What do you mean you traveled through it?”

Looking down the barrel of his gun there’s a new anger in his words. Al believed he wasn’t going to pull the trigger, until now. Getting concerned the old guys going to shoot from the look in his eyes, Al says, “We found this shack some hundred years in the future. We took the picture, sat it in the box, pressed the moons and this is how we got here.”

The old man sets his shotgun down to his side, leans on the barrel saying, “You entered through, so this is what this thing does?”

Al sees he looks confused and says, “Are your initials G.L.?”

The old man looks at Al, hesitates and says, “My name’s Glen Landers, why?” (The old guy takes a full stride towards them.)

Al says, “We did all you said. You know in the book you wrote, and it worked! We traveled back here, hoping you could help us find a way out?”

The old man shakes his head saying, “What book? Don’t know of any book?”

John leaning close to Al’s ear whispers, “He hasn’t figured it out. He didn’t write the book yet.”

The old man drops his rifle. Walks towards them saying, “You mean… I knew it! I thought it had powers! It’s a time machine, right?” (Al and John smile with relief seeing the gun on the ground.) And what’s this? You must tell me about the book, you said I wrote. Wrote what?”

He takes their arms leading them towards the door and John says, “Wait a moment. I’d like a word with my friend first.”

“I have stew. You guys hungry?”

Both watch until he’s in the cabin and John says, “Come here. We can’t go inside.”

“Why not. Maybe he can help us.”

“We can’t speak to this guy about anything. What if we change something? He may never figure out the box!”

“That’s it! Our way out, can’t you see it? If we do something that stops this guy, from discovering its secrets, then we’d never find it. And if we never find the box, we never get lost in pictures.”

“You’re talking about destroying this?”

“Not destroying, preventing it!”

“Are you crazy? Maybe you don’t want this, but I do. So don’t do anything that screws this thing up!”

“If he never figures it out, you’ll never know about it.”

“There’s the problem. You see, I know about it!”

“Let’s try to speak to him!”

“And say what? We’re here, and nothing’s going to change this.”

“We have to try something to stop him.”

“To late. You told him we traveled from the future back to see him. You think this made him less motivated? If you think I’m going to let you try to stop him from figuring this out, you’re crazy!”

“This is about my life. Back off John!”

“I’m not going to watch you destroy this. It’s not happening.”

“How are you going to stop me?”

“I’ll stop you from speaking to him even if I have to shut your mouth myself. You remember how that works, a little squeeze to the throat!”

“You’re an idiot! I’m going to do what I have to. I mean anything to stop him from figuring this out.”

“I already know what happens. So do you. He figures it out!”

‘Damn you! This isn’t fair. You want to stay? You stay. But at least help me find a way out to see my family.”

“That’s fine. I’ll help you find a way out, if there is one. But I won’t let you destroy this so you can get out. That isn’t going to happen. I want this, so be careful of what you do!”

“You’re making a mistake. You’re going to be sorry about this.”

“I say we go back to the shack and forget this guy. He doesn’t know anything. Kind of like you trying to go back in time to warn yourself, if it worked, we wouldn’t be here! Lets get out of here Al. I’m not letting you get within a skunks stink of him.”

After a long argument John has it his way, not letting Al get near G.L. Back at the shack, looking out the window, it is night. John says, “Come on. Let’s do this!”

“Do what? Picture traveling.”

“Yes. Why not? What else is there?”

Al paces the floor a few minutes, walks back to John saying, “I don’t see how I have any other choice. I can have this sick feeling about being trapped, or I can accept it.”

“This is what I’m talking about.”

“I guess I’m with you John. You want to do this. Let’s do it. I say we go through and see every picture!”

Al looks at John. He can see his eyes have changed from concern to, the heck with it! John puts his hand on his shoulder saying, “It’s about time!”

“There’s one condition John. For me to do this and spend time traveling with a smile on my face? You follow me. I choose all the pictures. Or I’m not traveling into another one.”

“What if I say no. After all you got us lost, and I feel as if I should have a say.”

“Quit complaining. You like us being lost. I don’t want to hear anything else about me getting us lost!”

John steps closer to Al saying, “There’s no place you can go. No time or universe where I wouldn’t follow. You go my friend to the furthest of lands, the more distant, the more bizarre, the better!”

Looking through the pictures all the secrets of the Earths creator become clear. Reliving the history of what was written, and destine to be known as the Bible!

Walking around the cellar, they make their way back to the first passageway. Looking at the backs of the albums they find another passageway. Entering it. Turning to see the albums that are here. John reads, "Neanderthal."

"No! I don't believe you. You're joking, right?"

"Why? You believed me when I said I saw Jesus?"

"I saw him to. But I haven't seen any Neanderthal."

"You're about too."

Here the guys find a map filled with the history of mankind, charted up to our first upright steps. Al takes a deep breath and says, "I don't believe it."

"Can't be Al."

"What if it is John?"

"No way. We shouldn't."

"Do you think we should?"

"Should you even think it Al?"

"...Don't know."

"That's better."

"Better then what?"

"Don't know?"

"Me either!"

“So we are?”

“Looks like it.”

“Then it’s decided?”

“Yes John.”

“Which picture?”

“I want to see them all. Don’t want to miss one!” This time there’s no thrill, no rush of the unknown. Rather an overwhelming numbness gripping their thoughts. Neither is sure if the next few steps might be too far.

John asks, “Are you ready to go back and see what we looked like, back then?”

“Have to see this.”

John opens to the first picture, and says, “Look Al. Woolly Mammoths!”

“Lets enter it!”

John puts the photo of the Wooly Mammoths into the box. Smiling with fear, both cross into the picture. Lowering their cameras the herd of mammoths are in the swampy grasslands. Al looks to them and says, “Over there. Look closely.”

John sees the spears shadows stand out from the grass saying, “They’re hunting the mammoths!”

In a moment out of time they watch as the cavemen hide low, up wind from the herd,

making a slow approach. Looking to the largest mammoth, it's stepping back, shaking its head side-to-side, ears flapping.

The Mammoth screams with its trunk up, all the others follow, and become uneasy, walking backwards, turning in circles. The dominant female, takes front flank. Each tusks twenty-feet, swinging back-and-forth. There are cavemen charging the mammoths with spears overhead. The dominant female charges as the spears fly. As the battle begins, there's a branch heard braking. Both Al and John spin looking behind them.

A spear sticks in the ground between John's legs. Looking from the direction the spear came there are cavemen are running at them. Another spear flies over Al's shoulder. A caveman is closing throwing more. Hopping to their feet and running, turning it up a gear, Al yells, "I hope we're better runners then they are!"

"Shut up and run!"

Running for some time, Al says, "I need to rest. Can't run anymore."

"Over here." Al holds his side gasping for air.

"Al, here, in the bushes. We can hide."

"I think we need to get out of here!"

Al reaches his hand for the picture. Hearing the cavemen coming John says, "Hurry, we need to snap our pictures."

John, looking back through the woods can see the cavemen holding their weapons. He sees what looks like a blue jeans pocket hanging on a branch. Stepping closer, looking harder, he sees a piece of paper lying on the ground. Putting two and two together he says, "You didn't find that picture, did you Al? Because I'm looking at it, on the ground, about forty feet back! You better run out there and get it fast."

"I can't out run them …too tired, you go."

"One of us has to before it's too late."

Al looks back in the direction of the picture whispering, "Too late." The cavemen pick up the picture.

Thinking for a moment John says, "Run out there screaming like a mad nut. Maybe it'll scare them away."

"And in what language would you like me to do that? And even if I was doing a damn good imitation of a crazy nut, what makes you so sure they know what a crazy nut looks like? You're a crazy nut. I'm not going doing that."

“Do you have a better idea Al?”

“A simpler approach. We stay hidden. Follow them.”

“To where?”

“How should I know? But if we’re lucky we can sneak that picture back from them.”

There’s a loud growling, then, blood curdling screams. Something’s attacking the cavemen and Al says, “What the…”

“I don’t know. But whatever it is. I don’t want it finding us.”

The sounds die and Al says, “Maybe we got lucky and they dropped the picture. Think about it?”

Al walks away and John asks, “Where are you going?”

“I’m not going to lie around here and wait for whatever attacked them to find us. We need to make our move now.”

“Hope we find that picture!”

As they get closer to where they heard the attacks, they see blood on the ground, trees, and shrubs. They see a hand, part of a leg. The sound of something large is heard walking. Al looks around. Because once in a while a large inhaling breathe is heard. Like something was onto the smell of the slaughter.

Al growing edgy says, “It’s coming, I can hear it!”

“Look, on the ground Al. It’s the picture!”

Al looks through the bushes and gets a glimpse! He leans to see if it’s detected them saying, “Holy...!”

John grabs Al’s arm, to run towards the picture. Al leans his head, moving it to get a better look, and the eye the size of a dinner plate’s looking through the thick ferns at him.

“What are you doing?”

Al points saying, “It sees us. It knows we’re here!”

John drags Al, to the picture. It’s lying face up. Both take their cameras and John says, “On three!”

Al looking at John sees something’s coming fast and yells, “Make that one!”

Back at the shack Al says, “That thing was coming at you!”

“Don’t forget that spear. That was close. We didn’t see them. You think if we got killed in a picture we would really die?”

“I think there’s a way we can make a backup. If we keep a picture of each other, we could bring ourselves back to life. This might guarantee...”

"Al! If that works, we'd be immortal. Right?"

"If one of us should die, the other could bring the other back. Think of it as an insurance policy. But I like these terms better. If we die, we get life!"

"Finally Al, this is what I've seen right from the very moment we entered this." They're jumping, chanting, "Freedom, Freedom, Freedom…"

John says, "Where were we? That's right. Backup."

"We may never be able to go back to our old lives John, but we could live forever in pictures. Doesn't any of this make you wonder, are we free?"

"I don't know. But I feel free."

"Maybe we are prisoners. I feel more trapped than wanting it."

"Lets not worry about it. If the time comes, and we're meant to find a way out, I'm sure it'll happen."

"Maybe we can change the future, (reaching for his wallet Al takes out a picture and shows it to John). Here we all posed for one of those gangster pictures. If I entered it, I'd be taking it of my family at the shore. I could go back

and talk to my dead Mother and she wouldn't know me. I could warn her about the cancer!"

"Think about what you're saying Al. Lets do anything but that."

"I don't see anything wrong with warning my mom. Maybe this is the reason we found this, and after this we can walk out."

"I say we travel through pictures. Go anywhere you want. But don't do what you're thinking."

John points to a shelf saying, "Look Al, (taking the album), its another passageway!"

Al takes the picture. Places it in the box. And they both enter it. Opening their eyes seeing the albums. Walking to them, reading the backs, John says, "Crustaceous."

Al reads the next, "Jurassic." (Al stops. Grabs John's arm and says.) "Spaceships!"

John's says, "Dinosaurs!"

"Spaceships have been visiting Earth for hundreds of millions of years!"

"Al, Dinosaurs!"

John points. Al walks in circles saying, "Maybe there are billions of years of pictures. Maybe the spaceships have always been here, for all time!"

"Dinosaurs. The hell with the spaceships!"

“They’re may be no end. Maybe we get to see all that ever was!”

John, bursting at the veins, yells, “Dinosaurs!”

“Maybe we can go back to the big bang! You ready to see what’s here? The Dinosaurs!”

“Yes Al, pictures of Dinosaurs!”

Al drags his eyes over the word Jurassic, and says dazed, “Pictures of living Dinosaurs. Did they have feathers, scales, skin, I have to know?”

John reaches for the cover, and it’s laid open. Looking, the pages are turned. Until the album is sitting on John’s lap closed.

The hours come and go. They’ve lost track of how long they’ve been here. As each picture is seen, a new one opens their eyes wider. Every picture seems greater then the last. As each page is turned, millions of years are flipped, and what was back then, the mighty dinosaurs are laid out in pictures, from the living-breathing animals.

“Hey, Al, look at the size of those teeth.”

“You think we should enter one, John?”

“No way. I think the pictures are good enough.”

“We have our back ups, remember? What’s there to lose?”

“If he bites you, it’s going to hurt. Back up or no back up.”

“What bite, he’d swallow us whole.”

“Yea, but that first gulp, it’s going to be a bitch.”

“Come on. Let’s try one. If we don’t like it we’ll leave right away.”

Al picks an album up from the floor, turns the page and says, “Look. It’s a picture of a herd of Brontosaurs. Let’s go see the dinosaurs!”

“I’d never guessed they had stripes, much like a zebra.”

Al places it in the box, pressing the moons. Looking up at a Pterodactyl gliding overhead, Al points, saying, “John, look. That’s what we came here to see, Brontosaurs.”

The sound of heavy steps is heard from behind and Al says, “Hope that was you, it sounded close.”

“Al, sick of things always being behind us.”

Both spinning to see a Triceratops is eyeing them and more come into view. The first lifts its head, mouth open showing its teeth, tasting the air. John never takes his eyes off the

closest, saying, “Lower that picture. Don’t move fast. But do it!”

Al reaches for his pocket, and John looks at him from the corner of his eye. Paying attention to the now getting way to close Triceratops, and John says, “What are you doing? Put the picture on the ground!”

“I can’t move. It’s to close. We’ll never make it.”

“If you don’t, we’re dead. Don’t freeze on me. This is it, your last chance.” John looks over Al’s shoulder, seeing there’s a pair of Triceratops charging. John tapping Al’s leg, there’s a Triceratops running at attack speed.

Al brakes free of his thoughts, reaches his hand into his pocket, and places the picture on the ground. John grabs his camera looks at Al, a Triceratops is closing, John yells, “Now!”

John looks at the Triceratops leaping at Al, the muscles in its leg thrusting it off the ground, mouth open. Turns its head sideways to get a good biting position.

John begins to snap his picture. He looks one last time at Al, and the Triceratops is about to close its mouth around him. John closes his eyes. All goes black, as he presses his shutter.

John is standing in the cellar. Keeping his eyes closed asking, “Are you there?” (Waiting). “This isn’t a good time for jokes Al.”

Nothing. Not a sound. He turns his head seeing he’s the only one in the cellar. Waiting for what seems like hours, only minutes pass. John opens the box. Holding the picture they entered in his hand he thinks, “Should I try it? What should I do?”

Sitting on the floor, looks towards the book. Reaching his hand to his pocket he takes out the backup picture of Al. Staring at it for a while. Walking in a circle, rubbing his head he panics for a few moments. He places the backup picture in the box, saying, “Hope this idea about backups work!” Pressing the moons.

When John opens his eyes he’s taking a picture of Al. The same picture he entered. Looking from the camera, to Al, walking towards him. John’s wondering, is it, can it be? Putting his big palm over the side of Al’s face, asking, “You okay?”

“Stop looking at me that way. From the moment you snapped that picture you haven’t been the same. You going to tell me what’s

going on? You should've seen the look on your face when you lowered that camera."

"I scared myself with a dumb thought, that's all. (John looks closely at Al, looking for anything, a sign, something isn't right, asking). You okay? I mean really okay?"

"Why wouldn't I be?"

John points to the box saying, "We entered a picture. I think you got eaten!"

"Repeat that!"

"You were eaten!"

"Stop! Go back to the beginning. Add a few words."

"Sorry. We traveled. We saw. You're dead."

John waits for his reaction. Al thinks to the laughing mood they were in before the backup picture, and the total change in John's mood afterwards. Looking at John he says, "I got eaten! We never left. Been here the entire time. Remember we're making backup pictures of each other. Incase something happens, to, one, of us."

"Al we're in a backup picture now. I came for you. You died. In the last picture we traveled in!"

Watching as John places a picture into the box, saying, “I made this picture of the shack. It’s our way back to the real time. Moments before coming to get you I took this picture. Come with me. You’ll understand better.”

Pressing the moons. Opening their eyes. John sees Al sliding his fingers off the moons, looking around. Walking from the book over to the steps.

John walks to his side saying, “You need to see the picture inside the box.”

Al reaches his hand to the box, cracking the lid, he sees the picture of himself, and John says, “I traveled into it. I brought you back. The backup pictures, they work.”

“They worked!”

John meets Al’s look halfway, saying, “We’re immortal! I entered that picture you’re holding. Went back. Here we are, now, in real time, together again! You never came back from the picture of the dinosaurs. You died. And now look at you!”

“Dinosaurs! What Dinosaurs?”

“And technically it wasn’t my fault. Heck, it was you’re idea. There wasn’t much I could do. Happened so fast, I almost got eaten also.”

“What ate me John?”

“A dinosaur. I think it was a Triceratops, at least that’s what you said.”

“A Triceratops! Where the hell did we find a Triceratops?”

“You don’t remember, do you?”

“Would I look so confused if I’d remembered?”

“We traveled through passageways, to the dinosaurs. We entered a picture. You were in big trouble when I last saw you. The Triceratops was on you, mouth opened ready to bite.”

“And you left me?”

“Had no choice.”

“You didn’t even try to help?”

“Do I look like Godzilla?”

“You left me to be eaten!”

“You froze Al. You had time, but you did nothing. Just stood there. As soon as we entered it, we were facing a herd of them.”

“It’s a pack, a pack, not a herd. Hunting animals travel in packs.”

“Whatever. The fact is I was fast enough to get out, you weren’t. If I didn’t leave, neither of us would be here now.”

“I can’t believe it, the real me is dead?”

“You better. I was there.”

“Great I’m dead, and to top it off, I was eaten by a what? A Triceratops. You’re going to have a hard time explaining this. Can’t believe you left me to be a dino snack.”

“You’re lucky I snapped my picture when I did. Maybe in that picture we entered you’re dead, but you’re alive and with me now.”

“I want to go back to the dinosaurs, I have to see this!”

“Wait a minute, slow down. We’re not going back into those, I’ve seen enough.”

John, having no choice, takes the picture of the passageways with Al back to the albums of the dinosaurs. Al, looking at the albums, finds another passageway and points. John walks over and looks saying, “We’ve seen back to the dinosaurs. What more can there be? I don’t understand, before the dinosaurs?”

“There’s not a chance I’m going to miss what lies behind that cover!”

John takes the picture places it inside the box. As the lid is closed he says, “We’re in this too deep. (John places his fingers on the moons, and Al has a big smile on his face). John looks at him saying, “You look like you conquered your worst enemy?”

Al with a under cutting tone answers, “I did, time!”

Al stares at John, and John says, “Come on. You’re scaring me. Stop looking at me that way!”

“What do you have to fear? We’re immortal, right?”

“Yes, but I’d like to stay the real me. I don’t want to end up a copy, like you.”

“A copy? You tell me what makes you better?”

“What is it Al? You tell me, I made a statement. For all I know you’re you. You’re acting strange!”

Al softens up a bit saying, “I want you to know, I am Al!”

“I never had a problem that it wasn’t you.”

Al walks to the box. John joins him, closing their eyes the moons are pressed and they enter the picture. When they open their eyes they see the chamber is made of dark crystal, and seems as if you can see forever into the blackness.

Al’s eyes fall on the cases, and John looks in the same direction. They walk to them. There are nine, lined across the back. Al walks to the first, which is marked on top:

Star: 45,564,465,231,126,150,215
Planet 1: Mercury

John reads the top of the next:
"Planet 2: Venus"

Walking along the cases each stops facing:
Planet 3: Earth

Looking at the rest of the cases, John reads them out loud, "Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto! Someone's been charting the birth of the planets. From it's first second, to current, but how Al? What have we found?"

"These Cases, they're the planets as they formed. But what gets me, you mean they've tracked that many suns?"

Al points at the number for this star, John looks at it and says, "I'm starting to wonder, I though it was Aliens, but I'm not so sure anymore. But what, what else could it be?"

"Only one thing left John!" (Al points up.)

"No! You shouldn't even think it! Not a chance!"

"What else, if not Aliens?"

"No way Al!"

“What if, we found, Gods pictures?”

“Gods pictures! Come on.”

“What if?”

“What makes you think we’re so special, God would open his door, to all his records? I like the Alien theory better.”

“I’d say it’s down to two, God or Aliens.”

“Al, I’m sure glad we aren’t having this conversation in public. If anyone heard us.”

“Screw the rest of the world. Everything we know, throw it out the window. We are witnessing only what God or Aliens have ever seen!”

“This can’t be, really, this is getting crazier and crazier!”

“Everything. We may be able to see everything that ever was. Who knows, maybe we’ll even see a picture of Him, the Man Himself.” (Al points up holding his finger next to his chest.)

“You mean God? You’re speaking of God? You think, maybe they have a picture of him?”

“If you would’ve told me, before we found this, we’d be able to see a living dinosaur I’d thought you were crazy. But think about it. Seeing a live, or even being eaten by one isn’t

so nuts, is it? Maybe we'll see a picture of God. Anything seems possible from here."

John holds an album, wipes his hand over the cover. Grasps what's under it. Pictures of Earth, holding it Al says, "Are you going to open it?"

"Trying to get a hold of what we're about to see."

"Why? Out of all the people in the world John, did we find this?"

"You're the only one that could've gotten us lost enough to find God's pictures."

They look at the cases of albums, from Mercury to Pluto. They're of timeless ends. Each of the planets is charted from birth, and the cycle of time is repeated in pictures. All the secrets of our universe are unlocked. They have the freedom to span the galaxies. Hop from star-to-star. They watch the birth of every planet, sun and moon, they're witness to creation itself!

From the dawning of time, before there was light, not even a flicker of a single star and beyond, and John's asking, "What happens if we enter one of these pictures, of the planets as they formed?"

Looking at each other, Al replies, “We’d be on board the ship or whatever it was, from were these pictures were taken!”

“We’d be on an alien spaceship!”

“No way John, we might not be welcome.”

“Maybe in Gods living room!”

“Not going there either. I say we go back!”

“Back where, Al, home? I’m passed that. We tried, failed, moved on, remember?”

“I have to go back to my old life.”

“Why try? What makes you need what you once had, compared to what you have now?”

“Do you really want to control time? Be immortal. To never take another step past this. Do you want to always exist floating in pictures? I’m not sure I want this.”

“I don’t see what there’s to think about. I can have the rest of my tiny life, or all time!”

“We have no future here, only the pasts in pictures. I want to be mortal! I don’t want to be forever, I want to live out my future, grow older, wiser, like all people. I love my wife and children, I miss them more then time can heal. Help me get out of this. You stay if you like.”

“If you’re so worried about your wife, I’ll bring back another one of you. One can

continue traveling with me and the other can go back to your old life. That's if you can find it!"

"No way. Not a chance. That isn't an option! One of me is plenty!"

"Okay Al, you go look for your old life. I'm staying in pictures. The hell I'm going back to my life. (John takes out his back up picture of Al.) I've got as many of you, as I need, remember? You're not even you, you're a picture!"

"I can make a double to, and you stay, while I go back with your double."

Both stop, drop their hands to their sides, and John says, "This is screwed up, isn't it?"

"We don't need ten of each other running through pictures!"

"Could you imagine the problems this would cause? Look at the way two of us are fighting."

"John let's try one more time to get out. We'll see what happens from there. We've had our fun, what else is there?"

"You're probably right. But I don't want it to end."

Back at the shack, Al's walking the cellar looking towards the steps saying, "I say we try

to find our way out. It's' been a long time since we've tried."

"You make it sound as if we both want out of this. I'm not leaving. You can go. I'm staying."

"We could go back together."

"No, wrong! I told you I'm not leaving!"

"John this is bull! You want to stay. You can stay alone. But first give me back my picture."

"No!"

John covers his pocket as Al steps towards him saying, "Give me that picture!"

"Or what, you're going to take it from me?"

"This is enough, give me my picture!"

"I'll tell you one thing, I know what's the truth. We're never leaving!"

"We have to try."

"Al, this is the last time I'm walking those woods." (John walks closer to Al's face pointing up the steps.) "If, when, the sun dies tonight, wherever we are, we let fate be!"

Walking out of the shack Al says to himself, "God let this be the last time I see this place."

Walking the woods, hours pass and John hasn't said a word, keeping a brisk pace. As this sun dies, the candle shows its glow, and Al

takes a few steps back saying, “Well, it looks like you get your wish, back to the shack.”

“I’m never trying again. For me this was the final straw!”

Walking the rest of the way to the shack, John leads through the front door. Al watches as John picks up the candle, takes a quick look at Al and heads towards the cellar door, opening it.

Walking down the steps, John takes a look back at Al, as he walks off the last step he hears, “It’s about time! Where in the hell have you been?”

John straightens, looks ahead, and he sees Al standing in front of him in the cellar already. Then he looks back up the steps, and Al is looking down at him. Al starts down the steps, after seeing the look on John’s face.

Looking back into the cellar, John sees a second Al and he’s walking at him asking, “Well, where have you been?”

This time Al is sure he heard another voice coming from the cellar and asks, surprised, “Who’s there?”

John shrugs. Al walks off the last step seeing there’s another Al already in the cellar.

John watches as the two Al's walk to the middle of the floor meeting, and circle slowly, John says, "Al, say hi to, Al."

John now near the steps, he thinks this may get ugly, and if it does, he's making a run for it. The two Al's are standing face-to-face, hands held at each of their sides, waiting for someone to break the ice.

John notices a shift in attention, from each other, to him. Looking at the two Al's walking towards him, and the double of Al says, "I didn't get eaten!"

The real Al steps closer to John yelling, "No, I didn't. It was close!"

The second Al, "Close? You said there was no way he could survive. Now look! What is he doing here?"

Al looks at his double and says, "John, why are there two of me?" (Al pushes the double away, as John backs up another step, Al yells.) "What's going on here?"

The second Al yells, "We want answers!"

The first Al screams, "I want an answer. The heck with what he wants."

John walks up the steps backwards with the two Al's following him upstairs. He has both Al's encircle him. Holding his hands in the air,

looking to the ground John yells, “That’s it. Stop! I’m getting nut’s here.”

The first Al says, “Look at us. There’s two, you want to talk about getting nuts!”

John says, “Stop yelling, let’s talk about this sensibly.”

“Sensible! Any chances of anything sensible went out the window the moment I saw him!”

“I thought you were dead!”

“No, I’m here, alive!”

The second Al, yells, “Look at him, it’s alive!”

John looks at the second Al and says, “Settle down Frankenstein, I can see he’s alive.”

The first Al screams, “What happened?”

John says, “I went into the back up picture, brought him back.”

John points, the first Al yelling, “We agreed, for backup only!”

“I saw what was attacking you. I thought for sure you were dead.”

The second Al says, “He isn’t dead, not even close, he’s yelling just fine.”

John turns away from the two Al’s and says, “I can’t look, I tried a few times, but it’s too much.”

Both of the Al's take a step forward, to match the steps John took back, and the first Al yells, "Too much. Too much for who?"

The second Al yells, "It's too much for him. What about us."

The first Al says, "Why John?"

"I believed you were eaten by that Triceratops."

The first Al stomps his foot saying, "I wasn't eaten."

The second Al screams, "He wasn't eaten!"

John looks at both saying, "I can see that."

The second Al asks, "How'd you escape?"

"I hid until they were gone." (The first Al turns to John yelling), "I didn't stand a chance. But a T-Rex attacked the Triceratops."

John's eye's open wide as he hears "T-Rex" saying, "You saw a T-Rex?" (Both Al's look at John.) "Oh, I guess there's other issues at hand here."

The second Al says, "What happened next?"

"I heard roars, all the dinosaurs, started fleeing from the Rex. When the frenzy stopped, I came out."

The Second Al says, "So, what took you so long to get back here?"

“T-Rex’s travel in packs, I think they were juvenile’s.”

John says, “Wow, really? What color were they?”

The double says, “ Can we get to the bottom of why he’s still alive?”

The first Al looks at his double saying, “We can’t keep his name Al. Every time you say it we’ll both be answering.”

The second Al says, “We’ll talk about who’s changing whose name.”

“John, where have you been?”

“I’ve been walking the woods, trying to find a way out.”

“Bull! You expect me to believe that?”

“Bull’s right Al. It wasn’t my idea. I wanted nothing to do with it.”

The second Al says, “It was my idea.”

The first Al answers, “That’s my life you’re talking about, so back off. I was waiting for you, and then you show up with him.”

The second Al says, “You’ve only been here a few minutes, and look at all the fighting you’re causing.”

“Keep your mouth closed.”

The second Al stands in front of the first yelling, “Are you going to let this little piss-ant, speak to me this way John?”

The first Al, pushes the second, back a few steps, saying, “I don’t want to hear another word out of you!”

The second Al walks back saying, “I’ll say as many words as I want.”

John watches both men, saying, “Oh, here we go. I know you, and neither one of you are going to back down.”

The first turns yelling at John, “I waited... then you, …with him?”

“Al, you never came back. I didn’t mean to make a two of you.”

“So fast, why?”

The second cuts in saying, “Okay. I’ll explain this to you one more time. I think it was said well enough. But since you can see for yourself all is okay, for both me and John, you can go back and die.”

“I’m not going anywhere!”

“Then don’t die. Go back and live with the dinosaurs. Do something, but for God’s sake, leave John and me alone?”

“Are you crazy? Is he crazy John?”

The second walks up to Al saying, “Let me explain, it’s simple. John and I have become friends. We’ve bonded, and don’t need a third wheel. I think you’d make things complicated. So it wouldn’t be such a bad thing for you to disappear.”

“I was here first! If anyone’s disappearing it’s you. You’re the copy.”

The second says, “I don’t see what that has to do with anything. Bottom line, is, you left, and didn’t come back. You’ll need to find a new traveling buddy, buddy!”

Each of the two Al’s is staring at John. He takes a step back holding his hands up saying, “Don’t look at me guys. I don’t get involved with personal problems, and this is on of the most personal I’ve seen.”

The first says, “This is your fault. What are we going to do with him?” (Pointing at the second.)

The second says, “I heard that! Remember I’m as much you, as you.”

“You’re as much me, as me?”

“You tell me, what’s the difference?”

“You’re a rotten copy!”

The second smiles saying, “This is what you think.” (Turning to John asking.) “Is this what

you believe? I'm nothing more then a copy? At anytime, did you ever think, I wasn't Al?"

John shaking his head says, "I never thought about it."

The second walks to the first saying, "You see Al, I'm a mirrors image of you. Like it or not."

The first, confused, takes his hands pushing the second a few feet back yelling, "Don't get in my face! We have our spaces in life, and your space doesn't include the space I'm standing in. And there's a big difference. I have a friend, you don't. You see, we came here together, and we're leaving together. You can kiss our fuzzy butts goodbye. Neither of us wants anything to do with you!"

The second walks up pushing the first one back, saying, "If you want John, you're going to have to fight for him!"

Al catching his balance says, "You think you can beat me?"

The second pushes the first, trips and falls on his back slamming the floor. He lifts himself to his elbows and looks over his chest to John, and says, "You going to just stand there? Or are you going to help me?"

John says, “It’s nice to have to see you deal with you. You’re a real pain in the ass sometimes. I kind of feel you deserve some of what your double’s dishing out.”

The second walking to John’s side says, “You tell him.”

The first says, “I can’t believe my ears!”

John stepping away from the second says, “Maybe Al, there’s a lesson in this for you.”

The second stepping next to John says, “Listen up and learn your lessons, because if you don’t, your lessons, they’re about to turn into whippings.”

John looks at the second saying, “If there’s going to be any whippings, you two are the ones that are going to be doing it. I’m keeping my hands clean of this. You want to fight, go ahead, kick each others butts, you two deserve each other.”

The second watches John backing away. The first takes this opportunity, tackling the double into the wall. As the double hits it, the real Al tries to ram him again. The second grabs the chair and then shoves the real Al to the ground.

John watches, as they roll over each other, both taking swings but neither making contact.

John gets sick of the two. Grabs the Al on top, walks him across the room, picks up the chair, and shoves him into it. John goes back over to the other, jerking him off the floor, throwing him in the corner, on his back.

John walks to the center of the room yelling, "You both fight like little girls. One runs another into a wall, attacking him from the back. The other grabs a chair, and is going to bash the other's head. One pushes the other, both of you swing like a girl. If I didn't know better, I'd say you were fighting yourselves. Now stop all of this bull, stop dancing, because it sure isn't fighting. Knew it, no way either of you, will be able to stay together more then a few seconds. But lets make this clear. I just watched you guys give it your best. So if there's going to be any ass kicking, I'll be the one doing it. You guys understand?"

"Yes. I won't start anymore fights."

"I won't start any either."

"You didn't start that fight, I did."

"Bull, I tackled you're ugly face from behind."

"Who are you calling ugly? You looked in a mirror lately?"

"John, he's lying."

“He’s the liar!”

“He’s the double!”

The one Al points yelling, “There, that’s your fake!”

John holds his hands up yelling, “Both you, shut up. Who gives a hoot about who started what?”

“I care! It proves he’s the fake. You believe I’m the real Al, don’t you John?”

“You shook each other up, rolling around on the floor, and now I can’t tell who’s, who?”

One Al walks to the other saying, “What are you doing? I don’t think it’s funny. Stop pretending to be me.”

This Al, never takes his eyes off the other, and says, “You better watch him, or you may find yourself in trouble. We have no idea what he’s capable of.”

“Come on John. Help me out here, take a good look.”

John says, “I knew you shouldn’t have followed me the last time in the woods.”

“You followed me!”

John points yelling, “You’re the double.” John grabs the real Al’s arm saying, “You screwed up, and you know it!”

The double takes a few steps back, keeping his eyes on John, the first Al says, “You got me on that one.”

John says, “I knew you’d fall for that.”

Al says, “Now, do you have anything else you’d like to say?”

Al begins walking towards the double, John reaches out grabbing his shoulder, saying, “Wait a minute, had enough of the musical Al’s, you stay here. Don’t want to have to try to figure out which-is-which again. The next time you might not be as stupid.”

“You’re lucky he’s holding me back.”

John says, “Settle down wild man.”

Al replies, “Hey, it wasn’t me that was stupid, it was him. You know that, right?”

“What’s the difference? The only thing I care about is, we have to deal with this. All of us, double, no double, real or not, I don’t give a crap. Here it is. Simple, we have to come to an understanding, and fighting isn’t going to be an option.”

Al says, “What are we going to do about him?”

The second Al says, “I don’t feel like a double, not at all, this really sucks. Come on, switch with me, it’s not a big deal.”

“It’s like the Mona Lisa trading herself for a forgery!”

John jumps in and says, “You’re not comparing yourself to the Mona Lisa, are you Al?”

“What?”

“The Mona Lisa is a masterpiece. It has lasted through time, not traveled through it. I can see you comparing yourself, let’s say to some lesser-known piece of art, lets say…”

The second Al jumps in, “A piece of crap!” (Both look at him.) “What? You guys didn’t think that was funny?”

Al whispers to John, “Maybe we can speak in private.”

“I’ll ask him, but?”

John walks to the second Al saying, “I’m not the one that’s fighting all the time, it’s you two. I’m going to try to talk him into letting you travel with us. I need a few minutes with him.”

The second Al whispers in John’s ear, “You’re not going to forget about me, leave me in pictures by myself?”

John patting him on his back, whispering, “The first Al, he’s a bore. But don’t worry, I would never leave you for him.”

“Okay, I’ll go down the cellar and wait.”

The second turns and walks away. John says to the real Al, “Outside. Let’s go.” (Out of the shack, walking away, John’s looking back.) “You’re double can’t hear us from here.”

“What are we going to do?”

“I say we become friends, all of us.”

“There’s no way I’m going to be friends with him. I think you need to come up with plan two.”

“Plan two, what’s plan two? You tell me?”

“Lets get rid of him. We’re in pictures, no one would know!”

“Al, you mean we kill him?”

“What else?”

“I’m no killer.”

“It’s more like tearing up a picture and throwing it away.”

“You’re talking about killing you, Al!”

“Listen to yourself. You’re not sure what’s in there. But I know one thing, it’s not me!”

“Did you look at it?”

“Yes.”

“And you don’t see anything in there that reminds you of you?”

“Not even close. He’s hot headed, stubborn, a total idiot.”

“And?”

“John, I’m seeing double, I don’t need to reason with this.”

“We can’t go in there and kill it. I don’t think I can stomach that.”

“You tell me. I have no idea. What should we do?”

“I’m not killing anyone!”

Al walks around thinking for a moment then says, “We can try to lose him in pictures. Tell him we all decided to be friends.”

“I’ll go in the shack first and explain to the double our plans.”

“We’ll think of something, but first chance we dump him!”

They walk back in. John walks down the steps, while Al waits upstairs. John meets with the second Al in the cellar, saying, “We believe we all can travel as friends. What about you?”

The second looks around the cellar, whispering to John, “I don’t want him to know I’m working with you, to get rid of him.”

“Get rid of him?”

“I say we kill him!”

“Can you say that again?”

“We dispose of him. Make sure he ends up dead!”

“So this is what you want, blood?”

“No, don’t look at it that way. We’re just making things the way they were before he showed up.”

“Oh really now. The Al upstairs is nothing more then a picture, we tear up and throw away?”

“Yes! It’s that simple.”

“How about this option? We all become friends.”

“There’s no way I’ll be friends with him, not a chance!”

John thinks for a minute about the double and says, “I said this to fool him. Think of it this way. We can lose him in pictures anytime we want.”

The second Al comes closer to John. saying, “We could take him to a cliff and push him off. It makes no difference how he dies.”

John, backing up, replies, “Wait a minute. I never said we’d kill him.”

“What else is there?”

“Why can’t we all get along?”

“He won’t let me live, so why should I let him?”

“You don’t know what he’s thinking.”

“If this is so, what took you two so long outside?”

“Because, that Al up those steps, he’s as pig headed as you are. I mean it, you both. You should hear yourselves talking about each other. Maybe I should step aside and let you two have it out.”

“Then it’s true, he wants me dead?”

“If I go along with your plan, to kill him, you promise not to do anything stupid?”

The second Al agrees. John turns, walks up the steps and opens the door, saying, “He agrees, we can be friends.”

Both walk down the steps, meeting the double at the bottom, and the second Al says, “I’m glad you’ve decided to get along.”

John says, “What’s next? Where should we go?”

The second Al says, “Let’s see, the highest mountains in the world. I’ve always wanted to see them.”

The first Al says, “I know him. Don’t trust his motives for wanting to go there.”

The second says, “I say we do it now John, no more wasting time!”

The first says, “Do what?”

John says, “I don’t know, you ask him.”

The second answers, “You know exactly what I’m speaking about, our plan, that we’d kill him.”

John holding his palms out saying, “No, I said there’d be no killing!”

“You said when I had the chance...”

John cuts him off, “I was saying whatever I had to, to get you to play along. We’re planning to dump you first chance we get, but no one’s killing anyone! That’s right Al, he was going to kill you first chance he got.”

“What! Why you little worthless... You think you could out smart me?”

“I told him I wasn’t going to kill anyone. But he insisted if I couldn’t kill you, he’d do it himself.”

The second Al says, “Shut your mouth John!”

“I tried for the peace treaty, but there’s no peace with him.”

The second yells, “You lied to me!”

John shaking his head yells back, “Yes, I lied to you!”

“You’re trying to trick me?”

“I was trying to have us get along.”

“So this is it? I can’t believe you’re turning on me.”

“It’s you two that turned, I’m stuck in the middle.”

“Do you know how bad you hurt me John? Do you?”

“I think it’s time for you to leave.”

“If this is what you want, okay then. I thought this was going to be easy, but no!”

Walking to the book, he places his hands on the moons. The second Al disappears into the picture. The room goes silent as the tension from him leaving fades, and Al says, “There’s two of me, two!”

“Do you want to follow, see where he’s going?”

“I don’t know what to do.”

“Me either.”

Both sit on the floor and Al Asks, “What if he tries to kill me, you know, to be with you?”

“He doesn’t have to. You’re double has a picture of me, and he can do what I did, make another me, like I copied you.”

Al stands, and says, “I want out. As far from this place as possible.”

“I’m not walking those woods again.”

“I want out of this!”

“And do what?”

“Do anything! I’ve had it, my line’s been crossed.”

“How do we get out of here? You tell me Al?”

“I say we never walk back towards this shack.”

“Some great plan!”

“I’m getting out of here, with or without you.” Al, heading for the steps, John follows outside. Racing the sun to the opposing horizon they walk a losing battle. The sun crosses the horizon first, setting the sky a blaze with fire blues and reds that melt the day into dusk. Sinking deeper into the horizon they find themselves again walking in the dark.

Keeping a fast pace, with the sun gone, Al feels a panic rushing in and it climax’s as he sees a tiny, almost un-seeable flickering light. Walking a few steps towards it, he says, “No, not again!”

Working their way back to the shack. Both beat from tromping through the woods, they fall asleep quickly. In the morning, Al’s shaking the sleeping John, saying, “Wake up, come on, it’s light.”

John opens his eyes, lifts his head from the table, stretches over the chair, saying, “What, what is it?”

“It’s morning. I’ve got an idea. I’m doing it John!”

“What? I could use a few more hours sleep.”

“I want to go back in time, travel in this picture.”

“I don’t like where you’re going Al.”

“I’m going to warn my mother.”

“We spoke about this. We decided you’re not going to do that!”

“I’m going to tell her to see a doctor.”

“You don’t know what you’re messing with.”

“The lump in her breast wasn’t found for years. I’m sure this would save her life!”

John sets his hands on the table, palms flat, shaking his head no saying, “It’s your life. Do what you want. God knows you always do!”

“I need to do this.”

“I always said let dead dog’s lie. You’re talking about digging up the dead, that’s insane!”

Al walks towards the cellar, and says, “I’m doing it.”

“Go ahead. But this is a trip you’re taking alone. Maybe I’m wrong. But who am I to say?”

“My mind’s made up. I can’t see what it can hurt, only help.”

“That’s it. You can’t see. Go, (pointing to the cellar), you do what you have to. But don’t take long. I wouldn’t want to face your double, and maybe mine alone.”

John watches Al walk down the steps, as the door to the cellar closes, John thinks about what Al’s doing. Time passes and he makes his way down to the empty cellar. Walking to the book, he opens the cover, seeing Al’s picture in the bottom. Letting the lid go, it snaps itself closed. Walking away to the albums, John waits for Al, looking at pictures.

Hearing something, he turns, and sees Al standing at the book. Walks to him and asks, “Did you do it? What happened?”

“I’ll never know. I handed a note to her and left.”

“I wouldn’t say that. What happens if we walk out of the pictures, away from this shack, and right now your mothers alive?”

“I have to know!”

“Oh no. Don’t tell me you want to walk through the woods again?”

“John if you thought you saved your mothers life, wouldn’t you want to know? Things will be different this time, I promise!”

“How? I don’t think anything we do will make a difference.”

“I’m walking those woods again.”

“You’re walking alone.”

“I’ll leave you in this shack!”

“Don’t threaten me. Go walk the woods. See if I care. I’ll be here waiting, but you’re not going anywhere. I’m sure once the night falls, you’ll be following that candle. I’ll be here, sitting at this table, eating imaginary Bon Bon’s, and my Bon Bon’s Al, well your Bon Bon’s are about as real as mine.”

Hearing a sound behind them, John and Al spin looking at the book. There they face the second Al, and he has a copy of John with him. Everyone in the room had to soak up the moment. All were crossing paths at the same time. Al and John shocked, look at the doubles of each, walking towards them.

Right off, Al’s copy is the cockiest. John’s looks to him, trying to see his reaction to

finding there's a double of him and his mouth kind of hangs.

The second Al looks up from the first Al's toes, looking to his eyes, saying, "Well. Look at what we got here. We have us a couple of real men." (The second Al walks forward saying to the first John.) "You were going to leave me? Like you once said, there's as many as you as I need, aren't there?"

The first Al says, "What do you mean by that?"

The second Al says, "Come John. This is a good time for us to be honest with each other. Since by some twist of fate we've all found ourselves here, together."

"Stop playing with words. Say what you have to, double."

"Answer me this. You said you could make as many Al's as you need. At least level with your friend. Let him know what you think, that no matter what he wants, leave or stay, he's staying one-way or another. Tell him what you told me."

The first Al looks at the first John, asking, "What's he talking about?"

"Nothing. He's bluffing to upset you."

The second Al says, “Trying to upset him? This is what you think I’m doing?”

The first John says, “That’s what you’re doing!”

The second Al, “Okay, maybe it’s true. I’m saying this with the intent of getting him upset. But it doesn’t change the truth!”

The first John, “Back off, before I literally tear you into pieces!”

The second Al, “Tell him, that if he didn’t do all you wanted, and stay forever in pictures, what you said.

“Hey double shut your mouth!”

‘You said; I have your picture. I can make as many as you as I want!”

The second Al walks to the first saying, “That’s right. Your good friend threatened me, if I didn’t do as he said, he was going to make as many as you as he needed! The last time we walked the woods, we found the car. I wanted to leave. That’s when he threatened me, with making as many doubles has he wanted of you!”

John looking at the first Al says, “Not true. Watch him!”

The second Al cuts in, walks between the first Al and John, saying, “At the car, I was

waiting for him to start it. But he sat there. Doing nothing. That's when we got into this big fight. He out muscled me."

The first John cuts in, "He's not buying a word!"

The second Al pushes John aside, looks at the first, saying, "I wouldn't be surprised if there are more of us running through pictures. Who knows how many doubles he's made? (The double throws his arms up.) Maybe there's an army of Al's running around in pictures. All lost, trying to find a way back home."

The first Al stomps his foot saying, "John, what the hell is he talking about?"

"Don't listen!"

"You better have some answers. I'm getting worried."

"Don't let him suck you in Al."

"Did you find the car?"

"Not even close. We never found anything!"

The second Al yells, "Not true!"

John steps closer to the second Al, yelling, "Back off!"

The second Al sticks his face into the first, and says, "We were there, at the car. John had

his hands on the keys, and pulled them out of the ignition! I asked what are you doing? He looked at me and said, there's no way he's leaving! I said you could go back if you like. He said, you're coming with me, and that's when he grabbed my throat, dragging me out of the car. I couldn't breathe!"

The First John with his temper rising says, "You and you're copy of me, standing over there like a fly on crap, you both can pack your butts up and take a hike!"

The second Al smiles saying, "If I'm not telling the truth, what are we doing here now? After all there are two of us."

The first John looks around the room, at all of them saying, "You believe this guy? What a scumbag. Al, you know if I found the car, we'd be out of here, and he'd be at your house, living as you, with your wife and daughter!"

The second Al, "I may be a scumbag. But at least I'm no liar. I don't try to trick people, like you!"

John shouts, "That's it, you worthless... I'm not going to stand here listening to this! If you have something to say to my friend, you first go through me. And if I don't like what you're saying, I'm going too…"

The second John grabs the first, as he was reaching for the second Al, and John's double says, "Stop! Hands off. Don't you lay a finger on him!"

The second John, with both hands, brings the first John's head in fast, banging his forehead down on the bridge of his nose. Before the first John realizes it, his necks pinned to a bookcase, and his head is pushed back, knocking albums over.

Holding him pinned, the second John puts his weight forward, leaving the first John hopelessly in a position, where if he wanted to, he could break his neck. Holding him in this position of complete dominance, the second John says, "Now, you're not going to pick on the smallest guy in the room, are you?"

The first John, trying to get a good breath says, "Get, your hands, off of me!"

The second John smiles saying, "Oh really. What are you going to do?"

Knowing he's beaten the first says, "I didn't think it was going to get aggressive. I'll be ready next time!"

The second John, "Maybe there shouldn't be a next time. I should finish you now. There's nothing you can do to stop me."

The second John shoves the first John's chin until his face turns colors, coughing, choking, and mumbling, "Let, me, go. Please!"

The first Al starts to take a step to help, and the second Al with no warning, clocks him with a punch to his lower neck, dropping him to the floor.

The second John can feel he's a shove away from breaking the real John's neck. The first Al watches from the floor. As the second John smiles saying, "If you've got anything to confess, I'd do it now. This is the last face you're going to see. Look who's calling who a scumbag now?"

The first Al climbs back up dazed, and the second Al says, "No way! They're evenly matched. Back off and let them finish. You stay on your knees!"

The first Al sees his friend about to be snapped in half yells, "Everybody stop! I'm asking. Please! Don't do what you're about to. I'm begging!"

The second John says, "Give me one reason why I shouldn't. After all when I let him go, he'd do the same to me."

"No. I promise. He won't."

"How do I know he'll do what you say?"

“Let him go. He’ll tell you.”

The second John backs his hold off saying, “You hear him? I let you go, you promise we have a truce?”

The first John gasps for air, and says, “It’s a deal. I never wanted any violence.”

The second John slowly releases his hold saying, “I know you don’t. (Looking at the second Al, the second John says), “You did this!”

The second Al points at himself saying, “You’re speaking to me?” (Backing up a step.)

The second John walks towards the second Al saying, “You started this. You never keep your mouth shut. What’s your problem? Isn’t the universes big enough for the four of us?”

The first John says, “I see you’re having the same problems I’m having with my Al. They’re both nagging little idiots.”

The second John says, “Maybe we should leave these two, and how about you and I travel together? We know what we want. We want to be free from idiots in the outside world, and in pictures!”

The first Al says to his double, “What the hell did you make two of him for. Wasn’t one enough?”

The second Al says, “I didn’t make two, only one. You’ve got one and now I’ve got one.”

“One what? This is about us. Can’t we stop fighting? Maybe we can help each other back into our real lives.”

The first Al shakes his head, no, saying, “You’re not going back into anybody’s real life!”

The second Al says, “We’ll see who walks out in the end, won’t we?”

The first Al looks at his double saying, “We are real. You are copies. Never forget this!”

The second Al says, “Jesus. Can you loosen up?”

The second John says, “Who cares who’s real, none of it matters. What does, is we’re here.”

The second Al walks back to the second John, and says, “We’re all in this together. No reason for us to be looking over our shoulders. We want to survive as much as you.”

The second John puts his arm over the second Al, saying, “I’m sure we could all be friends, if you two don’t decide to do anything foolish.”

The second John after a long silence, says, “It’s settled. We have a truce.”

The first Al and John, stands next to each other and watches as their doubles walk away, towards the book. With the hands on the moons, they press them, and travel into a picture. They’re both looking in the direction of the book, and Al says, “I liked it better when there was one of each.”

“Me too. I don’t feel so strong anymore. I might not be able to take him.”

“He should’ve killed you John.”

“I would’ve broken my neck. Bull, I’m going after a man without the intent of finishing him. Especially here, in pictures, he should have finished me!”

“We’re missing something, but what?”

“If so, I hope we find it fast.”

“Give me that picture!”

“What picture Al?”

“The picture you have of me. The one in your pocket.”

“You mean the backup?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me what you want it for?”

“That’s not a backup John. That’s a picture of me. And I’m asking you for it.”

“I’m keeping it. We’ve been through this.”

“I don’t want any more doubles.”

“I may need it. You know. Just in case?”

“To make more doubles?”

“It’s my insurance policy. I’m not letting it expire yet.”

“I want my picture!”

“When we’re out of this Al. I’ll give you your picture. And don’t start your tantrums, it won’t work!”

“John if you don’t give me that picture back…”

“If I don’t, what? You’re not my double. I’m not afraid of you. There’s no way you’re getting this picture.”

“What good is it?”

“The bottom line, I never knew he wasn’t you, that’s until you came back.”

“What’s your point?”

“He’s good enough for me! I thought it was you. He even argues as much as you. You wanted to explore. Well baby lets explore. I want to be able to walk through the ally of time, into the shadows of history. We can see whatever was, we’ll know all of times secrets. Nothing’s hidden. All, which was, can be for

us to see. Forever everything lives in pictures!"

"Get a grip. There are two of us!"

"I'm stuck in pictures, and you want me to worry about there is doubles of us? As far as I'm concerned it's more fun. Keeps things interesting."

"It's too much for me. I can't take it! My hands are shaking. Look, look at them. (Al holds his hands up.) Want out of this nightmare. This isn't freedom. I've never felt more trapped in my life!"

"Then leave. Walk forever. I don't give a damn what you do."

"I'm leaving this shack. No matter what I'm never coming back. If this means, night-after-night, I have to sleep in the woods, let it be. Never setting foot here again!"

"You can keep walking. I'll be here, warm, looking out the window laughing at your cold ass! Come on, don't be stupid."

"This is you're last chance. Are you following me, or are you staying?"

"You're not going anywhere."

"You don't think so?"

"Remember Al, I can't run out of you. No matter what, you're never leaving this shack.

As long as I'm here, you're here!" (John holding the picture of Al, pointing at it.)

Al throws his hands up in the air yelling, "That's it! (Al takes his picture of John out of his pocket. Tearing it up. Throwing the pieces at him yelling.) You're no longer immortal! Don't make a mistake! I'd never bring you back! I'd leave you dead, to rot in hell before I'd travel into a picture to bring your ass back. From where you're standing you think you're a God, but from what I see, you're acting more like the Devil!"

"As long as I have your picture, I have you. So I don't care if I'm God, or the Devil!"

"Give me that picture!"

"No way Al!"

"You're taking this too far."

"I'm staying and so are you. Even if you walk a million steps to the other side of Earth, get this, you'll still be taking steps here, with me."

"Don't make me have to take it from you!"

"You'd have to kick my ass, and we both know you can't, in real time, picture time, or double time. If you fight me Al, your ass is my time!"

Al takes a swing, John steps towards Al, with a full upper cut to Al's chin. Staggering to keep his balance, falling to a knee, to his side, then to the ground. John watches as he is completely crushed by his blow, falling face first, losing semi-consciousness.

Al regroups. Rolls to his back, and rubs his hand on his chin, saying, "I should've kicked your ass when there was two of me."

"What? You would need an army of Al's?"

Al looks at John, while trying to stand, unable to get his balance, sitting, saying, "John, what about our past?"

"Screw our pasts! The hell there's double's of us. Heck with everything. Let's take what we've got. I'm telling you, I can't see what else there is!"

"I don't know how you keep talking me deeper in this?' Al rubs his chin for a while, stands up, and looks at John, saying, "Okay John, have it your way. We will travel."

They travel through pictures. Back to the dawn of man, the first upright step is happening before their eyes. Everywhere, into each picture they see a window, they begin to unravel the truth beyond the stars. They're learning the truth about themselves.

Working their way back past man, both looking at the peaceful surroundings. Sparkling air and water, all is unspoiled. Soaking it up John says, “I have to admit, it doesn’t get any better then this.”

“I could stay forever.” (Al says stretching his arms.)

“Speaking of staying… (They hear from behind, swinging to see the second Al walking towards them speaking.) That’s a great idea. What do you think? Let’s stay forever.”

The first Al looks at him, looking around asking, “Where’s the other John?”

“He had an accident.”

John takes a step forward, says, “What accident?”

The second Al crosses his arms, and says, “Let’s say, he was a snack for something bigger. Speaking of this, (turning to the first Al), can I have the back up picture you have of John?”

The first Al looks at his double answering, “Why?”

“This way I could make another copy.”

“There are no more pictures of John. I tore it up.”

“He tore you up! What happens if you die? It would be your end. There’s no reason to take this chance. Not one! You must have a backup, and have someone you can trust holding it. (The double takes John’s hand.) Come with me. I’ll look out for you.”

John looks at the first Al, asking, “Why’d you tear up my picture?”

“You know why.”

“What happens if I die? There’d be no way for me to come back. I want another picture, and this time you better keep it safe.”

The second Al jumps in saying, “If he won’t take the picture, I’ll do it.”

The first Al says, “You could rip up the picture you have of me. This way we’d show him, no more doubles.”

The second Al says, “Man, he’s selfish!”

The first Al looking at John says, “We’ve been friends a long time. I need you to tear up that picture.”

John smiles while taking the picture out. Holding it up for the double to see, he tears it throwing the pieces. Tiny and small they fall over the second Al. Seeing the shreds raining down, holding his hands out, the double says, “Great. Really…”

John takes a step towards him, saying, “Now get your ass out of here!”

The second Al walks away, looks back, and says, “This is going to be fun. Wait to you see where this is going. I know something you don’t. You two have made some mistakes in pictures!”

The second Al walks out of sight, and Al Says to John, “What should we do?”

“I don’t know. What do you think?”

“Maybe back to the shack?”

John thinks for a moment, turns to Al saying, “Yes. I agree, back to the shack. I think we need to make new backup pictures of each. If we don’t, we can be terminated.”

“This is the reason we’re in this boat in the first place.”

“Al, let’s say one should die. Maybe it’s me. Would you want to be here, by yourself? We should play it safe.”

“How’s this playing it safe? There’s no way we’re making anymore backups!”

“Why?”

“If something happens, well I guess it would be the end, and that’s it. John, let’s not try to cheat, by creating false images that may come back to hunt us, like doubles!”

“We have to do this. What if something happens to one of us?”

“For the last time, no!”

“But, at least if you have the backup, you have a choice.”

“I don’t care. Final word!”

“But, the other would be without anyone to travel with. Worse, the other would stay dead, and if that person’s me, I don’t want to stay that way.”

“No! No! No!”

“Can you imagine being here for all time, forever and ever, never dieing. And never seeing or speaking to another person?”

“What are you so worried about John, you’ve got a backup already of me, in pictures. I’m sure the two of you could find each other, make-up and live happily ever after.”

“That’s not the same. He’s my enemy now.”

After a couple hours pass Al sees John is not letting this go, and says, “We only use them if one of us is confirmed dead. No other way. I mean it!”

In the cellar, after taking new backups, they’ve selected a picture to travel into. While walking to the book Al approaches, and stops,

John looks at him, asking, “What, what is it now?”

“Look. You see what I see?”

Al points at the book, “Picture Picture”. It’s lying open to the last page, and John asks, “What do you think it means?”

“I think it means my double’s reading the book. (Al walks to it, picks up a few of the pages by the corners, letting them slip off his thumb, asking.) Do you think, we should read it?”

“You want to take the time?”

“Maybe it’ll tell us how to get rid of a double. Or show away out.”

“Go ahead, read. If you get tired let me know. But I’m catching a nap.”

While John’s sleeping on the floor, he feels a foot kicking him in the back. He jumps up to see Al leaning down in his face. Before he clears his eyes, he hears Al screaming, “You idiot! Don’t want to read, let’s jump into this, moron!”

“What, what is it?”

Al grabs John, pulls him up off the floor, by his shirt, yelling, “Go read. The opened page of the book, see for yourself!”

John walks to the book, looks at Al, then to the open page, and Al says, “Do you see it?”

“Give me a second. I can’t even see straight yet.”

“I’ll tell you what it says. Crossing objects, or trying to remove pictures, traps you!”

The sleep leaves John’s eyes, as he looks ahead, reaches his hands into his pockets, and takes out the pictures. Laying them on the floor. Looking at Al, he turns and walks up the stairs. He comes back with objects he’s been taking while traveling, setting them next to the pictures.

He looks at Al as guilty as a dog lying on a shredded sofa. John walks over to the bookcases and starts pulling albums out, reaching behind them, and brings out more items. He walks back unloading them with the others.

Al slaps himself in the head saying, “What did you do? How many things you’d take?”

“I guess about everyplace we traveled, I took something.”

“I told you, not to take anything.”

“Before you get mad, hold on a minute.”

“For what?”

“I had no idea.”

“Do you realize, as long as we have these things, and not in the pictures they belong, we can never leave?”

“We can return everything.”

Al reaches through the pile, finds stones, seashells, Roman coins, jewelry, saying, “We can’t return everything. Can you tell me where this rock’s from?”

“It was from, where we tripped running from that flying thing. We still haven’t figured out what it is?”

“Really. That rocks from that picture?”

“Or from the picture where you were eating those thingies. You remember? After I saw you weren’t going to die, I ate them. Man Al, they where some great thingies.”

“John… The thingies and the flying thing were millions of years apart!”

“Big deal. We may have to swap a few things. But look at it this way. We’ve got time.”

“Look at this way, you messed up! No way you’re going to be able to put everything back. We’re so screwed!”

“We can try.”

“Try, why?”

“I know where many came from. We put those back first.”

‘We have no choice. I guess we have to try something.”

“Yes. Or we can do nothing. The only reason you’re upset, is, because this blocks us from leaving!”

“I’ve never wanted to stay. But because you saw so much personal gain for yourself, now I can’t get out. I’m the one being punished for your deeds. Does this seem fair?”

“I didn’t do anything with the intent to hurt you.”

“It doesn’t matter what you meant. What does, is your actions. We can’t leave. First, you by taking pictures, and then you had to collect souvenirs. You did it behind my back, not fair!”

“The only thing I can do is to say I’m sorry. That’s it. The damage is done.”

Al walks at John screaming, “You’re sorry? What’s this solve? If you didn’t have those pictures we’d be home and out of this mess!”

“If you want to yell, I can yell to! I can get loud. Remember I’ve got a good upper cut. So stop yelling at me.”

“It’s your fault we’re in this mess!”

"You could've read the book if you wanted. So stop blaming me. I didn't hold a gun to your head."

"That isn't all. Flip the page over. Read the other side."

John sees the look in Al's eyes, and gets concerned, asking, "What now?"

"You might as well see for yourself."

Looking at the book, John reads, "*It's wise to read every book. To leave one unread before traveling into that passageway, is to take a chance against the odds of time*."

"John, what I'm wondering, my double, how many books has he read?"

"If he starts anything, I'm literally going to kick his butt back to the ice-age."

Traveling to the next passageway. John's listens and Al's reading, "*Time's not real, there is none in pictures. Years can be seconds, and seconds can be years. You can never die in pictures, as long as you follow each book. If you don't death is possible*."

"We're in big trouble John. What did we do?"

"Calm down, you're going to give yourself a heart attack."

Al looks at John while reading, "*Never enter a picture and bring a double out. Bringing a double to a passageway sets him free in pictures. For a double the greatest thing is to walk away a mortal!*"

Al and John take the pictures they have of each other, out of their pockets, tearing them up, John says, "Free in pictures. What does he have to do to get out?"

'I have to continue." (Al begins reading). "*There's no exit if there's a double of you. A double can never be photographed. To a camera he's blind. A picture may only be used once to make a double. The only way to get rid of a double is to kill it. If this isn't done the double becomes harder to kill as time passes! For the double to be free, and walk out of pictures, he must kill the person he was made from.*"

"We have to do what? I didn't want to kill anyone, Al!"

"If we're ever going to be safe, we must!"

"*Only a double can tell a double. That's of course if the double you're looking at isn't yours. There's one-way to be sure if a person's real, and that's only by taking a picture. If it develops, the person's real.*"

Both look at each other, and John says, "We know we're real. Come on, think, we took backups and we were in them."

Al reading, "*The only false truce for the double is not to hunt each other, and forever live in pictures, neither ever leaving. Never trust a double. Its highest prize is to steel your life, to live as you outside of pictures. The sole ambition of a double is to take your place in the real world! The only way a double can walk out of pictures is if the real person's dead.*

To ever be free the double must be killed before it kill's you. For the double, a draw equals to a win, and forever time is on its side. That eventually, with the passing of time, the mortal in a human, will let his guard down. When you do, the double will take your life, make no doubt about it."

John says, "What's that mean, forever times on his side?"

"No matter how long we're here, if the double walks out of the pictures at the same time we entered, then forever time is on his side."

"What about my double? You think he's dead?"

"I don't know."

"The double must learn like us, by reading. If I know me, I'll understand I'm in a fight to the end. The stakes have taking on a level we may not be ready for."

"You better get ready. We're at war with ourselves Al!"

"We're in way over our heads!"

"No, can't you see? We're eye-to-eye."

"This is going to be a dirty fight. We have to watch our backs. The book says the doubles will try to kill us."

"Speaking of the book, go on, read."

"*At the books is neutral ground. You can only kill a double in a picture. If you kill your double on neutral grounds, you die also, the same for the double.*"

"That's why my double didn't break my neck."

"That means the doubles, even back then, were reading."

"Keep reading."

"*If a double kills you in a picture, he has a choice, but the double will always choose your life over immortality.*"

"I don't like that part. My double would go back and live with my wife and kid. No way that's happening Al, while I'm still breathing."

“Don’t want that thing touching my daughter or wife. We need to kill it!”

“Man, this is going to be weird hunting you, with you. I think this should give us a big upper hand.”

“You’re forgetting, we’re not sure if your double’s dead for sure or not?”

“I don’t want to see myself dead.”

“If we’re going to win, I believe we’ll both have to witness each other dead.”

“We’ve lost our heads before, but never like this!”

“I say we go back to square one, get a plan of attack.”

“I don’t want to show up at a passageway and have them be there, now that we all know what’s at stake.”

“Remember, the passageways are natural. They can’t kill us there, or they die also.”

“I’m not sure how to read between the lines, Al, but wounding is different.” Rubbing his neck where the bookcase was.

Al rubs his neck saying, “My neck’s still sore from that rabbit punch.”

“I know one thing. When I get my hands on that, or those doubles, I’m going to be doing some wounding of my own.”

“I wouldn’t do that so fast, we might get ourselves in deeper.”

“How much deeper can we get?”

“I don’t want to find out. Let’s go get us some weapons. We must end this fast!”

“Slow down. It doesn’t matter how fast, just so they don’t kill us.”

“I say we battle it out and get it over with.”

“That is the mad person in you Al, that always loses his head. While we’re here, lets do us both a favor, and try to keep you’re head on your shoulders, no tantrums.”

“I’m not having any. Just think, the longer we take to kill them, the harder it’s going to be.”

“Out of the two of us, I’m the hunter. Let me plan the attack.”

At a gun shop, after traveling into a picture of LA, they find out you need proper paperwork to purchase a weapon. Al says, “We don’t have to buy them, we can steal the guns. We go check out some, snap our pictures, taking them with us.”

John agrees. They work their way to the guns. One catches John’s eye. The person working asks, “Can I help you?”

John steps up to the counter saying, “We’re interested in buying a couple 357’s, like on the shelf behind you.”

They watch as he places a pair of 357’s on the counter, saying, “You’ll need to fill out the paper work. It takes a few days to come back.”

Al with his hands sweating says, “You can’t be too safe with guns.”

The salesman walks away and John says, “Relax, hide you’re hands. If they shake anymore, he’s going to think you’re having a seizure. You’re scaring me, don’t panic.”

Al looks at John, sees him putting his hand into his pocket. They grab the guns and ammo. John reaches for the holders, knocking one off the counter, it hits the ground, the salesman spins, seeing them with their hands filled.

The salesman starts to hop over the countering yelling, “Stop, thieves!”

Fumbling for the picture, their way back to the shack, it is placed on the ground. John looks at the man from the counter, his feet hit the floor, and John says, “Now Al, snap your picture!’ Both press their shutter buttons, leaving the sporting goods store.

Returning back to the shack with the items, both step back from the book “Picture Picture”

and they make their way up the steps, to the table, setting everything they took on it, and Al says, “When I saw you knock the holder off the counter, I was sure the plan backfired.”

“The book says the only way to win is by killing our doubles. I don’t want to lose, I think we’re packing the right firepower.”

“I’m ready!”

“You think so Al?”

“I have my gun and bullets, show me how to load the thing,” (Al looks down the sight).

“Where’s the safety?” (John asks).

“Safety. I’m listing.”

After a fast lesson on using the gun, they fill their pockets with bullets. John takes the extra ammo and hides it out back. When he comes walking back, he’s saying, “The double has to come back through here, to travel into another picture. I say we wait for him.”

“We have to kill him in a picture. I say we go hunt and track him, I don’t want to waste time.”

“I believe they have the upper hand. We aren’t sure if there’s one or two of them. This changes the strategy. I’m sure they’ll try to take advantage of this.”

“This is our plan. We sit here and wait for them to come to us?”

“I think it’s the best we can do for now.”

Al sees the doorknob leading to the cellar behind John turn slowly. He points to it backing up. They step closer together hearing the clicking sound of the knob opening all the way. As the cellar door opens a crack, John begins taking a step forward, as the door swings open.

John stops. Watching it as it taps the wall behind it. Keeping their eyes to the door, but nothing’s seen. The door hits the wall, bouncing back, closing itself, until it’s only open a crack, and John says, “Be ready! Hide the guns, this is our advantage.”

Al hides the guns quickly in the old potbelly stove. He walks back to John saying, “Do you think someone’s there?”

“Do you think the door opened itself?”

Focused on the door John takes a step closer, as Al grabs him asking, “Where are you going?”

“I’m tired of waiting. I’m going down there.”

“No! It could be a trap.”

“I think they’re messing with our heads. We’ve been standing here over fifteen minutes, and nothing. That’s it. They’re not messing with me anymore!”

John walks towards the door with Al behind him. As they approach, John reaches for, and swings the door open. Looking down the steps, seeing nothing, he says, “They’re playing with our heads Al.”

From the cellar they hear footsteps walking towards them. They’re pronounced! As they get closer they become more in tune, stamping their way to the top. They watch the door as it’s kicked open, and the doubles come walking out.

The second Al slaps his leg, laughs, and John says, “Go to hell, both of you!”

The second Al says, “We have decided to offer you a truce, this way we all win.”

Al faces his double asking, “How do we all win?”

“We’ll all live forever, in pictures.”

The first Al says, “We know there’s no higher prize for you guys then walking out a mortal.”

“So we can see you’ve been reading. Is this what you want, to fight us? You can’t win, we know your every move.”

The first Al says, “As long as you’re free in pictures, we’re not free in life.”

The second John says to the first, “I’ll make a deal, we don’t hunt you, and you don’t hunt us.”

The first Al says, “He’s with me. Back off!”

The second John says, “There’s four of us. Three can live without fighting. You can’t accept the facts we all want to live in peace. As much as you want to be free, so do we. But instead we offer a truce. I think you should take our generous offer!”

The first Al says, “I don’t want a fight. I want to be able to walk out of this. That’s all, go home and see my family.”

The second Al says, “There’s no way that’s ever happening!”

The second John says, “You’d have to kill us. We both want what you want, but we want it more. We’ve never tasted it. We have no idea what it’s like to be mortal. Sure we have your memories. But we don’t know what it’s like to sniff a rose.”

The second Al says, “We’ve never kissed a woman, and I think it would be nice to kiss the warm lips of your wife.”

Getting a bit mad Al says, “Watch it!”

“If my memory serves me good, you’re not such a hot lover, are you?”

“Back off!”

“Or what? Are you going to tell some of my secrets? Seems I have all on you. You have nothing on me. Being the double has some advantages. Just my luck, I’m the double.”

The first Al asks, “I thought he was dead?” (Pointing at the second John.)

The second Al says, “You two should consider our truce.”

The first Al says, “No truce. The way we figure, you two will fall easily. Why should we want a truce, that only benefits you?”

The second Al says, “Nothing’s needed here but our truce. It’s simple.”

The first Al’s yelling, “I won’t be told no to my future. No matter what the cost. We’ve made our move, this battle goes to its end!”

The second Al walks to the first saying, “You’re rejecting our truce?”

The first Al stepping up says, “I know you crack under pressure. You get mad when you

don't get your way. We'll see if you can keep it together. We can play mind games also. I'll be dammed if you think you're going to walk out of this, and into my life!"

The second Al says, "We'll meet in pictures, maybe we won't. It's a vast universe, and we'll be traveling it. Good luck trying to find us. Either way, as long as you don't kill us, we live forever. If we ever find and kill you, we walk out you! Didn't you notice for the longest time you didn't see John's double?"

The second John adds, "I've been reading the books, gaining the knowledge we need to crush you. Hope you guys are ready for what you're asking for?"

They watch as their doubles turn towards the cellar door, pulling it shut behind them, they leave.

Working their way back through passageways facing one of the books, Al's reading. At first John sits next to him, but he loses interest, sits on the floor and waits for him to finish.

Al reads in disbelief the complexity of picture travel. His head's confused trying to comprehend what's before him. With lack of sleep the pages are going out of focus. He

stretches his arms arching his body, reading, "*It's for sure that if too much time passes, you'll have no chance. The double begins healing so fast it's unable to be killed. At this point the only thing left is to run. Run for your life, and hide forever in pictures.*

My own double is so powerful all he does, without sleep, is hunt me relentlessly! So now and forever I'm afraid I'll be hiding. I believed someday if I kept studying the code, I'd figure out how to get out of this mess.

I haven't been able to escape from the forever torture my double inflicts on my soul, and what's worst, the more I learn, the more I understand my double. With time I learn my own weakest points. They've become his strongest. My doubles so much more advanced then me, that all I can do is try to keep a few steps ahead."

Al looks up, and John says, "We're in some hot water, but I don't think the pots boiling yet."

"You think we have a chance?"

"We have a better chance than the guy that wrote this book. We aren't running, and they're not coming after us full tilt. I think our chances are getting slimmer."

“I don’t believe we can beat them.”

“You’ve been saying you have bad feelings for a long time Al.”

“I think they’re right. We have to kill ourselves. What a nightmare!”

“Would you mind saying something positive, instead of telling me how screwed we are!”

In the shack they’re walking around, trying to find clues about their doubles. Looking into the box, the picture from the last passageway they traveled should be there. Instead another takes its place. John looks closely, saying, “They went back to the Wild West.”

“Let’s bring this fight to them.”

Al looks at the picture, closes the lid, pressing the moons. When they open their eyes, they’re facing a saloon. They lie low, hiding. After looking in all direction, to make sure there’s no sign of the doubles, Al whispers, “Where do you think they are?”

“I don’t know. We should have a look in the saloon. It seems to be the hot spot.”

John walks the dirt streets with Al, through the swinging doors, looking around. Turning their backs to the bar, John notices a woman

walking towards him, saying, “Honey you done with my girl already?”

John points at himself, and says, “You talking to me?”

“Big boy, you just walked up those steps. You’re fast. You can pay me now.”

Al grabs John, saying to the lady, “He’ll pay in a minute. (Al pulls John a couple steps away.) You’re upstairs, with a girl!”

John looks up the steps sees the second Al walking to a door, banging on it. The door swings open, and he steps inside, closing it. John turns to Al, they hear popping noises and screams. People are running or diving out of sight. Looking up the steps, running down them, their doubles are firing, John yells, “Hit the dirt!”

John dives behind the bar! Al follows. He’s tucked in a cannonball, slamming into the shelves and bottles behind the bar.

John sees Al, the glass and bottles coming down. John ducks his head, rolls to his side, and hears a heavy thump, followed by Al letting out a grunt. John looks at Al lying in a pool of alcohol and glass. John not hearing any more shots, leans towards Al, and asks, “You all right?”

“I think. (Looking down at his body.) No holes.”

“Where the hell were you jumping?”

“I got scared. You had a couple of steps on me. The entire bar had a couple steps on me. I looked around. I was the only duck sitting on this pond, I wanted out. Never thought those pops we’re guns.”

“Everyone in this place knew what was going on before we did.”

“John, where are the doubles now?”

“Stick your head, up have a look.”

“No way!”

Sitting next to each other, there’s not a sound coming from the saloon. John takes out his gun, and Al does the same. There’s scurrying, the swinging doors are heard squeaking to a stop, and the second Al says, “Well, well, well, what do we have here?”

John, from behind the bar, yells, “Don’t forget we’re armed to!”

Al backing up John, “Our guns are bigger then yours.”

The second John says, “You’re scaring us. Why don’t you come out and show us your big toys?”

John whispers in Al's ear, "You stay here. Make a few sounds in the glass. Keep your gun ready, and make sure the safeties off."

Al looks at John, leaping from the floor, and begins rapid firing. Al gets caught in the action and starts firing with his hand held over the bar.

The doubles back out the doors, John looks from the doors to the clicking noises, and Al's pulling the trigger, John says, "It helps if you reload the gun. Pulling the trigger, without aiming at anything, won't help unless you get lucky with the first six shots. Each click after that, that doesn't go bang, you're really not doing anything constructive."

Al, slowly stands, saying, "You should've told me what you where doing."

"I'm telling you now. Reload the gun. Our doubles are outside."

"I'm reloading. Believe me, I'm reloading."

"You need some combat training. You choked Al."

"First time in combat, the stress. Felt like all was a fog, happening at lightening speed in slow motion."

"I'm sure our doubles think they've got us trapped."

John works his way along the wall, to a window. Al staying low, works his way to John, pinning themselves to the wall. John ducks under the window, next to the front doors, and begins to step towards them. Al grabs his arm saying, “Don’t! I always said if I were in this situation, I’d hide on the other side of the door, and when whoever I was fighting stepped through the door, this is when I’d blow them away.”

John kicks the swinging door, a bullet flies in hitting the wall. John reaches his hand, and takes the picture of the shack setting it on the floor. Al looks at it saying, “Let’s get. We’ll pick this fight up in another picture.”

“No we won’t! We’re going to continue this fight right here. I’ll explain at the shack.”

Returning to the shack, John’s saying, “Quickly, we need reenter the picture of the saloon. If we’re lucky, we’ll catch them of guard, waiting for us to come out of the saloon.”

The moons are pressed, sending them back to the West. Hiding behind a wagon, they see the saloon, but not their doubles. Al creeps along the wagon, feeling with his hand for the

end. John's looking around hearing, "Bang, bang!"

John dives to the ground, holding his gun. The shots were close! Right away he thinks of Al. Looking for him, rolling to his side, he hears, "Bang." Again!"

Looking under the wagon, John sees his double's laying near the front wheel. Looking through the spokes, he's coughing up blood. John hears a step. He looks back, and sees Al's foot in the dusty blood stained street. Looking back at his double, in a pool of blood, his eyes are open. John sees Al's feet spread apart, aligned at shoulders width, and hears, "Bang!"

John sees his double bouncing from the impact of the bullet. Hears a bullet hitting his chest, again, "Bang, bang, and bang!"

John watches his double cough out his last breath. Hears Al's empty gun, clicking. John hops to his feet, looking for Al's double, and runs around the wagon. Al stands over the fallen double, still pulling the trigger.

Al turns, faces John, and puts the gun down at his side. There's a look of shock, and Al says, "I got him!"

Al turns to John and drops that, I just killed him look, and feels sickened, as he glances back at the doubles blood stained body.

Al stumbles a few times in the direction of John, and John asks, “You okay?”

“Do I look okay? He didn’t even see me. He was hiding behind the wagon, looking towards the saloon. I shot him in his back.”

They slap hands, giving each other a hi-five, hearing, “Drop your guns! Come out with your hands up!”

John says, “I think I’m ready for some fishing.”

“What’s the matter, losing some appetite for traveling?”

“Not so much that, losing my appetite for someone always trying to kill someone. I’m sick of it!”

Snapping their pictures, taking them to the shack. Al’s saying, “Wonder where my double is at now. I’m sure he’s shocked about losing your double?”

“First thing. Did he leave that picture? Or is he still in the west?”

“You want to reenter it?”

“I don’t know, after all. I think we’re wanted men.”

“Wonder what the price is on our heads.”

“I don’t want that much information Al. I think we should hunt your double, while he’s still rattled.”

Al watches John, checking the picture in the box, saying, “It’s not the same picture. It’s an old war picture.”

“He was here, and gone. My double.”

“Let’s finish this Al. We’ve got him on the run.”

“It’s, a World War one, picture.”

“I can see this. Let’s press the moons.”

“I can’t believe I’d enter any war picture. It’s a trick!”

“You’re double’s living on gut instinct, like other animals that knows its being hunted. We’re the hunters. It doesn’t get any better for us.”

“I think we need to stay right here, not do anything. If we enter that picture, we’re doing what my double wants. If we enter any other pictures, my double could track us, be on our tails and we’d be the hunted. We have options here, entering this picture shouldn’t be one of them.”

“Let’s hunt him, before he’s hunting us!”

“I want to stay here. On neutral ground.”

“Al, there’s no other way out of the shack, but to enter that picture.”

“There are decoys in life. I wouldn’t enter it!”

“What decoy? I can’t see any traps here.”

“That’s what makes it good, not seeing it. I bet my doubles near.”

“I disagree. Your doubles scared, he’s running. I think we should keep up the heat and get on his heals. Let him know we’re not going away! We’re wasting time. He’s getting further ahead. At least now, we can track him like the beast he is.”

Leaning in close to John, Al whispers, “This is what he wants, so he can regroup.”

“Even more reasons for your double to run into a picture we wouldn’t follow. Don’t you see? This gives him time to regroup.”

“I’m telling you, this is a trap!”

“I think you’re over estimating how smart your double is. You’re giving yourself way too much credit!”

“Let’s check the shack first.”

Al, with his finger tells John to follow, leads him upstairs. Looking through the window, Al walks back to the center of the room, rubbing

his head, and John says, “There’s nothing. Lets stop messing around.”

“Where’d you hide the ammo?”

“Around back. Why?”

“Show me.”

Al walks out of the shack, and John leads the way. There’s rustling in the bushes, but it goes unnoticed. Walking around the side of the house, to the ammo, John says, “Let’s go back. End this.”

“Are you sure you want to travel into that picture?”

Al steps inside the shack, looks back, and John says, “I can’t see what else.”

John steps into the doorway, with Al saying, “I guess you’re right. I’d rather be the hunter, then having him coming after us.”

John stops in the doorway, saying, “Can you say that again? I didn’t hear what you said. Something about me being right.”

Al watches as John begins to reach for his next step, to enter the shack, and sees the bushes moving behind him. Leaning to see what’s there, John sees Al looking at something, and he stops walking, begins to turn, to look.

Al sees, what looks like the end of a gun. It's sliding through the branches. Then a hand, wrapped around the butt, with an arm disappears into the bush. Al catches his breath. Opens his mouth. Sucks in air, filling his lungs. But his eyes are faster then his words. John's eyes meet Al's.

Al watches as the gun silently sends out a flash of light, jerking the hand up, followed by a loud bang. Al dives behind the wall, inside the shack.

Everything slows to a point in Al's mind, where things seem to stop. The only thing moving is a splatter of blood and guts, frozen in space. The pieces from John explode out. Each accelerates. Spreading across the shacks floor, rolling to a stop. As the debris clears the air, Al stands glancing out. He looks through a hole in John's abdomen, to the bushes, his double rises.

Al, his mind still hasn't caught up with his eyes. Looks at John's face, then to his abdomen, blood runs through the fingers of both his hands, trying to cover the wound.

Al looks from John, to behind him, and sees his double stepping out of the bushes. John takes a final look at Al, drops his hands. Al

looks up from John's hands, into his eyes. John's mouth's hanging open, dropping to his knees.

John hits so hard, Al could see the impact travel in a wave from his knees, hitting the ground. The shockwave travels up John's thighs, spreading over his body. Making his head snap down, with a splash of blood, his chin slams his chest. And the rest of the shock is released through his wrists, jerking his fingertips, pulling his hand fully open, and his fingers spring back. John falls forward to the ground.

There's no reaction. Nothing in anyway of John trying to protect his face, from smacking the wood, of the entrance to the shack. His head rebounds, back into the air, settling limp, gasping. The second Al walks from the bushes, holding his smoking gun at his side.

Al closes his eyes, looks away from his fallen friend, and screams, "What did you do? This is neutral ground!"

"For us it's neutral ground. Not for John and me. I didn't shoot you. You still look alive to me!"

Al, hears his doubles footsteps getting closer, turns his head to the door, and sees

Johns open eyes. Then his doubles foot comes into view, stepping over John, into the shack.

Al sits on the floor, watches as his double walks up and stands over John, saying, "Let the games begin. (Reaching down, grabs John's hair, pulling his head up off the ground. He looks to Al, sitting behind the wall.) Isn't this what I once heard you say. How do you like hearing it from me? I offered you a truce once. Now twice. We can be friends forever. Or let the pieces fall where they may. It's your call. It doesn't matter to me.

The double picks up John's gun, stands over his body, saying, "Any of this seem familiar?"

The double drops the gun on John's chest. Al watches as the gun bounces, with a splash of blood, flipping up in the air, it lands, leaning on John's face, the double says, "Didn't have time to get a shot off. Man, I'm fast."

"You shot him in his back. He never had a chance."

"He had a chance. Everyone had a chance!"

Al watches as the double walks to the table. Taking the old wooden chair, he slides it out, faces it towards Al, and sits in it.

Al watches every move he makes, the double stares back, stands, and walks to Al. Leans

down to his ear, and whispers, “In what picture did you think you could beat me? We’ll face each other on equal ground, not neutral, and when we meet, when the smoke clears, may the best man win!”

Al watches his double walking down the cellar. Standing, he looks at the pieces of John spread across the floor. Al, walks over to John, falls to his knees crying.

Not sure what to do, to touch, not to touch, to hold or not too. Looking at what’s left of his friend. Al gets mad, stands to his feet, screaming, “No, no! This can’t be happening, no!”

Al squeezes his hands into a fist, full of his own hair, shakes the shock out of him. An idea pops into his mind. Distracting him from the moment.

He stops thinking about John. His thoughts have been pinpointed, he runs down the steps. Reaches for his photo of his family at the shore, saying to himself, “I’ll go back in time. Warn myself. None of this will ever happen.”

Al enters the photo of his family. Walking away he takes a last look back. Sees his two sisters and parents. But what was hardest for him to take his eyes off, was himself as a boy.

Turning from his family, he's trying to focus on the task at hand, his double.

Walking the streets for hours, he's thinking, "I'll call my house. Maybe I can convince myself not to travel into the pictures. This way John will still be alive."

Wandering the streets for hours, he finds he's looking at a payphone from across the street, seeing someone using it. Sits on the curb waiting for the person to finish. Al's talking to himself, "I can't call my house. I already know what happens. I'll hang up. (Watches the phone, waiting for it to become empty). I'll explain about the candle. This way I'll beat him at his own game. Time!"

From across the street, Al watches as the person in the booth puts more money in, making another call. A few moments later, the man hangs up. And then drops another coin in. Dialing again. Al sits on the curb, seeing the person having an argument. Finally slamming the phone on the hook, pulling the door open.

Standing, brushing off his pants, Al walks across the street. As the person from the phone passes, Al hides his face. Not wanting anyone to see him. Al hears the footsteps stop, and something cold is pressed to his head. Al hears

from behind, “Don’t I know you? (There is silence.) What’s the matter, cat got you’re tongue? Sometimes you’re dealt a strange twist of fate, and the hunter becomes the prey. Guess what?”

“Guess nothing. Don’t care anymore!”

The double leans, almost touching his lips to the back of Al’s neck, saying in an underlying voice, “It was me that spoke to you all those years back. When you where a boy! You hung up and I called back. When I told you it was you, all grown, poor little you got scared. Then your babysitter took the phone and get this, she called you an idiot. She hung up. I tried to call back, but the phones been busy.

You see Al, I knew you’d take this path, to try and come back to the past, to change your future. You shouldn’t have left the picture of your family in the box. Up until we split, I have your memories, I remembered this call, wasn’t only you there!”

“Go ahead kill me. I’m sick of it anyway, finish it!”

“I did what I needed to beat you. You took the bait hook line and sinker. I think it’s time to clean the catch of the day. I wonder, should I gut first, or cut off the head! (Al’s double

clicks the hammer on his gun.) I guess the best man walks out, a mortal! Today you die as an adult, on the same day you spoke to yourself as a child. You lost in the ultimate game. Final move. Checkmate!'

Beginning to squeeze the trigger, Al's double loves this moment, for he's about to become a person, real flesh and blood. Pulling the trigger, the gun jams.

The double swings the handle of the gun, hits Al to the ground. Al turns to fight, but his double's gone. Looking in all directions, only his guns lying in the street. Al rubs his shoulder and picks it up.

Returning to the shack, he finds his picture of his family, it's torn and thrown over the cellar floor. His anger grows into an uncontrollable rage. Al walks to the book, and begins tearing every page out. Rips the cover off. Leaving the box exposed.

Walks from the box, Al takes his gun, loaded with bullets. He cocks it. Turns to face the box. Holding the gun out with both hands, aiming, unloading every shot. As he pulls the trigger, the last bullet nails it and it shatters into shards, spraying the room with flying fragments, sounds like pins snowing down.

Not sure what he's done, he walks the cellar, over to where the box used to be. Nothing's left! Mesmerized, Al picks up the candle, heads towards the steps. Stops, looks to the albums and thinks back to the day they found the pictures. What a happy day it seemed. Al takes the first step out of the cellar, up to the door, turns the knob, hopes what's on the other side was a nightmare.

Thinks that by destroying the box, this might bring John back to life. Opens the door slowly, he pushes it. Standing still watches it swing open, and hears it tap the wall, seeing blood scattered everywhere.

Al looks around, sees the chair at the small table. He looks up to the fireplace, and then down to the floor. Seeing there are two sets of footprints in the dust for the first time, his and Johns.

Walking to the fireplace, Al sets the candle on the mantle. Opens the box of matches. There's one less for the first time. Looks to the fireplace and there's a spent match. Looks at the flame of the now lit match, he relights the candle. Watches as it flickers. Casting its dancing shadows around the room, reflecting in his head.

Walking out of the shack, stepping over John, Al walks a few steps. Staring at his best friend, and begins to shake. Thinking, maybe losing his temper, destroying the box, may not have been such a great idea. Outside he looks at the entire view, from the fireplace on the roof, to the darkening skies above.

As this day fades away into dusk, Al looks to the shack. Through the window and sees the candles warm inviting light, dying as it burns to an end, it takes its warm glow with it. Watching the candle's last flickers whine out a goodbye. For the first time it dies. Feeling the candle die in his heart, in his head he feels Picture Picture dieing. He knows why the candles burned out. Times stopped repeating, it's come full circle.

Al looks to John, his lifeless body laying flat on the spot where he was dropped. Realizes by destroying the box and book, this did nothing to bring him back.

Walks over to John, he bends, picks up the gun, which the double dropped. Holding his gun in the other hand, Al stands over John. Looks at him, with his arms hanging at his side. Al falls to his knees crying. After draining himself of tears, everything in him, is empty.

Al, lying across John's body, turns his face, and rests it on his chest, feeling the wet cold blood. He lifts his head looking to the Gods for help, hearing, "Freeze! Drop those guns!"

At first Al's stomach sinks. As he kneels slowly to the ground, he starts to extend his fingers, and the guns in both his hands slide free, dropping to the ground, Al hears, "Take a few steps backwards, away from the guns. Towards the sound of my voice!"

Al doing exactly as he's told, hears, "Stop! Drop to the ground."

Al crying squeezes his eyes shut, imagining how this looks to the officers.

"Fall face down! Not a muscle, don't twitch!"

Al lying on the ground, with his head turned from the officers. He can't hold the tears, and they spill, washing some of John's blood from his face. As a ruby colored tear finds its way over his check, it drops pearl round, to the ground, slowly it blurs from Al's vision. Leaving the green grass painted in his head.

The officer's approach with their guns drawn, Al feels a knee pressing hard to his head. The cold steel of the handcuffs gripped

tight to his wrists, the officer says, “Is there anyone else here beside you?”

“No, just me.”

Both officers holding him down, look at John’s body, an officer say’s, “Jesus, what did you do?”

Al’s shakes his head saying, “No, yes. It wasn’t me. My double shot him!”

“What is it? Did you, or didn’t you, shoot him?”

“No. I didn’t shoot him!”

The officer sits Al up saying, “You’re going to need to repeat that. The first thing we heard you say, was you confessing to shooting him.”

Al looks to the other officers. And now coming to the scene reporters’ cameras are flashing, and he hears, “Did, or didn’t you kill him?”

Al looks at the cops, saying, “No. It was my double.”

“You have a twin?”

“No. A double. We made by mistake, he killed John.”

“Where is he now?”

“You’ll never find him.”

“Can you tell us why?”

“I destroyed the only way into the pictures. (Al hangs his head, not believing himself.) I kept telling him, I had bad feeling. Knew something would happen.”

“What would happen?”

Al starts stuttering, “I, I, told h, him.”

“Told him what, you’d shoot him?”

“Yes, no. I never said I’d kill him. I was, ...we needed to get away. He wouldn’t listen. John stole so many things we couldn’t leave. We kept seeing the window ...that damn candle!”

Taking Al’s handcuffed wrists, the officers lift him to his feet. Walking out of the woods, to the cop car, parked next to John’s car, the officer says, “You’re not very bright. The man that lives across the way saw you park your car. It’s private property. (The officer points to the no trespassing sign). An hour ago, he called the police. In this short of a time, man what a mess you’ve gotten yourself into. You must have been planning this a long time.”

“I didn’t shoot him. He was my best friend. I’d never hurt him.”

Al sits in the police car, looks out the window, and thinks how much silence there is in the back of the cop car, when all looks so

loud outside. The door of the car swings open. Kneeling, an officer looks into the car, saying, "Mind telling me your name? I'm Captain Richardson. (Showing his badge.) I was wondering, would you'd like to talk about what happened?"

The captain begins reading Al his rights. With each word Al sinks further in, lost in this moment, the captains saying, "Do you understand?"

No answer from Al, the captain repeats, "You understand the rights I've read you?"

No response. The captain slams the door. The front driver's side and passenger's door opens, the first two officers sit in the car. The passenger side officer says, "Captain says you have nothing to say. Even ignored your rights. Amazes me how tough you guys are, until you're sitting back there."

Driving to the police station, watching as things pass. The feelings of freedom Al once experienced with John, disappears. He thinks back to Paris. From the excitement of realizing picture travel was possible. To Africa, to the lion as it ran past. How that spear stuck between John's legs. He sees happy flashes in his mind of all the pictures they entered, and a

smile grows on Al's face. But it's hollow, thinking how they walked the woods. How John wanted more, and he wanted out.

Passing over the road, the grass, trees, the sky all had a color that was brighter then he'd ever seen before. Not really, Al thought, just appreciating it more. Like it's the last time he may ever see them from a car again.

Al's stare changes into a lost daze, and the outside world blurs on by. When all blurs back, he's in a holding cell, and an officer is saying, "There are a couple of people here to see you."

A moment later, Al sees his wife, walking with their lawyer. The door's unlocked, allowing them to enter. Al's wife pacing the floor, once in a while glances at him, saying, "What happened?"

"I didn't kill John."

"Who did?"

"My double."

The attorney holds the police report, and says, "I can see this."

Al's wife says, "Your double! What double?"

“The double John made, when he thought I’d been eaten by a Triceratops!” (Al says scratching the back of his head, looking away.)

The attorney replies, “If you think I sound repetitive, or I’m trying to make light of the situation, I’m not.”

“I know it sounds crazy. But every word, everything I said, it’s all true!”

Al’s wife, walks to Al, saying, “Snap out of it. This isn’t helping. You’re in big trouble. What’ll I do without you?”

“I know I’m in trouble. But every word about traveling into pictures is true. I didn’t kill John. My double did!”

Al’s wife starts to cry. Walks away from him saying, “That’s it? This is your defense. You traveled in pictures, and by mistake, John believed you we’re eaten by a Triceratops. Because of this, he made a double of you, and your double killed him?”

“I’m sticking to it. It’s the truth.”

The attorney, “I’ve got to be straight up. I think we have a chance of beating the death penalty.” (The attorney flipping through the police report.) “This is a strong case for an insanity plea.”

“I didn’t kill him. I’m not pleading insanity!”

“With what you’re telling me Al. I have to be blunt. I see you frying!”

“If there’s any justice, I’ll be found innocent. I’m sure when all the evidence is collected, it’ll prove I didn’t kill John.”

Closing the reports the attorney says, “Speaking of the evidence, have you looked at the evidence yourself?”

“I know what was there. I’m sure it’s clear.”

“Really. It’s clear, is it? Here’s what someone that’s not looking through your eyes is going to see. You where found holding the guns in you’re hand that killed John.”

Al jumps in saying, “I didn’t pull the triggers.”

“Only your fingerprints were on them.”

“There are two sets, mine and my doubles.”

“You where found covered in blood from the victim.”

“Like it says in the report, that’s why.”

“You two where the only ones seen walking into the woods.”

“That’s because my double was created at the shack.”

“Al, you should rethink my suggestion about pleading insanity.”

“I’m innocent. The pictures will prove it.”

“The pictures at the shack? There where thousands, many historical. It was quite a find from what I’ve read in the papers.”

“When they look into the pictures, they’ll find the truth.”

“I think I’m done here. We’re going to fight this thing you’re way. I think you should sleep on it. Try to come to some conclusion before then. Give me something to work with.”

“I gave you something. You’re an attorney. Put the pieces back together, and get me out of this. Back to my old life, with my wife and daughter.”

Al’s wife puts her hand over her mouth, crying hysterically, yelling, “What’d you say? You want to get home to our daughter!”

Al sees she’s extremely upset, asking, “What? What is it? Something happen to our daughter?”

“You don’t remember, Al, everybody’s gone!”

Al repeats, “Everybody, gone?”

“Who will help me with your mother, what’ll happen to me?”

“My mother. She’s alive!”

“Your mother’s alive?”

The attorney jumps in, “Al, you really don’t know?”

Al’s wife is yelling, “Do you have amnesia?”

“No. I don’t. Now please tell me what’s going?”

Al’s wife walks up to Al, looks to his eyes, saying, “Your mother was driving to the lake. You remember. You had to work that weekend. She fell asleep at the wheel. Everyone in the car was killed, but your mom. I don’t want to relive this. Not now. How could you forget?”

“You mean, our little Donna. Our girl’s dead?”

“For twelve years Al. The accident was twelve years ago!”

“You’re wrong. My mother died fifteen years ago.”

“Your mother started going to get her breast checked every year. She told everyone she was warned by an angle from the future.”

“What about my mom. Is she okay?”

“Your mother was paralyzed in the accident! I don’t think you’re as okay as you think you are.”

Al looks at his wife. A fear grows over him. He knows the picnic at the lake. Everyone has been going there for years, feeling his heart hit his heals, he says, “Tell me, who else was in the car?”

“Our daughter, killed on impact. You’re Sister Kelly, and grand mother.”

Al’s wife looks at Al, handcuffed to the bench. Running to the door she yells, “Get me out of here! Someone open this door!”

Al watches as his wife and the attorney walk away. Sitting on the bench, he thinks back to what John said; you shouldn’t mess with the future. He would like to go back and let the grains of time fall as they once were.

Al having served years in person, has grown very old, and was moved to the nut house, where he is now. Telling all the guys his story, of how he ended up there.

Thinking of his family, he looks at all the guys, and a smile grows. Seeing them. Looking around the room, he’s saying, “At my trial, they pushed my mother in on a wheelchair. She was my key witness. Taken

the stand, my attorney questioned her about the note. No one ever believed I went back in time, and gave it to her."

Ed leaning in closer to Al asks, "I want to know what you we're thinking, destroying the box. If I had a box like that, I'd keep it forever."

David says, "When you shot that box, it was like you shot me."

Jake looks at the two guys, saying, "I'm glad he destroyed it. You did the right thing Al."

George taps Al's leg asking, "You told us about the pictures John collected, the Pterodactyl, Brontosaurs and the Triceratops. When you showed them in court, can you tell us the reaction again, we love this part best?"

Al walks to the pictures of the Pterodactyl, Brontosaurs, and the Triceratops hanging on the wall, while looking at them, he says, "Everyone lost it."

Ed says, "If I was a Juror, you'd walk out a free man. No way could anyone make up a story like that. What really sold me were the mint condition Roman coins. To me this proved you guys were traveling in pictures."

Al says, "That's what I thought. They said the coins where stolen, with the rest of the

things. Those damn district attorneys, they said John and I got in a fight over greed, and I shot him."

George adds, "That's when people from all over the world started sending you pictures. Many believing you were innocent."

Al looks at his wall of pictures, and says, "At first only a few. But then the pictures started coming in by the bags. My story was so unbelievable that a public outcry started. Many wanting me to be set free, others wanted me hung for destroying the box."

"I have one question Al?"

"What's that Jake?"

"Looking back, what would you do if you found that shack, and those pictures again?"

Al makes his way from the pictures, to Jake, and says, "I sure as hell wouldn't be here. The only reason I wanted out of pictures is because I missed my family. But since I never spent another minute with them. (Al looks at Jake.) You've been with us a long time, and you don't know what I'd do by now?"

"I know what you'd do. I love hearing you say it."

Al looks from Jake, and at all the other guys in the nuthouse, smiling, saying, "You know

what I'd do. I'd jump into pictures. Looking back. I'd never have looked back, but not to escape. John was right! I'd say screw the real world and leave it to the idiots. I'd walk the beaches of time, everyone!"

Al, he gave up all time and immortality to be a mortal, to be in his eyes free. Some freedom! The rest of his life, locked up, in either confinement, or a nut house. After telling this story to the guys, a last time, he curled up in a ball on his bed. When they found him the next morning, they found he had died with a smile, or maybe a smirk. Only Al knows. But finally he's free!

What's freedom? Maybe freedom only exists in the pictures we dream in our own minds. Maybe freedom's nothing more than what we believe in our imagination, who knows what true freedom is?

Al's double is still traveling through the passageways, searching for his future. Trapped, he'll live in pictures for all time. His only gateway to Al's world has been sealed. And Al's double settles for second best, immortality.

The real Al had his future, the freedom he so badly wanted, locked up most of his life in a straight jacket.

They say the grass is always greener on the other side. Maybe it's true. John's wife collected his insurance with a smile, and lives rather well in a new house. Al's wife lies in an empty bed, by herself, crying to sleep every night, missing her lover.

Al and his double both got what they asked for, Al a future as a mortal, and Al's double lives for eternity, forever in pictures.

Traveling to the end, Al's double arrives at the last book. Finding a friend, the writer of the book, old G. L. They're at the last passageway. Looking at the picture in the bottom of this box, it's of the five moons. It's the only picture here, and they know it's of a planet, and it isn't Earth!

Closing the lid, the moons are pressed. When Al's double and G.L. open their eyes, they see the five moons over the horizon, with a pair of setting suns. Sitting on a couple of rocks, awed, they watch an Alien sunset.

Looking to the horizon of this planet, they see man isn't so advanced. Walking to the

alien city, both smiles, looking ahead, walking into their future, or maybe it's our past!

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