



ED SALVEN

In Search of the

ILLUMINATI

*a novel*

IN HONOR OF EZRA POUND

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IN SEARCH OF  
THE  
ILLUMINATI

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FINIAL

# **PRAISE FOR ED SALVEN'S THE SOLDIER FACTORY**

“...Salven’s memory-dredging and contradictory reflections are impressive.”

— brooklynrail.org

“[The Soldier Factory] makes a unique contribution to the literature of Vietnam, and to contemporary debates about the American military.”

— Publishers Weekly

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

A great debt is owed to the life of Ezra Pound for his great body of thought including radio addresses, political essays, and for his mentorship of such literary lights as T.S.

Eliot and James Joyce.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Ed Salven was born in Hollywood, California. Educated at UCLA and London University, he owns a landscape design company in Malibu, California, where he resides. He is the author of *The Soldier Factory*, a moving collection of episodes and meditations on being a part of the US military machine at the height of the Vietnam War published by George Braziller in 2006.

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## *Preface:*

To the reader: The following writings were discovered in a small antiques and collectibles shop called 'Avoirdupois', on Lighthouse Avenue in Pacific Grove, Monterey County, California in February, 1997. I bought them from an unkempt, disheveled character who spoke with an Eastern European accent. He told me that he had owned the shop for many years, and lived above it. I found no reason to doubt him.

I was not primarily attracted to the writings, but rather to the valise which contained them. It looked old, but appeared to be in good condition. It was a well-made, leather affair, ox-blood in color with brass piping and copper rivets on the stress points. Upon closer examination, I discovered it was

in fact made in France, 70-odd years ago. It seemed a good buy. And after the obligatory haggling, I paid twenty-four dollars for it in the end.

Initially I couldn't see any real value to the contents. Just various papers, letters, and spiral notebooks with personal scribbling and copious liner notes both in pen and pencil. But the shop owner said they were part of the deal. I could keep them or toss them out. It was up to me. He didn't care.

I was told the bulk of the writings were part of a compendium of miscellaneous works by a local poet whose *nom d' plume* was, H. Atherton Meeks. I was also told that the sum was an unfinished work of fiction. An incomplete work of fiction, it was reiterated. H. Atherton Meeks lived and ultimately died in Big Sur, California. The exact cause of death was as varied as those who you may ask, with different versions of the exact time frame of his life, or the country of origin. Suffice to say, it's sketchy at best. And up until recently I thought it to be immaterial and irrelevant. From what little I've gleaned from local denizens, he lived a hermit's existence in an old mining cabin up a once remote coastal canyon known as Lymkiln Creek. Now it's a State park, from what I've heard.

The State took it over. The mining cabin is gone. And so is Meeks.

Some told me he was on the lam. Others said he had connections he wanted to disconnect from. But like most folk lore, I found the stories of H. Atherton Meeks' demise to grow proportionately with the persistence of my queries until he became an urban legend unto himself - a person who had to be silenced by the powers-that-be. Or as one old bearded fellow who I met at an inn on the Big Sur called, 'Ventana'(who wore a threadbare red beret) referred to them, "The Illuminati."

The Illuminati. Prior to all of this, I had never even heard the term. Now it's become a keystone of my life. But a keystone holding 'what' in place seems to be the most gnawing question?

Interestingly, after extensive background searches in several different venues, I've been unable to find out who H. Atherton Meeks actually was, or anything much about his early years. Or really, anyone who actually met him. The fellow in the red beret said he had heard Meeks was an American expatroit who had been a bullfighter in Mexico for a time. But this was only hearsay. The propriator of 'Avoirdupois' was unable or

unwilling to provide any critical information on him, or even substantial proof there ever was such a person. And when I pressed him he became evasive, or one might even say, guarded in his demeanor. Fearful would be an exaggeration, but not by much. He ultimately asked me to not frequent his shop anymore. I found this to be more intriguing than frustrating or insulting.

But back to the writings. Originally they were transcribed by hand into three separate spiral notebooks, 8 1/2 inches by 11 inches, wide-ruled, like students use. All three were in poor condition especially when compared to the valise which contained them. But the last notebook was in a more advanced state of decay than the others, almost as if it had been buried in the ground at some point, then dug up. Again, this intrigued me.

Why would this have been the case? And why just the one?

Originally I wrote off everything contained in the valise as pure undiluted fiction, including the letters stamped, 'Par Avion'. However, after all that has happened, and all the time that has passed, I cannot in good conscience say I believe this anymore. It has recently dawned on me that fiction is very often a cover, or a vehicle to disseminate the truth under a

guise. However, it is not a shield.

As evidenced if one takes the writings contained herein seriously. Truth in many cases has a steep price tag attached. The pros and cons must be carefully weighed to make a decision whether or not the truth is worth the cost of exposing it. What is to be gained after all? What is to be changed after all?

I believe H. Atherton Meeks was not the author of the pages in question here, if there ever was such a person. I believe he found them. Much as I did. Possibly dug them up, even by accident - became one more baton carrier in the relay of forbidden communication that began decades ago. As I have inadvertently become. As anyone who reads them has a choice to become.

Yes, it boils down to choice really. If you want to carry the thing any farther, knowing of your fictional predecessor's supposed fictional fate. Is the cost too dear for whatever satisfaction is to be gained? To each their own, is what I say!

And not bravely, realistically! Still, is it not our responsibility to fight for our dignity, validity, autonomy, and our very rights as human beings? I believe it is.

Despite the fact we may be viewed as insignificant cogs that turn the gigantic gears of pennence and amusement for

those we shall never see, or even confirm their existence. Yet is it not they who affect our lives in the most profound ways each and every day? From somewhere nebulous, seemingly high and omniscient.

The exalted league whom some speak of sotto voce as, The Illuminati.

It may be noteworthy to add here that the shop owner's sir name was 'Pound'. I discovered this on one particular visit to the dark, dismal little establishment, watching him sign a bill of lading as receipt for a shipment of some sort which had arrived from somewhere. This I chalked up to coincidence after reading and rereading the hand written text of one spiral notebook in which the poet, Ezra Pound was named in conjunction with his elusive, supposedly banned book he titled, The Illuminati. I'm fairly certain the shop owner was in no way related to that renowned man of letters beyond his surname. And Ezra Pound's book is undoubtedly a fantasy.

But again, at some point all the events become suspect on some level and challenge the credibility to the veracity of the writings to follow this preface.

Finally, on my last visit to Avoirdupois, I was

nonplused to find it was empty, closed, vacant. After so many years on that street, that nondescript, dark little storefront was suddenly nonexistent. It wasn't up for sale, or lease. There were no referral numbers or forwarding address posted. It was simply gone. I don't know what significance this holds, but it's just one more piece in the jigsaw puzzle that's become my life since purchasing that old leather valise.

And now you will have to decide for yourself if the contents are pure fiction, or perhaps the most arcane, yet relevant blueprint for life on Earth ever revealed in our time or any time. But perhaps it's easier or even safer to not decide at all. After all, The shelter of Plato's cave has held its comforting appeal throughout the ages. Yet conversely, as Winston Churchill once said, "Ships of war are safer while anchored in the harbor, but that's not what they're for." The choice is yours.

ES.

*PART ONE**THE ROSES OF MAGINOT*

When I was in my teens, my father worked for a branch of NASA, called SETI – The National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s program designed to Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence. He was a technician stationed at a small facility out in the Alamogordo Desert of New Mexico, below the Sacramento Mountains. He was one of a team of six men who operated a huge radio telescope aimed at the heavens above. They were all qualified scientists and astronomers whose sole purpose was to try to make contact with other intelligent life forms and civilizations outside our solar system

or even galaxy.

Twenty-four hours every day, 365 days a year, the huge dish slowly gyrated upon its mountings as it covered one quadrant of deep space, trying to pick up any sign of life which may enter our atmosphere as radio waves on any of a billion different frequencies. And all the while, inside the SETI facility, the six man team were sending out transmissions in hopes 'others' were out there trying to receive them.

In the beginning my father enjoyed this work. It seemed exciting and adventurous. Prestigious in that it required a high level security clearance and so forth. But after months of transmitting dry, uninteresting data into the reaches of space from the middle of nowhere, he became bored, receiving nothing in return – not a blip or bleep on his monitor screen. The installation at Perco Canyon may as well have been on an asteroid.

Named for the nearest town 32 miles away, it was a sterile G.I. compound of stucco and corrugated tin buildings surrounding the gigantic radio dish, bordered by high electrified chain link topped with rolls of razor edged wire. One paved service road led to the facility off the main highway, dividing the seemingly endless scrub brush like a rifle shot. Low buttes and mesas stepped up on the horizon as an ancient village of

pueblos, obscuring the town in the distance. Even at night the lights could not be seen. The only evidence of civilization was a string of telephone poles diminishing in size across the desert floor as they held up their drooping power lines that sparked and flashed intermittently in the darkness.

At night the compound was an eerie oasis of electric light beneath the dome of stars and planets above. I spent a weekend out there once when I was a kid, visiting my father. I don't think I ever really saw the night time sky until that weekend – the twinkling stars took up almost as much space as the black void between. And the big yellow desert moon – you could see the craters and mountains on it without a telescope. And I remember the heavy silence of the desert. A silence louder than sound. The wings of a horned owl hunting tore the static silence to shreds like distant rolling thunder inside my head.

Inside the laboratory where my father worked, it was spartan and austere, like most such facilities. Long panels of buttons and knobs and levers ran the length of tables of Formica and stainless steel. There were numerous computers and printout screens, all manner of recording and transmitting equipment. Chrome swivel chairs and green tin wastebaskets. I remember it all as though I was there yesterday. Like in most

communal work places, the people working there did their best to influence their tiny domain and still remain within the confines of the required code. There was a large poster of Nancy Sinatra straddling a chrome motorcycle, wearing high suede boots, cheering up one wall. Looking back, I guess it was someone's effort to compensate for his sexless, sterile existence in the New Mexico desert for months on end.

The men mostly had framed photos of their families adorning their particular work space. My father did – a 3” by 5” of my mother, sister and I. Our family smiling out from behind the glass – commonplace, middle class. The kind of family who takes life's experience on face value, is unconcerned about their own faces exploding onto the bathroom mirror before breakfast because some agent of the powers that be put a botulism strain into their toothpaste tube. Who has no reason whatever, when opening the refrigerator, to wonder which item of food has been injected with a super thin syringe of some undetectable toxin able to paralyze the lungs and produce the natural or accidental death so prevalent in people who know too much, know anything which they [The Illuminati] consider counterproductive to the status quo.

This was the kind of family we were before my father received the first intelligent transmission from outside our

galaxy one evening at the Perco Canyon facility.

It wasn't that he withheld the transmission for his own reasons that got him killed, that terminated my mother and sister, that put me away only to escape and live as a fugitive. It wasn't that he transmitted unauthorized data back into space in an effort to communicate with these "Others" that turned our lives inside out and caused the natural or accidental death of every member of his SETI facility team. It was the content of the transmission he received. It was the message the 'Others' sent.

I was fortunate in several respects. One was my father always tried to make me aware of another side of everyday life, a side most parents deny their kids, if they know it exists themselves. Also, he kept a journal. This gave me an edge.

In the early 1970's, school kept him out of the war in Vietnam. And after he graduated with an M.A. in astronomy from UCLA, he went hitchhiking around Europe, where he met my mother. I was conceived when the conversation waned and the wine spilled in a small rented room in a chateau outside Paris in the midst of a pine forest and a million flowers growing in the gardens. My mother was originally from Connecticut, but she was happy to move to Southern California, which was kind of the center of the world back in the days of flower

power. I grew like a hydroponic vegetable under the violet glow of black light, stared up from my crib at the endless stairs winding into nowhere in the Escher poster that hung in my room. By the time I could walk, I knew exactly where those stairs led to. Your basic CIA agent hasn't a clue. This was also part of my edge.

But this environment wasn't mine. It was my parents'. And it was carried by my father into the unlikely place of the SETI facility. An unremarkable government installation involved in a project no one who worked there quite believed in. No one, that is, but my father. I believe he wanted there to be life on other planets so strongly that it came true for him. And in that respect he may have died fulfilled. Come full circle on his long quest - our long quest.

This incoming transmission from deep space he called the 'bit' was the 'Others'' way of making their existence known to us. For he believed their experience and existence to be totally different from our own, and ours totally incomprehensible to them.

He found this reassuring. And I must admit, so do I. According to my father, man's greatest achievements or lowest depravities mean nothing as they ride light particles to the reaches of our universe. Just three dimensional pictures neatly

packaged in holographic boxes, drifting kaleidoscopically through space – some arriving intact somewhere, others exploding into myriad beads of light after colliding with some obstruction, perhaps a meteorite or comet along the way – the broken beads beginning a new journey, carrying a new message somewhere.

The fact the ‘Others’ had no way of knowing, no way of understanding us, gave him hope. They were so different, and that was good. He gave to me the knowledge that death is nothing more than a corollary of life, everywhere. To begin again in some other form.

NOTE: To follow are excerpts from my father’s journal, which he kept at the Perco Canyon facility. There is no better way to shed light on the man, the event, and the time, than his own words. He personally deleted the years for reasons that shall become clear as the journal progresses, and ultimately the dates altogether.

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PERCO CYN/29 JANUARY:

It’s midnight, or thereabouts. I’m the only one on

duty. I traded a full 48-hour shift with Ed Edwards to get some consecutive days off next week, fly home, and see how my family is evolving. It seems so long since I've seen them, they're probably into mental telepathy and telekenesis by now.

It's been six weeks since I received the incoming transmission. Only the hectic disorganization of the holiday season allowed me to conceal it. Everyone around here was so concerned with Christmas passes, so used to the ennui of sending dry dumb data into deep space and getting back nothing in return except cosmic background noise on the ultraviolet frequencies, that it just slipped past them. I slipped it past them. It was a spontaneous act. Lifting the tape without reporting it. The first incoming bit of intelligent data received from outside our solar system. But it originated on Earth! Of this I'm sure. I'm glad I did it. I need time to study it - in its place, and inside my head. There must be a difference or there would be none. I need time.

Everyone here is so hopelessly square. So steeped in egotism and conceit. Almost any life form has got to be more intelligent. If I were out there and I could understand the messages my colleagues send, I wouldn't reply either. Like Paul Deaks (Mr. Crewcut), his endlessly repeated message is: "We of America and Earth, reach out in peace!" Marvelous,

considering the mass graves in Cambodia and Central America. But assuming the Aliens of other galaxies don't speak English or use our system of cartography, Paul Deak's outgoing transmission might as well be: "Bird cage liner, whoopie cushion. Bon jour, Gringo!"

Of course, this line of reasoning goes right by my fellow team members here at the facility. I get most tired, though, of how serious everyone here is. Like we're all air traffic controllers working high season, and to look away from our radar screens for a single second could mean major disaster. For years these screens have been so unblemished it looks like nothing is plugged in. And what the hell difference does it make what message we send out there? I mean, obviously it wouldn't be too cool to send: "Come near Earth and we'll kill you!" Though that's probably closer to the truth. But how about transmitting surf sounds, birds, Beethoven, the Beatles, humpback whales communicating in the sea lanes off Maui. I'm tired. Going to bed. I've got a lot to think about. I've received a message from beyond our galaxy, in French.

30 January:

It's midnight again. I've been broadcasting the song

“When The Music’s Over” by The Doors continuously into deep space for twenty-four hours nonstop. I’ve been broadcasting music now for about two weeks instead of microwave modulations in Morse code, or stupid, inane declarations in a variety of Earthly languages over an infinite number of frequencies. I do it on the sly because I know everyone around here would get super uptight about it. Like it makes any difference. But I figure the penalty for withholding the ‘bit’ is far more serious than playing a little rock and roll for other life forms somewhere.

I especially like the song I chose. I think it’s great. I chose it first because of the line: “Music is your only friend, until the end.” Which may be true. And secondly because of the line: “What have we done to the Earth? What have we done to our fair sister? Ravaged and plundered and ripped her and bit her – stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn, tied her with fences and dragged her down.” I think anyone we’re trying to communicate with should have a little insight into who it is that’s trying to communicate with them. Going on the assumption they can even decipher the words. But even if they can’t, then they can just listen to the music. That’s the beauty of my transmissions into space, why they’re so much better.

Allan Watts came in the lab earlier today, my day duty

supervisor. This guy is Mr. Establishment. He's got hair like a hedge hog. Kind of like Deaks'. I had the Doors tape on audio while I was eating lunch. He immediately freaks and asks real hostile-like: "What is that crap?" I told him my son sent it for me to listen to. It's called rock and roll, figuring he's never heard the term coined decades ago. He says, "With drugs and crap like that, people'll be shooting each other on the freeways in the near future – the Commies got it all figured out. From within." He lifts an eyebrow on the word "within", like he's the most insightful person since Nostradamus. I always agree with him. It's less hassle. Watts is thirty-six years old and acts like he's sixty-six. I bet he can't wait till his wife puts a blue rinse on her hair and shaves the back of her neck. I'd bet he put up the Nancy Sinatra poster.

LATER: 2:30 a.m. Cindy just left. A sexy little bar maid I sneak in here. She drives in just to see me. Thirty-two miles – sixty-four round trip. I met her in town, Perco Canyon, about two months ago. She's good people. We're friends. She brings me pizza and bottled beer – Coors. We get high and I show her the instruments. She feigns spellbinding interest. Her boyfriend is a quasi-trucker/cowboy type. He roughs her up and puts her down. And she comes back for more. I'll figure

out aliens from another galaxy before I figure out women. I don't know why she takes it, and neither does she. She's twenty-seven, pretty, lots of fun, and intelligent, too. She lives in a world of tubular pastel neon beer signs, long-necked bottles of amber brew, needle-nosed boots and blocked bull rider hats – C & W music bulging out the four wooden walls with steel guitars and doleful harmonicas.

Cindy and I joke about free love and sex. We get stoned and she takes the ring off my finger, puts it in her pocket, puts the framed photo of my family face down on the panel and giggles into my ear. I fight her off with less force each time. Then she sighs and rights the frame, rings my finger, and lights another fat joint of good Mexican grass. We watch the empty screens and think deep thoughts as I send Doors music through the window of deep space.

LATER: 4:30 a.m. I slept for an hour or so, but now I'm awake. I can't get that message out of my mind. What it means? What 'they' think it means? Why of all the endless data, they, the 'Others', must have received from Earth over the aeons, would they transmit back that 'bit' of data? Who the hell was Jean Luc? What the hell significance did or does the Maginot Line have? God! Wish I spoke French.

I wish I'd slept with Cindy. I always wish that after she's gone. I don't know what the overall lesson of this generation is. Flower power and free love! Nothing's free, I know that much. And flowers just make me sneeze out here in the desert. I guess it's good I didn't sleep with her.

I hope my wife has the iron will I have. I miss my kids, too. Good kids. A big owl just landed inside the oasis of light within the chain link of the compound, atop a power pole. I can see it out the polarized glass window above the computer keyboards. It's got a desert rat in its talons. The rat is dead. Moments ago it was alive, busy, with purpose, hurriedly scurrying between the sage and rocks, trying to avoid the silent death that fell upon it and took it into the sky. I switch ON the outgoing transmission to audio. Jim Morrison's voice laments accusingly: "What have we done to the Earth? What have we done to our fair sister? Ravaged and plundered, and ripped her and bit her. Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn, tied her with fences and dragged her down." Drums roll a dirge. Outside, backed by a black blanket of stars and a platinum moon, the owl tears the rat to pieces which it gulps down whole, looking quickly and mechanically around it after each one.

I gaze detached through the window and reflect: This

is our world. Harsh and real and dangerous. Silent death can take us to the sky without warning, negating, terminating our purpose. The saguaro cactus and spiny Joshua trees, the lacy-looking barbed palo verdes, the psychedelic peyote plants dotting the desert floor, grow from the fertile souls of long-dead Apache warriors – the blood lust of our predators and predecessors.

The drums and whining keyboard of the Doors' music gives way to Morrison's mournful tragic voice, and those words which haunt me: "Music is your only friend, until the end. Until the end. Until the end..."

JANUARY 31:

My new motto, Tune In – Turn On – Transmit! It's good, I think. Dr. Timothy Leary would approve. I've made a copy of the incoming transmission for my own use when I take my three day trip home to L.A. I plan on re-entering the original surreptitiously on the incoming monitor, after I've had time to examine it. It's my decision. I'll pay the price.

LATER: I've studied the 'bit' over and over, what I can even understand. It's a snowflake. A fingerprint. Unique. But I

don't know just how or why. I need a Rosetta stone. Something to help me understand. A French dictionary for a start. I'm just glad Paul Deaks or Allan Watts didn't pick it up first on their duty – they probably would've alerted NATO or SAC to put the missile silos on red alert. The assholes.

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NOTE: The incoming transmission from deep space which my father diverted at the SETI facility at Perco Canyon, New Mexico, was in fact a radio broadcast from the 1930's originating here on Earth, in France. It was his guess that the broadcast had been intercepted somewhere in its long outgoing journey, and returned to Earth to show us that there was someone out there able to do it. Pure and simple. And if there were any repercussions resultant of the bit received, it was pure chance. There were repercussions, all right, though after all this time I don't think 'they' were being purposely provocative. It was just a "hello" that brought down an avalanche.

The broadcast was about four and a half minutes in length. It was a commentary in support of a woman named Madame Sollier who had been publicly offended by a French soldier, Jean Luc Lameroux, stationed at the time on the

newly constructed fortification on the Maginot Line, along the French-German border. This costly rampart was meant to keep the dubious Germans out of France. Madame Sollier was a wealthy socialite, and like so many women of her stature, she was constantly occupied with creating interesting and worthwhile things to do – worthy causes meant mainly to keep boredom at bay. It was one of these worthy causes that brought the beautiful Madame Sollier and the soldier Jean Luc into each other's lives and arms. And brought accidental death to numerous innocent people, including my entire family more than a half century later.

It seems Monsieur Sollier, Madame Sollier's husband, partially funded the construction of the fortifications along the Maginot Line, mostly high concrete barriers that ran along a seemingly endless expanse of desolate terrain. Standing vigil along this vacuous stretch of no man's land was boring duty indeed, watching for signs of any kind which never came, day in and day out. Any soldier who drew such duty was considered unlucky, to be sure. The duty was often used as discipline or punishment for infractions of the military code. This, in fact, had been the case with Jean Luc Lameroux. He had been stationed at a particularly desolate place along the line for getting into a fight with another soldier in the seaside

town of Biarritz. Politics was the issue (my father discovered in his research), not a woman.

Jean Luc Lameroux was a dashing, good-looking, outspoken veteran of World War I. He was in his mid-thirties at the time – about the same age as my father when he received the ‘bit’. Jean Luc was an extreme leftist, accused by some of being a Communist. A charge he always vehemently denied in fisticuffs with the extreme right in cafes and bars. Nevertheless, his outspoken views would have far-reaching effects, beyond his wildest dreams.

It happened that Madame Sollier’s most recent and publicized “cause celebre” was to cheer up the boring existence of the French soldiers stationed along the Maginot Line. Brave men guarding France from the evil Boche. And she proposed to do this by planting hundreds of rose bushes along the line for the pure enjoyment of the men serving there. This brain child of Madame Sollier’s was overwhelmingly accepted as marvelous and gracious. It also served a dual purpose. It allowed Madame to hold many fund raisers to purchase the rose bushes and to pay for the labor to plant them. Events to which only the creme de la creme were invited. Awards and recognition were given for grand donations, and so forth. Flash bulbs popped and Champagne flowed with the praise.

Secondly, the idea shed favorable light on Monsieur Sollier, a man who was generally not well liked for his ruthlessness and avarice. Jean Luc, the radical, found the whole affair ludicrous. He was outraged. Duty along the Line had given him ample time to read. And a certain book, soon to be banned into near non-existence, had found its way into his hands. It was a novel written ostensibly by the poet, Ezra Pound. It was called THE ILLUMINATI. The book's premise was that the entire global milieu was manipulated by a handful of men for profit, amusement, and at times, even sport. Recessions, depressions, famine and disease, and war, were initiated for the pleasure and profit of these most ruthless of men. To even stumble upon the existence of this select circle meant certain death – accidental death, natural death, mysterious death. The Illuminati were inviolate.

Apparently Jean Luc took this inflammatory book to heart. It fed the fires of contempt for the affluent and bourgeois. It became his Bible. He wrote a poem of protest of the silly charity of Madame Sollier entitled THE ROSES OF MAGINOT. He sent it to a sympathetic publisher in Paris, who printed it. Within the week it was the talk of the nation. Jean Luc was catapulted into instant notoriety and brought up on charges of treason. A public apology to Madame Sollier and

to France was demanded and refused. The country was in an uproar.

It took my father a year to discover all this information that lay behind the French broadcast contained in the 'bit' he intercepted at the Perco Canyon SETI facility. The fact that it was in French and fifty-some years old presented great obstacles, especially since he needed to decipher it covertly. It's easy now for me to see how my father developed such an affinity for Jean Luc, almost to obsession. And his definite obsession to obtain the book. Their lives were so parallel. My father out in the middle of nowhere, sending sounds into space for years, endless nothingness. And Jean Luc guarding the emptiness of the home front along the Maginot Line for months on end. Space and time and vice versa. The two of them, kept apart only by themselves and time.

Jean Luc's valiant, yet naive, attack on the Illuminati of his day was in reality his terminal indiscretion. His relations with Madame Sollier (the two of them ran away together), was the story sold for the reason of his demise. And insanity. Of course. If patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, then insanity is the first!

Still, my father had so much in common with that French soldier, that leftist radical, that he felt driven to his

destiny, our destiny – for I, too, feel an affinity with him, and my father. So it's the three of us, the Trinity Nuevo – Father, Son and Leftist Ghost. What fell to Earth into my father's lap in the desert of New Mexico offended the Illuminati of our day. If by chance or choice, the end is the same. An excerpt from my father's journal is to follow:

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PERCO CANYON: Los Angeles was fine. The family is great. Wonderful. A woman's body is a marvelous thing. A wife. The kids are like radioactive vegetables – they triple in size within a month. Their energy could light a city. I hope my son turns out okay. He's a lot like me, but I feel I'm depriving him of something, being away so much. He shows my complete disregard for team sports like baseball and football, so I guess not having a father around to toss balls back and forth isn't too traumatic. Lots of fathers have work that keeps them away from home. Anyway, I think about that. My little girl is into stuffed animals and ballet. Fully focused at five. She told me she wants to be a ballerina when she grows up. I said, right choice. I work with stuffed animals at the facility, and they get old quick.

PERCO CANYON – LATER: There's been no new incoming transmissions received in my absence, and no one still knows of the 'bit' I logged before I left. But that's not true. One person does – Cindy. I told her. I have no idea why. It's like telling a total stranger the most intimate secrets of your life. Of anybody's life, for that matter. But it's not really like that, either... She's not a total stranger. I don't know why I told her. It's ridiculous. I didn't even tell my wife or kids, of course. But I know I can trust her. I know this because I don't think she really cares one way or the other if there's intelligent life on other planets, or unintelligent life. To Cindy, Los Angeles is another planet. Her biggest concern is why she gives so much to her trucker/cowboy boyfriend, and he still treats her like "dirt" (quote/unquote).

I had to tell someone, I guess, without jeopardizing my family. She's got an interesting mind. She makes me laugh – cracks me up. I really think she was torn between not believing and not caring. She just left the facility. It's 11:30 at night. No one is here but me and brilliant Bob Worneker, asleep downstairs. Cindy mostly asked questions about the Maginot Line. God, put the simple straight-forward way she puts things, people seem like the stupidest beings possible. She asked what

the Line was. I told her it was like a big, thick, high wall built to keep the Germans out of France. To keep them from invading the country like they did back in World War I.

First thing she asks is: "Did it work?"

"No," I replied.

"Course it didn't, silly," she said, having never before heard of the Maginot Line, one of the most costly fortifications in history.

"How would you know?" I ask, sincerely curious. "You just found out it even existed."

"Cause, silly," she says in her sexy, desert dust drawl, "any fool knows it don't matter how high the danged thing is, or how thick – ain't no way it's gonna be long 'nough. Half-wit could figure that one out. Just go 'round it. Ya'd have to build a wall 'round the whole danged world t'make it work."

Of course, that's exactly what the Germans did. They went around it. It set me to thinking. Did the 'Others' intend to frame a perfect example of man's stupidity? Was it stupidity? Or calculated business on a grand scale? It's odd the greatest minds in France hadn't seen the obvious. Or, perhaps, being one of the most profitable projects of the time, millions were spent on publicity to make such a stupid thing seem viable to the public. The marketing of false security. Perhaps the Maginot

Line of the 1930's is like the defense budgets of today. Maybe the missile silos are full of thin air, or comfortable furniture and champagne on ice – a nice place where the powers that be can go and relax and decide what to do with all the money.

\* Where the Illuminati can commingle, plan the future and laugh loudly at folly, sounding to the common man like distant rolling thunder in the clouds above.

\* [NOTE] That last line was penciled into my father's journal at a later date than the actual thoughts being recorded. Apparently after he'd researched the 'bit'.

To follow is his next entry in its proper sequence. It is somewhat difficult to be exact in their order, as he deleted all the dates.

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We smoked a big pipe full of Mexican grass, drank beer, and laughed. I shook my head at the depth and simplicity of her intelligence. Then we fell into silence, glanced fearfully at each other, looking away. True love was like a flower, a perfect rose, floating between us downstream in placid waters. And we could only look and long and pine as it went swirling

slowly past – too afraid to reach out. She has her life and I have mine. We visit and show each other pictures of what we think is important at the time. She said she'd missed me while I was away. I said, "Goodnight." Now I'm sorry I didn't say more. I'm always sorry I didn't say more.

PERCO CANYON, LATER: 3:00 a.m. The wind is blowing outside. The metal cables bang into the metal flagpole, sounding hollow and resonant. God! Why did they send that 'bit'? Did the concept of building a relatively short wall to keep out invaders seem so ludicrous that they sent it back as a... A jibe? A joke? A threat? Warning? Maybe Deaks would be right in alerting NATO. Maybe this is symbolic in some way? Portentous. The 'Others'' way of saying, "There are no walls in space, in the universe!"

Paranoia strikes deep. Why would they include the whole broadcast? Four and a half minutes. This stuff about Jean Luc and his insulting poem, so offensive to the Madame Sollier and her husband, to all of France? Boy, would I love to read that poem! I've got to find out more about these people in their day – if they are still alive. God, would that be great! Where to start? In France! Sure, why not buy an 85-foot yacht and sail over there at my leisure. I could get a couple

of weeks' advance on my \$250 a week salary, get all of next year's vacation time, too. I'll figure something out. I've got to research this thing before someone else finds out I have it – or they receive other transmissions.

I had to laugh. I made Cindy laugh too. I made her double promise, cross her heart, no Kings X not to tell anyone what I told her. She agreed to all my elementary school ties and bonds in regard to our secret. Then sloughed it off, saying: "I wouldn't worry too much about it, honey. If a danged man from the moon came in the bar tonight and told everyone he'd just landed, only thing liable to happen is he'd get his ass kicked for not drivin' a Ford. Who in hell's gonna care 'bout some fifty year old message sent into space marked RETURN TO SENDER? Huh?"

Paul Deaks would. Allen Watts would. The chumps. Cindy refers to all forms of intelligent extraterrestrial life as men from the moon. If they're not from Earth, they're from the moon. Before she left, Cindy had me convinced an alien could land just about anywhere on Earth and insist they were genuine, and end up on the funny farm for all their trouble. Asylums are probably full of unfortunate aliens unable to prove their story or provide the proper ID, sitting and waiting on medication to get better. "Mr. Jones, here, is from Andromeda.

Aren't you, Mr. Jones? He's a long long way from home. Now take your pill, Mr. Jones."

Speaking of the funny farm, I think I'll change my outgoing transmission. I've been sending the same Doors song for three weeks straight. Imagine if it's reaching someone that can't turn it off. I mean, it's a good song, but enough is enough.

PERCO CANYON, LATER: Deaks found that dead spot on the tape. My incoming tape. Out of a hundred feet the son of a bitch noticed the almost unnoticeable jump as it crossed over the tape heads and showed itself briefly as a line thin as a razor blade. "This tape's been spliced!" he said, coldly accusing. "Who else has been accessed to this spool?" He's looking directly at me. Ed Edwards is across the room, doing his mundane paper work. He turns at Deaks' tone – Deaks is like a bloodhound now. Now his life has meaning and validity – all the frustration and boredom of the past months ignites his innate suspicion. Only Worneker and I have access to that particular tape and unit. If nepotism ever existed, Worneker is the exemplary appointee. His eyes are as empty as our monitor screens – no one would accuse him of anything because it would take too long to make him fully understand what he was

being accused of.

That leaves me. I don't deny it. "I broke it and fixed it," I reply without much hesitation.

"Kind of neat about it, weren't you?" Deaks sneers.

"I did a pretty good job, I guess," I reply.

His crew cut is bristling. My longer hair is brushed tight, bound in a short pony tail with leather. He hates it. It's just as much of a statement as his is. I'm half expecting his hair to start a fight with mine. "Nice neat splice," he says sarcastically. He reminds me of the cop in Hugo's *Les Miserables*. "Hard to even see."

"Next time I'll use a stapler if it makes you happy, Deaks."

"What the hell are you driving at, Deaks?" asks Edwards. "Leave the poor guy alone. You're just getting cabin fever." Worneker walks in mid-sentence, gives his classic inbred grin, and says, "Deaks needs a woman."

"Shut up, you imbecile," shouts Deaks, now ready for anything. "What I'm getting at is, if someone wanted to be so careful and neat splicing the tape, maybe there's a reason – like he didn't want it noticed."

"Why would that be, Deaks?" I ask, trying not to look unnerved.

“Cause maybe there’s something missing. Those tapes are 100 feet long. Why don’t you run it back? See how long it is now?”

“No, thanks,” I reply with disinterest, and a cold wind on my spine.

“Well, I already did. There’s eleven and one half feet of tape missing on standard pick-up. A little over four minutes.”

“And I suppose you measured that spool before you noticed it was spliced,” I say dryly. Of course he did not. This goes on for an hour, back and forth. Nothing can be proved. No one really believes anything of value could have possibly come onto that tape anyway. But Deaks has become the light of inquisition and he has washed his accusations across me and the tape, leaving the room in a shadow of doubt.

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It took my father a long time to put together a workable hypothesis of how the particular ‘bit’ of data was sent to Earth by intelligent beings somewhere on the fringes of our galaxy, where he pinpointed its origin. Essentially, his theory was this: the ‘Others’ picked at random one of the endless trillions of images that came their way and literally ‘shot’ it back at us.

My father believed their capabilities to communicate over the vast distance between us was limited at best. And that perhaps it was their one shot, so to speak. Maybe due to limited stores of energy, bending time, or whatever. I'm no scientist. I'm a fugitive.

This broadcast over French radio in the 1930's was somehow contained intact and fired back at us at speeds greater than the speed of light. This shooting of light was, of course, meant to save time in its return. Then at some point the 'bit' lost velocity, as a bullet would along its trajectory, and carried on like any other event at normal speed back to Earth, toward Perco Canyon and its gigantic radar dish tilted skyward.

After all this time, I can't find fault with my father's reasoning in regard to this 'shooting' of light images. But I'm not so sure about the random selection theory. Too much has happened as a result. Too many people's lives have been affected. Too many people's lives have been ended. However, I don't believe there was malice on the part of the 'Others' – it was simply meant to be.

People become insignificant as cosmic dust when caught up in the grand movements of the natural universe. And who really knows for sure? Maybe there are no 'Others'. Maybe the 'bit' that ended my family's existence and turned mine

upside down wasn't consciously returned to Earth by anyone. Perhaps the outgoing radio broadcast of the 1930's simply hit some inexplicable phenomenon in its original journey into space, like a mirror in effect, and simply rebounded back without rhyme or reason. Pure chance dictating destiny. Perhaps that's how our entire planet was conceived, a ricochet of God's thought, when he was thinking of something else.

After my father managed to get the entire broadcast translated into English, he became obsessed with researching all there was to know about the principals: Jean Luc, Madame and Monsieur Sollier; all about the Maginot Line, and particularly the poem of Jean Luc entitled *The Roses of Maginot*. And, of course, Pound's novel, *The Illuminati*. At Perco Canyon it was difficult for him to correspond with anyone in France regarding the material he needed to research. With Deaks and Watts around. This was accomplished with the help of his friend Cindy, who took a post office box in a small bookstore in town. She would post and receive letters for him. I guess this was really an exercise in futility as far as covert activity was concerned, because letters to and from France weren't all that common in Perco Canyon, New Mexico. Anyway, it confounded Paul Deaks, who knew something was up but couldn't figure out what.

My father's first break-through came in the form of an English translated copy of Jean Luc's poem published in the 1930's. This was resultant of fifty dollars enclosed in a letter sent to a publisher in Paris who my father later referred to only as his friend. Since he actually did something for the money other than keep it (as had two other people in France). My father's new friend not only sent the poem, but offered to be of further assistance in future if at all possible. He took him up on the offer. To follow is Jean Luc Lameroux's poem (circa 1937).

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#### THE ROSES OF MAGINOT

Dun hills roll toward me.  
 These brave hearts behind.  
 Vulgar trenches - Filled with tears and horrid sounds.  
 I stand vigil against the frost.  
 My eyes bore holes through no man's land.  
 The Hun is taunting – Death is waiting.  
 I eat rot - Drink swill - Sleep with waves of vermin.  
 Yet alone.

Promised nothing – In return for all.

My golden fleece to be the arms of stone - To play at purpose for no reason.

Oh Illuminati; wise, omniscient - I shall die for your amusement, gladly.

On this Line of Maginot.

Covered in soft petals of the blood red rose.

JLL

Note: Excerpts from my father's journal shall follow. Some may be out of sequence, as there are no dates, but they are definitely some months after the previous excerpts I have included in these writings.

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LOS ANGELES: This whole thing is getting expensive. I took another three day pass to visit my wife and kids in L.A. I'm in L.A. now. But my family doesn't know it yet. I took a hotel room. I'm making some necessary calls to Paris via the room phone – paying for everything in cash. No record of the calls or the room.

I have plenty of time to think up all this James Bond

stuff back at the facility. I don't know if it's necessary, but what the heck! The missing eleven and a half feet of tape has been blown into astronomical proportions – offsetting everyone's overwhelming feeling of uselessness at the facility. Like anyone with a conscience, I feel somewhat guilty depriving them knowledge of the 'bit'. Not letting them know all the long hours of work and waiting weren't for nothing. But I don't feel guilty enough to let the cat out of the bag just yet. John Steinbeck once said true greatness is only accomplished in the singular, by the individual acting alone. I believe he's right, for now I'm responsible for the greatest cover-up in history. But there's too much to learn to turn it over to the government clones just yet. That most likely would lead to the bureaucratic shredder and the second biggest cover-up in history. Since my superiors are the usual totally unimaginative links in the seemingly endless chain of command, a chain forged entirely by budget.

Like any government facility concerned with security, mine is overly preoccupied with dealing with external anomalies or trouble. And almost completely unprepared for internal negligence, human error, or even sabotage. That's how I was able to get away with diverting the 'bit' for my own personal scrutiny.

Take human error. Paul Deaks, for example. Last

month he developed a pretty good case of cabin fever and took the drive into town on a Friday night – intent on making the acquaintance of some fast track filly there. I've seen this jerk in action after a couple of beers. Even worse, a couple of whiskies. I don't drink like that, so it's even more amazing, from my point of view. Anyway, his line is, he's a big shot scientist over at the secret NASA facility out in the desert – that he's in charge of all sorts of classified material which he can't talk about, which he generally ends up talking about non-stop.

Of course, most of it is completely unimportant or out-and-out lies, but still. The really repulsive thing is all this hogwash and bar room bullshit is sometimes eaten up by the local gals, who are mostly dying to get out of the rut of Perco Canyon and secretly hope this important scientist from the NASA thing out in the desert makes tons of money doing his secret stuff, that he will fall in love with them, marry them, and take them away from the platoons of drunken truckers, rowdy ranch hands and boring shop clerks, all trying for the same thing in the dark, smoke-filled bar, banging out juke box music at two bits a throw.

Deaks isn't bad-looking. He's got some sort of suave appeal I find sickening, and he sometimes scores. It's usually after he's loosened up his mouth with rivers of booze, which

brings me back to the security issue I started on about. I've seen him leave monitors on, unattended, erase things unretrievable – lose access keys and entry cards, forget to turn on equipment essential to daily or nightly activity. All because he was too hung over to function within the simple paint-by-the-numbers routine of the facility – resultant of trying to impress some girl half his age in tight jeans and a tube top the night before.

I'll tell you, in a lot of ways, Freud was right on the money. This is what really dictates security here. And I imagine it's not too different in government installations nationwide. They can put in the most sophisticated state-of-the-art equipment available and still not be prepared for Paul Deaks with a hangover. I guess it's okay with what we do; in terms of error it's not real risky. But what about the Paul Deaks-type working at SAC headquarters or on the space shuttle project?

I don't know how the whole thing with the missing eleven and a half feet sits now. Before I left, Bob Worneker discovered that fourteen of the sixty-three, hundred-foot tape spools in that section were less than the standard hundred feet. Most were ninety-nine plus. One was ninety-seven plus. And one was actually a hundred and two feet. Of course, none had splices. I like Bob for going to all the trouble.

I've taken several postures on the matter, from total

indifference to jumping on the band wagon to discover what might have occurred. But the fact that the standard hundred feet doesn't necessarily mean anything is putting almost everybody at the facility back at ease. I'm optimistic the whole thing will fade away. The length of the eleven and a half feet has lost concreteness – like the first day of creation in the Scopes Monkey Trial, it could have been twenty-four hours or ten thousand years. The missing tape could have been eleven and a half feet or eleven and a half inches. The tape could have simply broken and been spliced as I said in the first place. I'm optimistic.

LOS ANGELES, LATER: I talked to my friend in Paris for twenty minutes – \$42 plus the room, \$35. Equals \$77. Twenty-five percent of my week's pay. It was worth it. My friend speaks fairly good English. So it makes it easier. I told him I'm a writer working on a novel beginning in the 1930's. He's very helpful. I wonder if most Europeans are like that? I'm becoming obsessed with this Jean Luc. I feel a real affinity with him. My friend told me he was married, Jean Luc, that is, at the time of the scandal. He had a wife and two kids, a boy of fifteen and a girl of five, like me.

Apparently after his poem was published, Madame

Sollier came to visit him in jail in Biarritz. This Madame Sollier was very beautiful, according to my friend. She was very renowned in her time. She visited Jean Luc over the course of several months, where he was confined in the psychiatric ward, even though he adamantly refused to make the public apology for his poem. Ultimately, he made a desperate escape during one of her visits, in which a guard was killed. Madame Sollier was ostensibly his hostage, but it is believed by many that the two ran away together. Jean Luc and Madame Sollier. It is not clear exactly what happened, but they were both missing for several days before being found dead together in bed, apparently of poisoning. They were at an inn outside of Aix en Provence called La Maison des Fleurs. Murder/Suicide was the official report, and predominant headline in the national newspapers as well.

Soon after however, Monsieur Sollier disappeared mysteriously. It was believed by his associates to another country to hide his shame – but some say he was removed by unknown men from his chateau near Versailles in the dead of night against his will and never to return. According to my friend, vandals painted CHATEAU LAMEROUX in large letters on the front wall of the grand chateau in his absence. A tragic supplement to all this is, Jean Luc's wife and children

were accidentally killed in a train wreck on the way to her mother's home outside Biarritz, following the news of her husband's death in the arms of the beautiful Madame Sollier.

For some reason, all this seems familiar to me. Like *deja vu*. It's more strange than tragic. When I hung up the phone, I felt more anger than relief at the information my friend had so copiously researched on my behalf. The book, *The Illuminati* referred to in Jean Luc's poem, keeps coming to my mind. I'm going to look for that book while here in Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES, LATER: My wife said someone called for me twice and hung up. Wouldn't leave a name. She told me that she said I wasn't due until tomorrow. According to my schedule sheet at the facility, I was due at home one day early. Officially, it's none of their business what I do with my passes or off duty time. But it's kind of an uneasy feeling knowing that someone is checking to see at all. The dirty bastards! I'd bet it's Deaks, or maybe Watts. They're two of a kind.

LOS ANGELES, LATER: I'm not too surprised that *The Illuminati* is not easy to find. I spent all day going to

book stores. It's not in print, of course, and not on the lists of available books out of print. One old guy said he'd heard of it, but told me I'd have to go to a specialty shop and put a tracer on it, said that it could get into some major bucks. He gave me the name and address of a certain shop and said, "Good luck." When I asked him if he thought the shop could really obtain it for me, he said: "Hey, pal, anything can happen for money!"

LOS ANGELES, LATER: It's good seeing my family. I think I appreciate them more – absence makes the heart grow fonder and all that. Or maybe seeing through Jean Luc's eyes. God, I can't imagine being without them. I've got to change jobs. Or get seniority, become a real family man again. This quality time is slipping away like sand through my fingers. I think my desert days are over. My wife is so patient, understanding. She's like some war bride, and I'm off staring into no man's land on the Maginot Line. No difference at all. And my son. Great kid. He's so smart, I wonder where life will lead him? Or where he will lead life? He seems to see things on so many different levels. Though to pat myself on the back, I've always tried to instill this in him. We can all use an edge.

I don't know if many kids are like this, but as a prejudiced parent, I don't think so. He's into spies and intrigue

and intelligence. Says he wants to be like me someday, do what I do. It's funny, but I get the feeling he'd understand the 'bit' more than anyone I know - why it was sent. Even at his young age. It'd be great to tell him about it, he'd really enjoy knowing. To see his face, the look in those eyes. I would love that.

My little girl is growing into a real little lady. I'm a lucky man. Everyone says she's so polite and well mannered. In a little while, couple of weeks, maybe, I'm going to re-enter the 'bit' on an incoming tape spool and let nature take its course. I just wanted a little head start on everyone. That's all. But I've got to be creative in doing it. I can't just enter it and have eleven and a half feet suddenly and coincidentally appear. I've ruled out editing out anything. That's stupid. No matter how much I study it, I'm liable to miss something someone else might see. So I've got to add something seamlessly, yet totally meaningless, unable to be construed as anything. Static, solar wind, anything. I don't know, it's just got to be longer than eleven and a half feet.

PERCO CANYON: Saw Cindy this evening briefly. She had to leave early. She's going to a rodeo in Tucson with her boyfriend for three days. They're leaving tonight. She had some news. A letter came to the P.O. Box from France, but she

left her key at home and couldn't get to it. One of the postal clerks who come in the bar told her about it. Great! Small town secret. I have a key, so I'll pick it up in the morning. Tomorrow. Say I've got cabin fever. She told me a story I found interesting, and I somehow can't help relating it to me. I have the weird feeling it somehow ties into me diverting the 'bit'. I may be crazy, or paranoid. Or just guilt-ridden, sensitive to everything, like when you break up with someone and suddenly the lyrics of every sad song seem to be written only for you, like they describe perfectly your feelings and emotions at the time. That same song could be meaningless to you a week before.

Anyway, Cindy's story was: Two guys came into the bar when I was in L.A. They were in their late thirties and early forties. She said one of them was a little older, more lines on his face, a scar like a welt below his left ear. The other was more youthful, but as serious, humorless as the older one. Their hair was short, neat and combed. She said they wore city-type clothes. Slacks, thick corrugated-soled leather shoes, cotton shirts and windbreaker jackets zipped halfway up - athletic, sporty. She said the thing that struck her first was that they were both dressed differently, but looked the same. The young one asked her name and made small talk. The older one said they'd gotten side-tracked and gotten off the main road - noticed a big

compound and radar dish out in the desert, asked if she knew what it was. She told them some sort of space thing was all she knew, went and got them their no-booze Seven-Ups, as they sat side by side at the long bar and waited.

Then she said something strange happened. This rowdy local trucker nicknamed Peterbuilt Pete, who's known for starting trouble, went over to these two guys, beer in hand, sat down uninvited. Cindy says Pete drives a 18-wheeler from Santa Fe to Sedona five days a week, wired on whites and coffee. He likes to drink and fight on the Sabbath for his day of rest. He's been warned about it, but he's a big guy.

Cindy said his usual approach is to mix it up with some stranger, insult his gal, bump into him and spill his beer, that sort of thing. She heard Pete say, "Virgin Seven-Up, huh? Kind of a faggoty drink, ain't it, ladies?" Then he shouted out: "Hey, sweet meat, gimme 'nother beer over here!"

Then she said the strange thing happened. She was zeroed in, thinking, "Here we go." Pete was kind of leaning into the older of the two, the one with the scar, staring at the side of his face provocatively, when the younger one turned and looked straight at Pete, eye to eye. No expression, no change of posture, nothing.

The other man wasn't even looking at them, but Cindy

said she knew he was aware of the whole thing as it happened; he just sat on his stool and kept looking straight ahead. She went to the cooler and got Pete's beer. As she walked it slowly back, she saw the young stranger pick up his Seven-Up and drink it straight down, slowly, never taking his eyes off Pete over the rim of his glass. Then as he put it down empty on the bar, he turned his gaze toward the front again, away from Pete. The same lack of expression, the same cold, terrible, inhuman glare. A muscle in his smooth cheek twitched, once.

Cindy said even she shivered as she set Pete's beer down in front of him, and noticed his aggression and bravado had drained away like his very soul swirling down the drain. She said Peterbuilt Pete looked ten years old, as he stood up, grabbed the fresh beer and started off across the room, saying, "Put it on my tab, tight ass." His voice broke on the word "ass".

This little incident sure affected Cindy. Enough to tell me about it, anyway. With all the bar room brawls, broken bottles, and knock-down drag-outs she's seen, this no-blows encounter impressed her the most. The silent strangers, just passin' through. She said seriously, (for Cindy) "It was just like ol' Davey Crockett hisself grinnin' down a b'ar - 'ceptin' this son of a bitch weren't grinnin'!"

PERCO CANYON, LATER: I think someone's been going through my things. Everything is in order, but I always leave this one four-buttoned coat hanging in my locker buttoned wrong, like one button off. If I button it right, it always seems to fall off the hanger – it's a little trick I learned. The coat was buttoned right and was half off the hanger. Everything else seemed undisturbed. It's no problem getting into the lockers. A street punk with a hair pin could do it. I mean, this is a relatively high level security installation, after all. What does this all mean?

PERCO CANYON, LATER: On the pretext of getting Ed Edwards a case of beer for his birthday, I went to town and picked up the letter from my friend in France. He is having no luck finding The Illuminati, but says several old timers insist the book did and does exist, and he will keep trying. He says the book dealt with global manipulation for amusement and profit by a secret league. Sounds like a pretty contemporary theme to me, and more non-fiction than a novel. Fascinating. And fresh from outer space. What in heck does that mean? Our first communication with alien beings couldn't have been something simple like, "Hi. How are you?" It's got to be about

a French radical who reads books banned fifty years ago and writes subversive poetry. I'm going nuts thinking about it. My thoughts roar and pour like the falls of Niagara. I'm going out with a pipe, stroll the compound grounds, commune with the souls of Apache warriors under the halogen moon.

LATER: It's been a week since I've written in this journal. I haven't been able to. I've been totally numb. Cindy is dead. My dear friend. It happened the night she left for the rodeo. A car wreck on the interstate. The papers said her boyfriend lost control of his truck at high speed avoiding a convoy of semis – alcohol was blamed. Empty beer cans were all over the cab and in the bed of the pick-up. A full six pack was in the cooler on the floor. I don't know why, but I just don't believe it. Not that it happened; that it happened the way they said. I wish I'd said so much to her that I never said. I was just like the other son of a bitch she ached for – getting all and giving nothing in return, even in friendship. She was so good and kind, saw the world so clearly. Sensed people's needs so simply and had the courage to act on her feelings, and the strength to have a good time even though her needs were being denied. I think she understood how weak and afraid people really are, and didn't think less of them for it. She could accept

things, where myself and others had to complicate, justify, rationalize. She used to say, with that little shrug of her frail shoulders, "Hell, they never did promise us a rose garden."

Now that saying seems weird, ironic. That strange poem of protest by Jean Luc haunts my mind, as I feel him gaze with contempt at his rose garden along the Maginot Line. How I wish I had held her, as my friend. These nights have become a vigil on my own no man's land. I gaze into the black blanket of stars above me. I shall miss her so.

Tim O'Brien meets Dan Brown in a philosophic surreal quest after Ezra Pound's fabled book, *The Illuminati*.

EZRA POUND

"...the fundamental causes of war have received little publicity. Schoolbooks do not disclose the inner workings of banks.

THE ILLUMINATI

This war is part of the secular war between usurers and peasants, between the usurocracy and whom-ever does an honest day's work with his own brain or hands.

This war was not caused by any caprice on Mussolini's part, nor on Hitler's.

The cardinal fact of the American Revolution of 1776 was the suppression, in 1750, of the paper-money issue in Pennsylvania and other colonies, but history as taught in the U.S.A. speaks of more picturesque matters, such as the Boston Tea Party."

FOREIGN  
MONITORING SERVICE

*Ezra Loomis Pound 1941*

TRANSCRIPTS



**ED SALVEN** was born in Hollywood, California. He is the author of *The Soldier Factory*, a moving collection of episodes and meditations on being a part of the US military machine at the height of the Vietnam War. He resides in Malibu.

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