

The investigator gave me an incredulous look and said, "So let me get this straight, Alex. You believe the code from Edgar Allen Poe's story *Goldbug Island* was not a fictional account of where Captains Kids treasure was hidden."

"Correct," I answered.

"And you believe that while Poe was stationed at Fort Moultrie in Charleston, South Carolina in the early-1800's he found a way to unlock a doorway to a parallel universe?"

"Yes," I answered. "And I believe my grandfather used this code to discover that doorway. I mean how else can you explain the circumstances behind his disappearance?"

"Easy. People go missing every single day."

"I understand that. But are you familiar with Numbers Stations?"

"No."

"Well, during World War I strange transmissions started coming across Ham Radios. Really spooky stuff. Later it was generally accepted that the transmissions were encrypted codes sent from foreign intelligence agencies to their spies."

"Okay and exactly what does this have to do with your grandfather's disappearance?" The investigator asked.

"He was obsessed with Edgar Allen Poe. In 1848 Poe wrote a story titled *Eureka* which was unlike any of Poe's normal macabre stories. It was a scholarly essay on the origins of the universe. Poe's essay suggested that that the universe had exploded into existence from a single "primordial particle" in "one instantaneous flash" or what we now refer to as the Big Bang Theory. In his essay Poe also theorized that the universe is finite in time and space and that the velocity of light is measurable and fixed. Because of these scientific constants Poe believed that it was probable that there were other universes in other dimensions with different laws of nature. Don't you find it astonishing that Poe wrote about this a hundred years before physicists even started considering these things?"

The investigator shrugged. "That's very interesting but what does it have to do with your grandfather?"

"Well, one of the most profound aspects of *Eureka* was because of these deductions Poe was certain that the soul continues to survive after death. Hence, maybe his fascination with ghouls, death and the afterlife. I believe my grandfather found Poe's portal to another dimension."

"And what proof do you have of this?"

"Grandpa kept extensive files of his research. In one of them he wrote that by using *The Goldbug Island Code* it had led

him to a secret room inside Fort Moultrie which served as a portal to a parallel universe."

"Wait a second I thought you said these Numbers Stations were just spy transmissions."

"Well, they mostly are but he thought some of these transmissions were coming from a different frequency than ours."

"What do you mean by different frequency?"

"I guess the best way to describe it is this way. It's a scientific fact that humans can hear or see things only in certain frequencies or spectrums. But grandpa thought there are other dimensions all around us but we can't experience them because we aren't hardwired to that specific frequency or spectrum. He believed that some of these Numbers Stations were actually transmitting from different dimensions."

"Here's what I think," the investigator replied. "I believe in Occam's razor. The simplest answer is the most likely. Most likely your grandfather did go out to that old fort, accidentally locked himself inside a room and now he can't get out? Or he suffered a medical emergency. The fort has been closed for upcoming repairs. If he was in distress, no one would know."

"So you're not buying into the multiverse theory?" I mumbled wondering if perhaps the investigator's deduction was that simple.

He smiled. "Things used to be so simple before Quantum physics. Let's drive out to Fort Moultrie and see if we can find your grandfather."

We arrived at the fort and the investigator easily jimmied open the front lock. We began searching the fort and entered a dark tunnel leading toward the ocean.

The investigator halted about halfway down the tunnel. "Do you hear that?" He asked.

I listened to a series of numbers being repeated with eerie background music echoing off the tunnel walls. "A Numbers Stations," I answered.

We followed the transmission to a wooden door. The investigator looked at me and then opened the door. In a flash darkness engulfed us. Then we were standing in the middle of a strange looking version of Battery Park in downtown Charleston. But I knew this was not the Charleston I was from.

Streaks of eerie gray sunlight filtered through the dark mist. The air felt heavy and dank. A chill ran down my spine as a dark form emerged out of the doom.

Then I recognized the figure immediately. "Grandpa!" I exclaimed throwing my arms around him.

He looked scared out of his wits. "Alex, I told you not to come looking for me if something ever happened."

"What is this place?" the investigator interrupted.

"They call it Poe's World or Dark Charleston," Grandpa answered. "It's a world being created from Poe's energy."

"But how can this be?" The investigator mumbled.

"Were in a multiverse of Poe's creation," grandpa answered. "According to a theory called the Anthropic Principal universes are fine-tuned for conscious life to inhabit it and that is what Poe's imagination and energy is doing."

"So how do we get back home?" I interjected.

Grandpa looked out over the dark horizon. "That is the problem. Under the Anthropic Principal universes need observers to exist. Poe created a one way portal to the world of his imagination and he needs observers or his creation will collapse into a nothingness void. I fear we are trapped here."

I stared out into the darkness of Poe's world and thought of his quote about the nature of reality and human existence -
"All that we see or seem / Is but a dream within dream."