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Prologue

The Martian Discovery.

Loud explosions and blinding flashes from the crash haunted Anders as he watched the remains of his rocket vehicle burn out and vanish into the dark desolate Martian night.

The vehicle had come down to the surface of Mars too fast and the two astronauts had hardly been able to land manually in the darkness, and they had just escaped as the vehicle had started exploding, and sat at different places against piles of rocks, watching its fuel burn away furiously, and he wondered how long their oxygen would last.

He felt painful bruises covering his entire body and checked his oxygen supply again, and checked for any escaping air in his spacesuit, while watching Robertson, the scientist, repair a hole in his with a small repair kit from his suit.

He realized that they had to find another way of landing on Mars, and that it was far too dangerous! Although it had been their fault in carrying out the unscheduled ludicrous landing, in search of wealth! They had gambled and had lost!

Robertson claimed incredible diamonds of immense value were on the surface, in the unexplored region of the south pole, and they had made a great mistake in landing in the dark, as it had been their only real opportunity to carry it out without being caught, and they would not know of them being out there as they had not used any communications to the space stations and Martian ground bases, and there were no satellites overhead!

Mars was not like what he had imagined it and it now felt like he was on a world in another solar system buried away in the deep depths of the universe as he stared out into the depths of space, in the dark night sky, and at what seemed to look like the furthest stars of the universe, and he watched them wondering what horrors existed there, realizing what they had encountered there, which had also made them crash!

There were billion of light years of stars out there and he gasped just thinking what could be on the nearest stars, and they had just had an encounter on Earth's nearest world.

The world about him seemed a flat stretch of ground full of nothing but space dust and piles of rocks, with no real atmosphere, resembling areas on Earth's moon in the dark, and some large asteroids had clearly hit areas nearby.

He wondered if their crash remained undetected and unregistered by them if their skeletons would be found lying there by future astronauts, and he considered if such an occurrence could really happen, over a long time, and if he could end up in a museum back on the Earth, or if his ghost would be trapped there forever on the desolate lonely planet!

The last burning region of the rocket was a sphere of light floating like a ghost in the darkness, and he realized that something had been there, right there on Mars, and he had telepathically felt its presence!

A silent roar vibrated through the ground and he expected a sudden explosion, and he thought of it as a tremor from some fault line, and a blur of light swirled in the blackness from an area of the space vehicle and he realized it was the last of the fuel dwindling away.

Memories of its strange sounds and lights sent sensations through his body and he realized how close to death he had been!

The world seemed unique but there were trillions like it through the unexplored galaxy.

He recollected a full vision of what could have attacked them and he felt his blood explode through his veins, and he realized how little oxygen he had as he was starting to feel like fainting!

A dull yellow and red radiance gleamed from the remains of the rocket and illuminated his shadow casting a crimson shadow like a hideous devilish figure, with peculiar features, and he thought of it as what had attacked the vehicle.

He glared unmoving at the silhouette in shock, studying it, almost hoping it would come alive and answer what it was.

The blackness was so deep and vivid as the light and flames vanished completely, and the thing there felt so real, and alive, he felt deep horror—and he thought of it as they had first discovered it up in space—and he was surprised that he started to see something in the blackness, and he realized that he just wanted to die, and its glowing shape floated towards him, and he watched Robertson react to it.

For an instant it altered formation and he wondered what the hell it was! Where the hell had it come from? What was it doing there in such a desolate place?

It lunged over Robertson first, like the grim reaper, taking his soul, and he watched him go lifeless, fall over, and collapse, and it moved to him, with its black shadow shape shifting over the ground, and he felt its vibrations go through the rock, and he sensed its powers, and he clung to jagged black rocks and its swirling mist shifted over him, and shifting outlines magically formed about him, and he realized how painful death would be from slow oxygen starvation, and he welcomed death, and as he did he realized it was Christmas and that the star he was gazing at was really the Earth.

Chapter 1

The Antarctica Encounter.

Something startled Commander Cronenberg and he struggled to grasp what and focused on the deformed sun, as it went below the Martian horizon at the side of the shuttle, and he gasped as he watched the golden landscape below grow dark!

They had to land! Soon! Surely they should not take the risk continuing to fly to their destination at night! The shuttles were new and recently completed and they were trying it out for the first time, and testing it for the first time over Mars!

Something staggered him about the mission and he sensed something was going to occur, and had seen it approaching, edging its way towards him, which he knew he could not avoid! He had to go through with it! He believed he could survive if he did everything he could and avoided any deadly mistakes!

It was Mars! It was the new dangers there! It was exploring where nobody had been, and the great deadly environment and hidden dangers! The region they were in was the least explored!

They were approaching the south pole, the legendary Martian Antarctica, and he now sensed there was something strange there! Something he had not encountered before! Something that could only exist in such a place, in such a place, and in the depths of space, which might not be able exist on the Earth, and it gave him chilling and peculiar sensations, but he could not grasp what!

As the shuttle accelerated on he increasingly felt a presence of something, somewhere, in the chilling darkness of the alien world around them, and it started to become visible that the five other members of the crew of the shuttle.

At a distance the shuttle resembled a highly advanced early twenty-first century space shuttle, but far larger, and was designed for the exploration of worlds, especially Mars, and future explorations in the solar system.

Most of the crew, including him, were also scientists and explorers, wanting to see the universe and discover new things, and were testing and improving the space vehicle, like the other twenty space shuttles being tested on Mars, and were from Base One, the largest structure in space and on Mars and the headquarters of all the operations, bases, and space stations on or over Mars.

The commander of the base and Martian operations was Base Commander Clarke, an associate of Commander Carl Cronenberg.

All the information from the shuttles was being gathered and transmitted to the base, and studied mainly by the shuttle builders and scientists.

The other five members of the shuttle crew were Orwell the shuttle science officer, medic, and biologist/exobiologist, Stanley the shuttle pilot, and an expert shuttle pilot and navigator, and Lyndon the co-pilot, navigator, expert on most of the Martian world, landscape and locations, and expert on shuttles, like most of them, and Deputy Commander Tom Campbell head flight engineer, and an astrophysicist/planetary geologist, and Rosenberg a flight engineer, and an astrophysicist/planetary geologist, and all basically checking the performance of the shuttle and findings the new detection equipment aboard gathered, especially in the unexplored regions they were entering.

Cronenberg knew that they were finally properly exploring Mars, and they were properly filming and mapping the landscape, and entering regions never properly explored.

He had recollections of seeing the shuttle for the first time, and its abilities, and ability to fly in the almost empty Martian atmosphere, and he knew they were a breakthrough that could lead to immense discoveries and the proper exploration of the smaller but vast world.

Their explorations of the whole world had been little so far – with only probes and satellite explorations—and he grasped the chance to be a part of it, but the dangers had not been apparent until he had started their mission.

After hours of intense training, medical examinations, and every form of screening, the astronauts were finally carrying out the first mission, and future missions.

“This technology is a scientific breakthrough!” Orwell announced to Cronenberg, as he sat monitoring newly installed equipment, over at his side, which was to survey the ground, and had a clear image even in the darkened landscape.

“It’d be a mistake not to use it to its full potential for science!” he replied.

“They’ve been redoing scanning and carrying out tests for months, back on the Earth, and seem to have progressed the technology far further than we thought. The views and information received is far greater...”

Cronenberg wondered if it was good enough to detect what was there, and realized whatever it was he had sensed there might be reacting to it and he considered having it turned off.

He was starting to suspect that some of them had discovered signs of something of unknown origins somewhere, and were either not sure and leaving it until they had enough evidence or they did not want to confront what was there, and, of course, it could be both.

Finally Rosenberg muttered to him, “There’s some form of powerful magnetic influence—or something of that nature—around here somewhere!”

Cronenberg swiftly checked it to see what it was and moved away, and considered what it was, and if it belonged to Mars.

From a side window he watched shades of light play with his vision in animated motions, as the shuttle rushed on, and he watched the crew at work, constantly examining the new technology, getting use to using it.

The Antarctic had a great potential with the ice and its other features and he wondered if any of it had been there for millions of years like the Antarctic on the Earth! If Mars had seas or large lakes there could have been amphibious or even prehistoric creatures that could be buried frozen away there!

For a few seconds he watched blankly as crew members gave reactions about something unbelievable, and he reacted when he spotted the equipment showing strange reactions that he could not comprehend, and he considered if it was because things were too vague, with insignificant reactions, which could be off anything, but he was sure something nearby was creating a disturbance or being detected for some reason.

The problem was they had not fully checked everything with the equipment, and its reactions to everything, even though it had been tested back on the Earth, and they were sure that something was ahead! The equipment was more powerful and sensitive at detection than ever before, and had even been modified before the trip, for detection at distances, which they had to work at there, which would speed up future searches of the vast terrain.

The shuttle rushed on across the immense desolate landscape and the equipment gave increased strange reactions and accounts, and they checked for equipment problems, and they gradually perceived that there was definitely something ahead that had similarities to something artificial with immense proportions

Chapter 2

The Attack.

Cronenberg never got who was the most baffled by the situation, and if they were in danger, and how they should proceed to deal with what they had! No danger to them had arisen and nothing showed they would crash but they sensed something!

They had gradually realized something was emerging, with them studying the slightest reactions created by it, while still trying to prove the new equipment had nothing wrong with it.

Nothing seemed to be visible ahead and where the disturbances had been found to be generated.

Was it a coincidence that the equipment was malfunctioning at the same time? He knew there could easily be still hidden flaws in the technology! It was valuable and might still need to be advanced further, in its new state!

He checked Deputy Commander Campbell's map, which he claimed was the most accurate up-to-date map available, and Rosenberg helped, but they found little ahead, and the facts showed little existed there, and the region had not been explored by anything other than satellites.

Their records showed nothing had been recorded of such a disturbance, even though he was sure there had been mentioned past events discovered on the Earth, but they were too vague and too proven to be false for him to believe.

It was then that he realized that all the communications from and to the outside world had gone and the pilots reported it to him when he asked, and he expected them to offer help or at the least their scientific theories, and they just looked confused.

They just left pilots on their own to handle all the problems themselves, with the shuttle's flight! They were better off without them being in the way.

It was incomprehensible and crazy, and would surely be recorded as such a discovery! Investigations proved that nothing could be there!

Would they even survive to see what was there? The equipment and plane had increasing signs of being dangerous, at an alarming rate, as they advanced forwards, and they surely would have to land, and their constant attempts to turn back had failed.

Something was either wrong with the shuttle equipment or something was taking them forward, and its power was increasing as they went forward, and the pilots seemed to lose more and more control, and he kept on believing it was the new equipment, and even considered if they had deliberately invented the situation to test their ability in handling such a scenario and were also trying to test the shuttle, or someone needed the information.

Shudders and fluctuations ripped through the plane and him and the others as what seemed like strange unknown energy surges swept through the region, threatening to rip it to shreds and scatter it and them across Mars, and he imagined his remains being recovered days later half buried away in sand.

The rest of the crew also started to realize it and that they might not even see what was there, but he decided to insist in ignoring it! He gasped when he realized that they should have turned back as soon as there had been evidence something

was occurring, and even because it was getting dark! Surely there was a way to change the course of the shuttle, and the new shuttle and equipment had only confused them! Perhaps it was a built in programming that had been somehow activated, which had not been known by them, and had perhaps been on an earlier version of the programming or was used for some other reason.

He considered what it could be and what would happen and how to combat the occurrence! Whatever it was it had control of controlling the shuttle!

He decided to ignore the dangers and to examine everything that was occurring to try to explain things, and fit things together and get a proper picture of what might happen, and if they could do anything. In the past he, and surely the others, had pulled themselves out of dangerous and tricky situations, and he thought that they could do it once again, even if there was a slight chance.

He examined the strange alterations, with erratic characterizations, in the equipment and realized there had been a change, and they all started examining how it was now affecting the shuttle and its performance, and he checked the pilots and saw that they had seen something in the increasing darkness ahead and wondered what the shuttle was going over, and was surprised at how fast it was getting dark and he managed to adjust his eyes and followed one of the pilot's eyes to a location ahead.

He joined in examining there in detail. It was incredible! There was nothing visibly there but he knew there was something! He had seen nothing like it! At that distance it seemed normal though, and he was left confused as he was sure something was going to happen there, and he and the pilots started preparing for something to occur, and he decided to ignore the dangers and to handle everything he could as best as he could as it appeared.

The area was not properly charted and there was nothing shown there, and the satellite photos showed nothing but another area of Mars, and he suddenly wondered what was there and where the hell it had come from!

Areas surrounding the region had a volcanic appearance, and it was definitely old.

Campbell discussed it with Stanley the pilot and tried to get anything he could from the pilot.

"We should get someone to check out what's there as soon as our communications return!" Stanley replied. "It seems to be where the disturbances are from!"

"That looks empty?" Orwell announced, looking into the front window with high powered binoculars, hardly able to see in the blackness there.

Campbell took the binoculars and searched where he was looking, and stood confused, and replied, "What happens now? How the hell could anything be there?"

"I think we're going down..." Stanley shouted, and the shuttle started going downwards.

"I've recovered control of it!" he gasped, after a few minutes of struggling to control it.

"We'll have to land!" Lyndon announced, checking everything about him, preparing himself.

Cronenberg gasped at the situation and rushed into his shuttle commander's seat, one of their impact protection seats, designed for him, and the shuttle started reacting crazily and viciously shuddered, as if caught in some force, and they started descending swiftly and he realized like most of the crew that the worst outcome could become real, and he saw them reacting and preparing themselves for their worst fears.

He copied positioning himself in his seat and prepared for what was ahead, and considered using something for violent impacts.

As it hurtled downwards he spotted the last shreds of sunshine illuminating the sky on an area of the horizon, and he spotted the startled faces of the two pilots recalling emergency procedures, and others swiftly securing equipment or themselves.

He wished he had a better view at a main window of what was happening! He imagined it bursting into flames with the powerful fuel and the entrance being blocked.

The last shades of weak light pulsated, in various motions, through the front pilots window, and he considered what could happen! Would it ruin everything if the shuttle was destroyed and they survived?

Yet they had revealed something, and with incredible powers, powerful enough to take down a powerful large shuttle, with such high technology, and he wondered if they could discover what it was and save the day! If they survived to see what was there!

All they could do was wait for the outcome, and try to do everything they could, and he realized he was actually part of a real drama and occurrence, perhaps for the first time in his life!

He started realizing how professionally skilled and proficient the crew actually were, and how far they had gone out of their way to get them and carry out the Mars operation, and he realized why they had chosen him, and had realized the dangers!

Everything on the shuttle appeared in order, and it was only being influenced by something clearly below, somewhere, and he wondered if it was a natural phenomenon, and if it could be a danger to flights over that region. He was sure it was forcing them to land – or was it their imagination, and some force like gravity, and he wondered if there were disturbances like it on the Earth.

He saw that they were having a hard time controlling the speed of their descent!

How could anything take control of such a powerful shuttle, and at such a distance? What form of technology was behind it? Could they use it in warfare? Was it a form of military technology? Could they figure out a way to block and stop it?

Surely there had to be a way to obstruct it or just weaken it?

One of the crew called out, "It's not increasing in power!"

He realized that some of them were holding back information about it, and he considered if he should try and get it!

The pilots tested and did what they could perceive and he realized that it was a more interesting trip than he had even imagined! Nothing anywhere seemed enough to understand it, and he was sure none of them had anything to properly explain it!

There had to be something irregular, visible, and solid behind it, and he wondered if he could get it if he had long enough and the right means!

“We’ve still lost all contact with the base!” Campbell confirmed loudly, as he examined his equipment.

He noticed as it got lower to the ground the crew started avoiding looking at each other, with occasional horrified glares, realizing they that they were going to land soon and they might not be any longer in control of their fate!

“I don’t get this!” one of the pilots uttered, as he looked up startled. “It is as though something kicked in there and has started landing it, and I cannot discover why and why it is going to a different destination than we were set to land!”

“Is there anything visible there?” Cronenberg asked curiously.

“Nothing visible! It seems to be carrying out some form of alternative plan—to land us!”

The shuttle shifted down low, but still at a regulated pace, almost as though it were being overwhelmed by something.

Occasionally the crew started monitoring what was happening about them as it happened, and Cronenberg realized that they liked to handle things rather than ignore them, and they were not fully confident of surviving!

Even the most professional pilots on the Earth would have a hard time finding a landing site below, and they were allowing it to land them there.

The shudders from turbulent energy surges made them jerk forwards and backwards, making them all go silent and stop silent conversations, and they started putting on their spacesuit helmets.

At times he felt as if he were drifting down to a hideous death!

It plummeted and suddenly administrated what was an almost perfect landing, but smashed hard into something, and his eyes bulged brightly, and he barely believed the destructive forces lashing out at the shuttle.

When he realized that they had avoided dieing, when it stopped, flames bursting out, and an alarm blared out, and a sudden explosion smashed it with tremendous force!

Then as he caught sight of something in the obscurity out in the distance, through a window, he heard them all trying to escape and realized that the shuttle had acquired serious structural damage and fuel was leaking out and had ignited.

Chapter 3

The Crash Site.

After the astronauts had jumped onto the Martian soil Cronenberg and copied the others lifting out oxygen tanks and he rushed away from the crash site with them, and he had a strange sensation and thought that he was somewhere far more than an uncharted desolate region of Mars!

It was as though they were entering somewhere else, and making the first step for mankind to something!

He did not know what their next biggest problem would be!

Was it even dieing of starvation? Or was there something there after all, which had brought them there, which was getting ready to kill them all or what?

They never had any communications with the outside world and the shuttle was damaged beyond what they could repair and the last of the fuel was burning away, and they were lucky as the shuttle had been designed right and it did not have a fatal explosion, but they never knew if what had taken them there would allow them to leave, be found, and allow them to live!

The next peculiarly that they saw was the strangely tinted night sky, and nobody could recall seeing anything like it but they had not been outside the base at night that much.

Yet he was sure it had not been there when they had landed!

There was sand and rocks everywhere, unhampered by humans, and it was very dry and he watched the astronauts return and get fire distinguishers and help control and put out the flames, while others removed equipment and things they needed outside the shuttle, and he watched their speed increase, and slow when the flames started going out, and their reactions when it was annihilated, and they started moving back in the shuttle and fixed its lighting and heating.

They eventually all started resting and went to sleep to conserve energy supplies, and left everything for the morning.

Cronenberg woke early, after sleeping too long, and examined the outside world lighten up as the sun rose above the horizon, and he watched the other astronauts slowly awaken, eat, and start work checking the damage.

“There’s some form of powerful energy influence,” Rosenberg announced, after checking things, “and it’s still stopping us scanning what’s out there!”

“Just as it was on the airplane?” he replied.

“Well, it seems to have altered—and we could have found another *encounter*—and it’s tremendous!”

“What could it be?” he moaned, confused, and wondered if he had known something of it before the shuttle had come down.

“It could be that on the shuttle we were not able to properly check anything as it was so far away and there was too much disturbances! Now that we have landed we are detecting it and it is also more powerful this close...”

“Is it near us?”

“I don’t have a clue where it is! It could be anywhere! I will try to get the information on it!”

He handed him some readouts and Cronenberg stared at them with amazement, gasping, and muttered, “What the hell could create such power? It’s colossal!”

“It’s also like someone is playing around with something out here! Has anyone got any science or military establishments or anything at all out here?”

He considered it for some time and was amazed that someone could build something like it there, but he could not grasp what or why it would be put there.

“Nobody has been near here as far as I’ve heard!”

“But it could be confidential?”

“Yes! But why would it be built out here? Why would they be using anything or experimenting on anything?”

“Perhaps they are using or creating something too dangerous to be activated in an inhabited zone!” he replied firmly.

“That would explain it being so secretive and at an uncharted region but it does not explain anything of its use!”

He kept going, curious in what the scientists would make of things if he pushed them further.

“How did they manage to hide something of its size and power though?” he moaned. “Nothing seems to add up here!”

“They surely would have to have technology beyond anything we’ve heard of!”

Cronenberg stood still, staring out at the Martian landscape through the front shuttle window, unable to grasp it!

“What could create such power and what is its use?”

“It could be someone using a natural phenomenon or something? Like someone harnessing and manipulating energy in the planet’s core or something?”

Nothing added up though, as it was only used to control the shuttle and take it there, and they could easily have hidden away, and never be found, and they would be found out eventually.

He could not realize what it was and realized that the real solution to what it was would be far more unbelievable and crazy than what they would come out with, and he wondered if he could get what it was, and it could be far too ridiculous for them even to assume existed.

The night before when it had taken control of the shuttle he had detected something of unknown origins, and it had been like that when it had made a full appearance.

Yet there clearly was no evidence of anything and only someone making a ridiculous mistake would add anything to what had been said, and he filled in his account of what had occurred on the flight, and going by what all the crew about him indicated it was a crazy occurrence and they never had any proper facts anything was there.

“To discover whatever is here we’ll need more reasonable and solid clues!” he finally announced, especially to Rosenberg, who seemed to be the most interested and knowledgeable on it.

They eventually left the shuttle through the airlock wearing their suits with extra oxygen tanks on them, and they started to go further out from the shuttle to a nearby small hill with a view of the surrounding view, where they blankly viewed the surrounding area, and Cronenberg looked back and down at the shuttle, which resembled an airplane brought down in a desert region like the Sahara, surrounded by bright reddish sand and rocks in bright sunlight, in a cloudless white blue sky.

The surprising thing was his spacesuit’s high temperature and the surrounding view combined to give the impression of it being incredibly hot, instead of incredible cold and at the Antarctica of the world, and he even considered if any of them were capable of making some form of mistake because of it.

The adrenalin of the crew was visibly rushing through their veins, overwhelming them, as they checked their new surroundings, and most realized where they were, and he thought he saw the Earth in the sky.

All around them they examined things like they were strange new phenomena, and he wondered what they thought they were discovering.

Even though they had been exploring areas of Mars, especially about the base, they had not been to an unexplored area like it, and they moved over to an area where it looked like a cold region like the Antarctica, and they looked for ice and water.

“Look at all this!” Campbell explained, picking up a strange rock, and none of them could recall seeing it before, and he then looked as if he recognized it.

“What do you think brought us down now?” he asked, curiously. “There’s nothing out here! Nothing can grow!”

They all discussed it and it was apparent none of them properly knew, and they started examining the landscape and giving facts and their thoughts of it, and Cronenberg and Rosenberg examined the best map they had of the region and discussed it, and they all then discussed what to do.

Rosenberg pointed at the highest hill, buried away in the landscape, in a southerly direction, in the direction of the southern pole, where they had been traveling to, and he examined why most of it was covered up and saw small sand hills in front of it, covering up most of it, and what was below.

“There’s a better chance of finding water there!” Rosenberg announced.

The more Cronenberg examined what was there the more he thought it was a good place to go and he announced that he would like to go and check there.

It looked familiar to him, as a place with something, and he was sure it was where the shuttle had been going.

“It’s as though it has formed differently, by some means, by something else...” Campbell mumbled, looking at it through his binoculars.

“Could be a fault line?” Rosenberg replied.

They all examined it and avoided replying, and Cronenberg wondered if they agreed or disagreed!

Chapter 4

The Haunted Hill.

Cronenberg leapt onto his feet when a strange explosion shattered his sleep and he stared out into dark Martian night!

They had wrongly calculated the distance and time it took to get to the hill, and they had only been able to leave late in the evening, and it had become dark on the way and they had rested and had fallen asleep below the hill. The long day and march over small hills in the thick heavy spacesuits, marching through deep regions of sand carrying large amounts of equipment, including oxygen tanks and supplies, had tired them, and they were unable to do anything but sleep anyway.

Cronenberg was staggered when he considered what the noise was, as it had sounded like an artificial explosion, and he stood trying to explain how it could be there, and he wondered how the atmosphere could even carry the sound through it, and he realized Mars was different, and it might even be some form of volcanic disturbance from below, blasting up through a vent.

The other two astronauts, Rosenberg and Campbell, who had accompanied him either ignored it, or were asleep, or had not heard it, and he examined them through their dark helmet faceplates but could not see what they were doing.

When a second explosion blasted out he stood shocked, as he had just started to ignore the first and had considered it to be his imagination, and the powered rifle blast exploded into the empty silence staggering him, and the explosion sounded so powerful he believed it had some form of powerful explosive in the bullets!

The other two astronauts at first never reacted or even moved and he finally spotted Rosenberg opening his eyes, and watched him looking startled and realized he had also heard it and had been trying to ignore it.

“What the hell was that?” he finally asked, as he stood.

“It sounded like a gun!”

“We don’t have any guns on Mars though?”

“There’s nobody out here either!”

Rosenberg yawned, and replied, “It has to be something else!”

Rosenberg went back to where he was sleeping and tried to go back to sleep.

Whoever was there had to be crazy or up to something and he realized he might even get the answer to what had brought them down there and decided to investigate it.

He silently crept away, and tried to creep up on whoever it was to observe them and realized that if there was someone there that they surely had to have left traces of themselves, as there was sand everywhere and there had to be footprints or something.

It felt silly looking for someone there, in such a desolate place, where nobody should be! He could not realize who was there and just accepted that they might be trying to do something! Perhaps it was the shuttle they wanted, as it was priceless and its technology highly confidential on the Earth.

It had to be located in the coldest and most remote place on Mars, and its southern pole! Even in the summer the place was deadly cold without the spacesuits!

As far as he was concerned there was nothing to be there for! The hidden coldness around him at times made him cringe, and he, almost blindly, rushed on to where the sound came from, and for some reason when he reached a specific region he realized it had to be where the noise came from.

Suddenly a loud explosion blasted out and a bullet thudded somewhere nearby and he automatically switched off his light and ran through the darkness for his life!

He dared not use his light now and he could barely see, and regularly tripped up and continued!

He realized that he could have an infrared filter on his faceplate, to see in the dark, and he searched for the switch to activate it, and realized it was a different

version that had it, and he just dived into a pile of sand behind some rocks, and hid himself. Surely he would not be found there, and he had not left any footprints nearby and had changed direction a few times!

Once he realized that nothing was happening he started to enjoy the rest and being free from being attacked, and he considered how to get back to the others, and if it was actually safe there. His mind raced through what had occurred! Yet he only realized that the location that he strolled into had to have something, and he started to wonder what was there.

Who would go to such lengths to kill him? What could possibly be there? What could be there in such a desolate place? Was there another space vehicle there?

Suddenly he saw something buried in a region of the darkness to his side, and he shifted behind a large boulder at his side and hid from there, and his heart leapt as he studied the dark spacesuit figure shifting lifelessly forward, and it shifted out from the darkness into where some starlight was beaming down, and he studied the figure not realizing what would happen!

He felt like moving away from the figure but he would be spotted for one, and he studied the gun and it looked like an old one, and he wondered who the hell was there and where he had got the spacesuit and gun, and noticed that the spacesuit was an old version.

There was something strange there that he could not grasp and he studied everything over and over trying to grasp something, going over everything he could think of, and it was like there was something there that should not be there, but it was there!

He studied the spacesuit faceplate and could not see through the dark shiny material, and the figure never reacted, and he wondered what would happen if he rushed towards it.

He sensed he could do something stupid and he studied the faceplate of the spacesuit more and more, and stood back shocked!

He thought he saw a skeleton, and it moved away, and realized that there usually was a name on most spacesuits, even the old ones, and he tried to see it and though saw it he could not see the letters properly, and as it vanished into the darkness he thought he saw it said Anderson.

He was confused, trying to work out what they should do, and what it might do, and what could happen!

When he finally returned to where the others were he soon found the other two astronauts at exactly where they had been, but noticed that their positions had altered as though they had done something and returned to where they had been.

While he rested over the ground he wondered what the hell an astronaut, or even a ghost astronaut, was trying to shoot him, or what he was actually doing, and realized again that the shuttle was unbelievably valuable and worth it, but why had they not just taken it, as they never had guns, and he realized they might be just after its technology and he considered if they could take it without them suspecting it.

Chapter 5

The First Death.

Once the sun rose above the horizon Cronenberg went out and explored where the other astronaut had been and was surprised that there were no marks anywhere, and found where he himself had been there and where he had been behind the boulders and found his own footsteps in the sand.

He searched everywhere and started to think he had imagined it, and he examined the hill over at his side in the sunlight and realized it would be quick to climb and decided to go up and explore the region from the top, as he had intended.

If he needed the others he would return and go back up, and he quickly climbed up and at the top stood staring at the fascinating view, with Mars stretching out into the horizon all about him, and he spotted the shuttle, and spotted a large short message beside it, written in the sand and with boulders, with a SOS message, showing their destination and they had crashed, and he was sure the satellites would spot it, and most could spot any changes in the landscape and environment and detect anything unusual and take close up photos, which would be sent back to the base—and they would be looking for it after the communications stopped!

He examined everywhere with powerful binoculars, including where the southern pole was, for anything unusual and for water if they got trapped there but never saw anything and realized they would have to be saved by the others shortly or they would die of oxygen starvation.

Yet as he was about to move away he wondered where the hell the thing that had taken them there was, if it actually existed, and he removed a device he had brought and checked for any traces of it and found nothing and wondered what the hell the outcome of it would be, if they survived, and if he would always wonder what they had encountered there.

When he arrived back where the other two astronauts were he discovered Campbell still asleep and Rosenberg gone, and he began watching Campbell strangely, and his lifeless unmoving figure, and realized that he had not moved since he had left, and he considered if it was just his spacesuit that made him not move, and he started to wonder if there was something wrong and rushed over and showed himself to him, moved up close, and examined his unmoving face and gasped when he saw his hidden mouth expression, as if he was screaming at something.

He firmly shook him, still not believing anything was wrong, and shook him hard, and he unzipped and removed his glove and felt his cold hand and arm for a pulse, and saw his cold lifeless complexion, and was amazed that there was no pulse, and that he had been dead and had not noticed anything.

He searched his spacesuit for any rips or holes, and wondered if it had been a fault in his spacesuit, and he realized that he had best record a message on their camera of the incident and gave a record of the occurrence, and checked the

various functions of the spacesuit, and had its computer check him further and was surprised his death had not been oxygen starvation.

In the end he removed his helmet and whole spacesuit and sat back staggered, as large sections of his body were gone, as though something had removed them viciously, as though a wild animal had attacked him.

Suddenly he spotted marks on the ground where something had obviously happened.

Rosenberg suddenly rushed out from behind him and gasped, and crouched over the body, and he observed him examining the body, and fall back with blood covering his gloves.

Chapter 6

Anders.

What astounded him was how deadly and vicious whatever it had been was! If it was what had taken them there!

What the hell was it? How could it be so advanced and vicious? Was it some form of alien animal that got its prey with special powers? Yet how did it manage force an entire shuttle into going there and what form of prey did it live on? The planet was virtually empty of life!

In the end he realized he could not believe it without more evidence, and whatever it was it would have to be left until they could check it out.

What also surprised him was that Rosenberg had been away, and looking about like him, since he woke up!

He was also surprised that he had found something hidden away in the distance, which he never knew the identity of, and Rosenberg took him over to a region at the other side of the hill, from where he had gone, and he showed it to him and they examined it with their binoculars, and he realized it was artificial, and that it had been there some time and partially buried in sand, and was hidden behind a small hill from where the shuttle was, and from it being observed from where he had been at the other side of the hill, and on the above hill there.

After examining it he was surprised that it was at about the same distance away as the shuttle and virtual in a straight line with it from there, and just hidden away from it, and he wondered how the hell it could have ended up so close to it. The planet had hardly anything on it and the south pole even more so.

The chances of two objects coming down there was immense, and after examining everything he wondered if it could be just space wreckage. Something from some space station or rocket had been discarded and had fallen there.

Rosenberg wanted to check it, before they returned to the shuttle, and so did he! But their main problem was their oxygen was running out, and they only had a little left, even after taking Campbell's, and they swiftly left, and left Campbell where he was, for investigators to find him, and they saluted him, at where he was, and went away from the hill wondering what had happened.

When they finally approached the place they both started to gasp as they realized that they had lost more air than they had thought they would, and Cronenberg even thought his last tank was empty a dozen times, and felt like collapsing, and he approached the site struggling to focus on what was there, seeing a distorted form of the sun, shimmering around, and he again adjusted the hot temperature that built up in his spacesuit, and wondered what had happened to its stability and ability to control its temperature, and he realized it could be him, and his struggle to get there faster, and he sighed as his spacesuit adjusted and he felt its coolness cool his body, with ecstatic pleasure.

The site looked incredible as they staggered into the area, a miniature valley, and crater in the landscape, hidden at three sides from areas further out, and only visible from where they had seen it on the hill.

It had resemblances to volcanic desert region and Rosenberg started analyzing and taking soil samples about him, while he inspected what was there and found the wreckage of a space vehicle, and on a closer approach he saw that most of it was buried in the ground, and had structural damage from an explosion, and fire.

The heat from the explosion had had more of an effect on it than he had realized further out! Things somehow took a different perspective than the damage of a normal fire.

He asked Rosenberg for his advice, recalling Rosenberg was experienced in space vehicles, as well as being one of the flight engineers like Campbell was, and he had some experience in the old stuff.

They rushed around and investigated everything, thoroughly.

Cronenberg examined it in detail and half-heartedly observed the soil and rocks—while looking out for traces of anything within the layers of ground.

Rosenberg examined things, as swiftly as he could, clearly running out of air and trying to quickly finish the investigation so they could rush away to the shuttle.

Suddenly he yelled out and Cronenberg rushed over and found him standing next to a partially buried spacesuit, stuck in the sand, with the top part resting over boulders, and they examined the helmet faceplate and Cronenberg lifted it up and saw a skeleton inside and he followed its stare going up into the Martian sky, and he read the nameplate on the suit, and realized it his name was Anders, and he recalled his name.

“Did he not go missing?” Rosenberg gasped.

“Years ago! They never found where he went...”

He recalled reading about it when he was younger, and him thinking of becoming an astronaut.

“This place is incredible!” Rosenberg announced. “What are the chances of two space vehicles coming down here?”

He nodded back amazed and examined the rocket vehicle, and wondered what it had been like, and Rosenberg rushed away and continued his investigation of the crash site.

Cronenberg started examining the pockets and contents of the spacesuit and was surprised at how preserved the things were and that one of the items was an old map, with names and locations on it, which clearly had been used a lot by Anders, and he studied the area on it and realized it was the area they were at.

Chapter 7

The Rescue.

While they marched swiftly back to the shuttle Cronenberg kept going over the events trying to piece them together but he could not grasp something! Something hidden or obvious! Some clue that they had not noticed!

The heat from bright sun shining straight into their faces, through the thin atmosphere, resembled the blazing sun in space, with its high radiation, and it exhausted them, especially with lower level oxygen they had altered their spacesuits to.

He thought of Anders and the way his body had been resting and his stare and he looked there now, to the location in space, and was surprised to see the Earth.

What surprised him was another large object raced passed it, and faster than it should go, and he slowed, shaded his eyes, and struggled to focus on it, covering up a distorted form of the sun, shimmering around, and he recalled where his spacesuit helmet's polarization adjustment was and adjusted the polarized faceplate to compensate for the extra light, and started studying the object's incredible velocity and shape, and even thought it looked like a small alien spaceship.

When Rosenberg stopped and stood dazed he knew it was something big, and when he rested he realized its true identity and that it was one of their shuttles, and they both rushed on.

Their speed increased vastly and he knew he would not die before they reached the shuttle, and knew he had to go faster, and he was surprised when they got over a hill and saw their shuttle was resting at the bottom, and they watched the other shuttle come down from the sky and land next to their shuttle, and they ran down the hill as fast as they could, not wishing to miss anything and to get a new supply of fresh air.

At the shuttle he was so out of air and suffocating that he ordered them to get him into the shuttle, where he removed his helmet and collapsed over the floor, recovering from the run, and breathed the incredible air in, and Rosenberg copied him, and he realized how wonderful it was not to have the helmet on, after sleeping in it, and he studied the amused face of Stanley sitting in at his pilot chair, and he wondered what had happened while they had been away.

He was surprised beer cans were lying over the floor, and tried to work out where they came from, and if anything had occurred.

"Did you manage to contact the base?" he panted, curiously, breathing in the sweet air, seeing the remains of the food they had been eating, and discarded food containers lying about the floor.

"So you made it...!" Stanley murmured, grinning at him, and at the state he was in, lying over the floor.

"When did you know that the shuttle was coming?"

“Just before you arrived! It was lucky! Our oxygen is starting to get real low!”

“Whose idea was the SOS message over the ground?”

“That was Orwell! He claimed he had seen it done before! And calculated the size it had to be to see from up in orbit! We all worked on making it!”

“It worked! Any food?”

The pilot jumped up and removed a container of food he knew he liked, and gave it to him, and got a drink dispenser!

He watched Cronenberg and Rosenberg sitting on the floor eating through the food hungrily.

“Where’s Campbell?”

Cronenberg gasped and nearly choked, and saw Rosenberg look startled, and watched the others look up with looks of astonishment, knowing something had happened.

“We found him dead!” Rosenberg announced. “Something here kills humans! When we woke we found his body and that he had been partly eaten!”

“What! Something ate him! And neither of you heard anything?”

“The spacesuit and the thin atmosphere don’t carry much sound, and we were heavily asleep in our spacesuits!”

They all seemed to consider what had happened astonished!

“Perhaps that’s what took us here! To eat us!” Lyndon gasped.

“What did you see over there on that hill?” Stanley asked, curiously, examining them, and the state they were in.

“I saw little!” Cronenberg confessed.

“Where you there early in the morning?” Stanley asked.

“Yes!” he replied.

“I thought I saw you! I got up early! The top part is visible from over there!”

“Find anything else? Why did you come from over there...?” Lyndon asked

“We found another space vehicle over there!”

“Where did you find it?”

“He found it!” Cronenberg pointed at Rosenberg.

Rosenberg replied, “I searched the other side of the hill! I saw it over there, hidden away... It was in a direct line with here!”

They looked at him confused, wondering what it was.

“We found a crashed space vehicle there! It was an old rocket spaceship! We found two pilots! One was called Anders!”

“I recall him!” Stanley replied first. “He vanished with another astronaut on Mars years ago!”

As Cronenberg thought of Anders he realized he had looked identical to the ghost astronaut he had seen in the night over at the hill, which he had searched for signs of in the morning before he climbed up the hill, and he wondered what the hell it meant, and he decided not to mention it unless there was more evidence of whatever it was existing.

They all looked up and watched pilots from the other shuttle enter their shuttle, and them examining everything about them, and one trying to check the damage done to the shuttle.

Cronenberg got up and watched one at work, and recalled him, and his job, and realized he was the best person for the job.

“You’re Commander Cronenberg! What happened before you landed here?” he asked, curiously.

“Something attacked the shuttle and took control of it!”

He looked up, and stared at him with surprise.

“Are there flights records that can confirm that?”

“And we can to!”

He looked confused, wondering what it could be.

“Wait until you see the other space vehicle...!” he told him, still amazed at the find.

“What other vehicle is that?”

He pointed over in the direction of it, and replied, “Did you not see it while landing? It’s away over there!”

“What could it be?”

“Anders! Remember him! It’s an old rocket vehicle ...”

“I remember him! What do you think he was doing out here?”

“I don’t have a clue!” he announced, and he thought about it and realized how intrigued he was, and realized he really wanted to know, and what was there and what was going on there, and why he had seen a ghost astronaut.

Cronenberg went over to Orwell, the shuttle science officer, to see what he had.

“Did you get anything on what happened to the shuttle, and how it came down here?”

“A few things! It sure as hell was not the shuttle itself. I checked records, and also proved it could not have done what it had. There had to be something else that did it!”

It surprised him that he was also questioning what had happened had happened! He also realized Orwell knew that they were also going to have a problem explaining what had happened to them. Would they accept what they told them, and if they did not what would they do about it?

He could try to get a full investigation, as they had been nearly killed, and the highly expensive shuttle could have been destroyed, and it might cost a lot to get it properly repaired.

“There was a strange magnetic phenomenon detected...!” Orwell gasped.

“I wonder what that could be...” he asked, confused, copying one of the rescuers investigating it, to see what he replied with.

“Something of incredible magnitude created a form of powerful magnetic influence, or something of that nature!”

“What could create such power? It had to be tremendous!”

“Someone may have been playing around with something somewhere! I was thinking if it was not from around, as we have seen, then something could have created it somewhere else, by some unknown means!”

“Why would they be experimenting on something out there though? Could it be the southern pole creating a magnetic influence?”

“How could it have controlled the shuttle and carried out what it did!” he moaned, confused. “Someone may be playing around with something in this region!”

“Why would they be experimenting on something out here though?”

“Perhaps they’re creating something big to influence Mars itself!”

“In what way?”

“They could want to alter Mars!” he mumbled to himself. “If they could move it close to the sun or use it to melt all the ice here they might be able to create immense lakes of water and create an atmosphere. They might be able to colonize it one day!”

The idea surprised Cronenberg and he realized that he might even be suggesting it was a secret government or group of governments plan, and he considered why it would be so secretive.

“What are your assumptions?” Orwell uttered, breaking the deep silence, seeing him thinking it over.

“I’ve not drawn any proper conclusions!” he confessed, considering how he could check if it would work. “Whatever it is—it has incredible power! We need more reasonable clues.”

“Even with all our technology, unknown and unexplained phenomena still exists! Who knows what exists out there in the depths of space—and even unseen about us—which could very well be beyond our detection methods and comprehension.”

Some strange thought was going through Orwell’s mind and he was figuring through possibilities and Cronenberg could not fully understand why his view of things had so vastly altered and he wondered what had happened when he was away.

He also occasionally had the look of a person who somehow sensed an oncoming consequence, and was checking ways to tackle it.

Had he found something? Or had he dreamed of scientific finds far too many times?

“At any rate, there might be other mentions of such occurrences on the Earth!” Orwell continued. “Even if most are antiquated and mythological! For instance there are zones like the Bermuda Triangle! Which was reputed to cause a similar effect—before ships and planes vanished! There could be some sort of mass of something around—perhaps a mass of magnetic iron...! Our detection methods on Mars and even the Earth may be small, and far smaller than we think...The magnetic field of the globe has been found to have altered in many ways over Earth’s existence!”

Orwell searched his face, wondering what he thought, and Cronenberg was sure he was thinking of questioning and getting answers from him.

“I have not heard of it properly doing anything though!” Orwell replied. “Though not altogether investigated—it is very unlikely to have such an intensity and nature—even in northern regions...”

“Okay!” he replied firmly, determined to force Orwell into giving him something. “It’s coming from somewhere and we all know it exists... And it will be beneficial to check the disturbance—which cannot be explained by normal science—and find what we can on it.”

“I’ll attempt to find out if someone had something around here, or was using something capable of doing it!”

“Did you find anything while I was away?” he finally replied.

“I checked all the records and found one thing and just before it took control of the shuttle something appeared and flashed on and off, and was just recorded,

which I think was unintentional, and I took a photo of the unusual formation, which was buried away in the blur of flickers!”

Cronenberg was surprised when he produced a photo of a complex sphere, which was clearly artificial and of a highly advanced nature, and he realized it looked of highly advanced alien origins!

Chapter 8

The Lost Library.

Eventually, after hours of searching records, Cronenberg entered Base One library, after being given recommendations to go there, and glared at vast bookshelves, covering the library walls, as he entered, and gasped at how empty of people it was.

It amazed him that such libraries once were the source of information for the human race, and as he approached the books it became clear that it had a great deal of unidentifiable information, and he put it down to laziness that the stuff had not been added to the computers.

At first he had dismissed that there was a library, as the others had not been aware of there being a book on the entire base.

He had just grabbed some books and sat down when Orwell marched in smiling, and marched up to him and sat next to him.

“I saw you coming in here at the end of the corridor!” he laughed, and picked up a book off the table, at his side, and flickered through the pages. “What you looking for?”

“I’ve checked everything about Anders everywhere and have not found anything!” he moaned back.

“Anders!” he replied, surprised. “What do you want to know about him for?”

“Why was he there, for starters? It’s an incredible coincidence he crashed at the exact same place, in a desolate region covering such a vast region, and it was one of the only crashes on Mars!”

“You’re correct! What’s the connection though? Why do you think he was there, anyway?”

Cronenberg just shrugged back.

The furniture about him held his attention, and amused him, and was clearly used to make it look like an original Earth library, to give it authenticity, like many of the rooms and objects about the station, to give it the look of a normal place, as the astronauts had to live there for a long time, and stay indoors, without seeing a normal world.

The vast size of Base One was incredible now, and had been slowly built up over decades, with many countries helping build sections, and them wanting to increase the inhabitants on Mars, and explorations there and in space. It was as though they were on the Earth most of the time, even after being there for years!

The military and police had recently been increased to compensate for increases in the inhabitants!

It was now like a small town, in a strange place, and Cronenberg kept realizing how little he knew of the inhabitants, as many he had never seen, and many left and many were new there, and he realized how little of it he had actually seen.

He still regularly returned to the Earth and visited places like where he had been born and the people he knew back there!

The library now had the look of an ancient study, and he started examining bookshelves, and he even wondered if the books were mostly all too old.

The furniture there grasped his attention as it looked expensive, and he realized that they had lowered the production costs and amount of materials used in the furniture about the base, and he was surprised at the quality of it and how far they had lowered the quality and he realized the seats and other furniture there were also far more comfortable and usable. It gave the whole room an atmosphere that was not elsewhere and he considered trying to use it in his apartment at the base and considered where he could get it and if it was still available there.

He soon started examining bookshelves searching for anything on Anders, astronauts, things of that era he was in, and he and Orwell worked away for hours searching, and started speeding their search up and he soon realized that there was nothing there, and he slowly grew depressed and started trying to consider other methods of getting what he wanted.

It was then he spotted a closed door at a hidden part of the library, which had ignored as it had looked like another entrance into the outer corridors or just a locked storeroom.

On his close approach he realized it was something else and grabbed at its stiff brass handle, and felt it had been that way for a long time, and he realized how long the place had gone unused and how aged it was, and he gave the door a hard jerk to make it budge, and it creaked open, and a black switch became faintly visible on an interior white wall and he activated the lights, which flickered and grew bright.

It took a few seconds for the sight before him to sink in, and he stood steady, glaring at shelves of books there, covering its walls, realizing that they were far more different and what he was looking for.

It was clear it was a small room of information about Mars and its history, and detailed information that was not available elsewhere and on the computers, and he found official documents about the base and bases, findings about Mars, explorations, and astronauts, and he started searching for information about Anders and Orwell joined him, and he was surprised at how interested in it Orwell became after reading it.

They started to realize most of the stuff had been classified stuff that they would not have been allowed to read, due to their low classified status, as their line of work never warranted it, and the stuff had declassified stamped on most of it and that the rest had been declassified without stamps, and they sat for hours at a table there examining the fascinating stuff they never knew existed and had occurred.

They were even to astonished at some of it to mention it to each other, and they realized the mistake they had made in leaving the material there for anyone to

read, as they clearly had not fully read through it all, and it mentioned things that were still classified, and about their introduction, with them only missing out things of what their current state was, and some of it gave away stuff that had been highly illegal and deadly, of a military nature, which they surely had been breaking laws creating, and it gave away the nature of their current classified material.

He searched for anything at the region that they had crashed at and anything they worked on or had found that could have caused what had happened, and of what Anders had been doing there, as he suspected he had been doing something there.

He even thought, after reading one paper on some military research, that they had created something there!

He jolted when Orwell called out that he had found something and he dropped what he had and rushed over!

If an answer to what existed actually existed he knew that it could well be there! Even though most of it seemed to be only outdated.

What he found was about Anders and his disappearance and he collected all the material he could find on it to read afterwards, and they searched everything that they could, and he scribbled down notes about what he found, and added any interesting facts that he noticed, and he grew determined to do something and carry out his mission. If he could find out more about Anders, and what subjects he had been interested in and had been doing, and doing there, he might be able to discover what he had been like and what he had been doing when they crashed.

He started to consider that they might have something over there, at the southern pole, and that it was still highly classified, and that they might find suggestions of something from before it was created, and perhaps what had led to its introduction.

Chapter 9

The Lost Treasure.

Cronenberg reluctantly dragged himself away from all the files he was studying, which he had been going through for many hours, for over a week, and he watched Orwell march in the library, for the first time in days.

Orwell was still fascinated at why he was so obsessed with searching the information, and only seemed to turn up occasionally answer it, and seemed be trying to answer other unanswered questions, and he believed that he wished to know what had nearly killed them and took control of the shuttle, and why, and perhaps why they survived. What had the whole episode been about? Nothing seemed to add up!

“Come over here...!” he called out to Orwell, and Cronenberg moved over to the end of the table and removed a pile of files, and returned to where he was and dumped there.

“What are they of?”

“I’ve put together everything with the information I want on the table, and all the files about Anders and things associated with him and that site, and I’m going through it all searching for the slightest clues...”

“What’s the point? You’ve searched through the main stuff though!”

Cronenberg had realized that he would have to let someone else in on what he was doing, as he could not do everything himself, and was sure that he could answer stuff he could not, and he had checked him out everywhere, and he knew him more than anyone else there.

A glance into the main library showed it was empty, and he listened to the deep silence, and he listened into the deepest depths of the base, and outer corridor, once again, and it showed him that there were still only workmen building a new ceiling in a nearby apartment, replacing an original ceiling, with modern materials.

The wires from the electrics had rot and webs over them, and had been easily broken, and were in bits on the floor, and he had studied the room and people.

He had been surprised that spiders actually existed at the base years before, and must have been in things brought to Mars.

“So what is it?” he asked Cronenberg, sitting at his side. “If you find something you’ll have to let it out eventually!”

“I think Anders was looking for valuable diamonds!”

Orwell gasped and his face showed he was startled by the final reply, and he sat thinking it over, and then looked confused, and finally asked, “What makes you think he was looking for them?”

“I’ve found various things... I still have not proven anything though! But I believe that was why he was there! And it made him the only person in history to steal a rocket vehicle, with such an expense, right under their noses!”

“Ah! He stole that vehicle, with another astronaut...”

“Who, according to this, they both managed to cover up where they went, but crashed in the end, and they even thought he got away with it, which was why they never searched here for him! They believe he could have been working for another government and had taken it and its highly advanced technology for them—as they might have not been able to get hold of anything on it!”

Cronenberg removed a document that he had marked and handed it over to him, and he started looking for another.

Orwell read it swiftly, examining things, and put it down over the table, thinking about the stuff in it, and Cronenberg handed part of an old newspaper with part of the story in it, showing where they believed the vehicle had been taken.

“What he was after must have been incredibly valuable?” he silently moaned to himself. “Are you sure it was diamonds?”

For a moment he never seemed to accept the space vehicle had been taken—not believing such a fact. But the official documents confirmed what had occurred, and he had not seen such documents and information being wrong.

“There is still a small chance it could have been something else though?” he finally confessed.

Cronenberg just nodded in agreement.

“Are you saying the diamonds are at where they crashed?”

“That’s what I’m searching for! If only we can find something on it! We need a location!”

Cronenberg never said anything of the map he had found in Anders pocket, and a mention of diamonds on it, and though he had not found the location on it he decided to try and keep it that way, if he could.

“So you think we should start looking for it?”

“If we find a more accurate location!”

Chapter 10

The Investigation.

Cronenberg could not believe the police investigation into Campbell’s death! The strange way they had approached it was unbelievable and surreal! And it left him gasping at what would happen, as they insisted he was killed, and they believed there were no animals outside the base.

How could an animal or anything live there? He and Rosenberg had a hard time explaining what had happened to them!

There had been barely a killing in space or there, and the crime was low, and it was mainly made up of scientists and other professionals working there.

He was baffled! What the hell had killed the flight engineer, and how had it made it into his spacesuit?

There was only one explanation and it was what had taken them to the destination! Yet what the hell could be that advanced and that savage? And why had it only attacked him?

Orwell soon started asking questions, after he told him of what occurred, and he wanted his thoughts on it.

His first question was, “Who found him dead?”

“I did!”

“He managed to stay alive until the morning?”

“We were with him up until the morning! And I’m sure nothing happened while we slept...”

“When was the last response or movement you saw from him?”

“It was at night when we went to sleep! We hardly moved while sleeping in the spacesuits!”

Cronenberg avoided telling him and them about the ghost astronaut he had seen, as it was not linked to the incident, and he was now unsure if he had imagined it.

“How did he die?”

“He looked as if he had been eaten by something!”

If it had been one of the others in the shuttle, who had followed them there, and how could the person have done it? They had been in a group!

And it could only have been done while Rosenberg was away investigating the other side of the hill! He believed there was something out there, which had to be

with what had taken them there or it was it itself, which he had explained to the police, and he had told Orwell and he agreed it could have been, as what had happened to the shuttle was far stranger and difficult to occur.

He realized that he only needed to explain what it had been, and he realized it might have taken samples of Campbell's body for some reason, and he wondered why.

Had this infernal place a killer alien or not? Yet why would it want anything from him?

Still nothing about it made sense—and neither did anything else there—it was obvious it could have attacked all of them.

From the looks that he caught from the police he knew that the incident had affected them! The police were now aggressive! And he was sure that they had not found any other clues.

His killer, whatever it was, had to be ruthless and carefree to have done it in the way that it had been done it.

He wondered if something was on the southern pole that did not need proper supplies of oxygen, and had been there from when Mars had an atmosphere and water, and had adapted to survive in the harsh climate!

Fish survived with barely any oxygen in water, and lived off miniature life forms, he wondered if it had tried what they had been like as a food supply, and he wondered if it liked it!

Yet that was fantasy, and they had not found anything like it, and why had they not found anything like it and what would it have normally have consumed? Yet was a big planet and they had hardly explored the surface and there was water and life forms that froze and dried out and returned to life, including plants...

He and Orwell marched along a corridor to the library, for their regular visit and they occasionally looked into rooms with their doors open, as it interested them what people were like there.

"It's also incredible," Orwell muttered, "that most of the people that investigated the body thought it was some form of animal!"

They then entered the library, and he asked Cronenberg, "Have you found anything else?"

"I found a photo of a newspaper article of Anders, found in his apartment, about a scientist that found something, which I'm sure was the diamonds... I've been trying to trace information about him and what he was doing."

Chapter 11

The Deaths.

It was almost a week later when he saw Orwell again and he thought he had lost interest and was glad to see him and was surprised that he had been searching elsewhere in his spare time, and had arrived with some news.

Cronenberg search in the library had just about become exhausted when he saw him enter the outer library, marching over to him, and he studied him trying to see what he was up to.

“What you got?” he swiftly asked.

“There’s been another death!” Orwell replied, making Cronenberg gasp.

“What happened?”

“The person was found in the same condition as Campbell! Large regions of the body were eaten! And they’ve found Campbell was definitely eaten in the same way.”

Cronenberg was confused, and wondered what was going on about, as the day earlier he had found declassified material in the library showing similar attacks and deaths at the base and that they had covered it up.

“I’ve also found stuff on deaths here!” he replied, and flicked through a pile of documents he had at the end of the table, and handed him over two documents about it, which were of deaths occurring there over a decade, five years from then.

Orwell searched through it in surprise, and stood confused, staring a section of one document.

“In one case they were unable to find out if it was an animal or human!” he finally replied, and put the document down.

“We could have been followed there, by someone?”

“Or there are things of Mars that kill? They might have been covered up? They might not have declassified the stuff!”

Cronenberg nodded his head, and agreed it could be the answer and he wondered why they had not been warned by some means about there be a possibility of them being there, and he gasped when he realized that they could enter the base.

“Found anything new about the diamonds then?” Orwell finally asked, after a few minutes of stunned silence, with Cronenberg realizing he could have been the one.

“Yes!” he replied, firmly, searching through another pile of documents, and pulling documents out.

“What you go there?”

“I found stuff on the scientist that found the diamonds! It seems he was working with a new satellite, at the time, that could magnify into areas of the Earth and Mars far greater and clearer than before, and he was the first to use it on Mars! I think he found the diamonds with it!”

“From up in orbit! I never knew that could be done!”

“I reckon he knew where to look for diamonds and that he discovered them!”

“So if we managed to get the use of it we could explore the area where the shuttle went down for them ...”

“Or where the diamonds may be under the ground...”

“I’ve not heard of any diamonds being found on Mars yet!”

“Exactly! And their value would be great!”

Chapter 12

The Satellite.

Cronenberg could not believe the length Orwell went to find and get the use of the satellite, and he was sure they were now being watched by security agents, and was sure the satellite was still highly classified, even after decades, and perhaps vastly improved and used for some military purposes.

He was sure that he only gained use of it for them to get what he was up to, and he realized why they had started watching Anders, and he had also highly illegally taken an expensive classified space vehicle.

Orwell had updated himself on where to look for diamonds, and techniques used to locate them, and he searched the region where the shuttle had gone down.

Cronenberg was invited to join them and welcomed it and he became sure they had little on them other than they were trying to use the satellite for a project, and if they found the diamonds, they were an interest to science and their missions there anyhow.

They used it to search everywhere they could on and around the hill, searching there in such incredible detail that he was sure he would never think he was not being watched outside again. It was incredible and he managed to examine where the shuttle had come down, and the massive amount of footstep and vehicles marks left there, and where the shuttle had been and had been repaired and taken away, and he studied where Anders had been, and the remains of the rocket, which had been dug up and examined, with its interior searched.

He realized it was the ultimate way of searching for it, as he could search everything there, hill by hill, but realized that where the diamonds had been may now be buried deep beneath the sand, but the area looked unchanged to him, and the sand was not as deep as it seemed, and he proved that they could not be properly hidden away.

Eventually he returned to finish the last of his research in the library, and searching through the last of the documents.

What was peculiar was he somehow sensed that there was something missed out in the documents! So he was not surprised when he found it, and it was hidden away in the last of the documents, and it was a document about security services watching Anders's wife and he was sure they believed he intended to meet her at some point, and it never happened, and he found a photographed letter from her to him, which was her last letter to him from the Earth to him on Mars, which mentioned his search for something, which he was sure was the diamonds, and that he intended to return to the Earth for good, and it mentioned the map and Anders's belief that the scientist, who actually was the astronaut with him, had recorded the location wrongly.

Cronenberg discovered suggestions that the map, which had been made by the scientist, had more information hidden on it, and Anders thought he was up to something!

Chapter 13

The New Mission.

For an instant Cronenberg thought he could die a hideous death, and he even considered what it would be like being a ghost trapped out there on the desolate world.

They had to land! Soon! Surely they should not take the risk continuing to fly to their destination at night! The shuttles were still new and the repairs on theirs was only recently completed and they were trying it out for the first time, and testing it for the first time over Mars, and he was sure they had hardly even tested the thing out before they had given them it back!

Loud explosions and flashes had suddenly appeared from somewhere out in the dark Martian night sky, and had sent the whole shuttle shaking about, and he realized it had to be some form of storm, created by the weak Martian atmosphere, and he heard the other astronauts talking about it and announce it was, from the information from their equipment.

The entire crew was the same except for Campbell who was replaced by Deputy Commander James Mitchell as the new head flight engineer, and who incredibly resembled Campbell, and had the same experience and was an astrophysicist/planetary geologist, and was being helped by Rosenberg the other flight engineer, and they were all basically checking the performance of the shuttle and findings the new detection equipment aboard gathered, especially in the unexplored regions they were entering.

He realized the shuttle might not be designed for the storm and it could be far different from Earth storms, and have incredible wind speeds, and he realized the shuttle could go down and again crash on the surface of Mars.

Though he could not imagine the empty atmosphere coming out with a powerful wind, even though a high speed wind could be generated, and he considered what had actually taken them down the last time.

The sky outside, over the space vehicle, was so peculiar and strangely colored that he was sure that it was no longer in the universe, and at the outer limits of the universe, floating outside it somewhere.

The problem with the mission was that they were ordered to stick to the route they were given no matter what, and he realized that if they were confronted by a storm ahead that they would go straight through it.

He recalled the shuttles were now shielded to stop anything, after being taken down at the Antarctica the last time, and they thought it would stop anything taking control of the shuttles, and he thought it might help protect them from the powerful energy disturbances in the outer storm.

He switched on a small powerful light over him, to properly see the booklet he was given with his orders and the mission described on it, and he stared out one of the windows at the surrounding darkness, and into visible stars there, and

started properly examining the details in the booklet to see if he was missing anything he should know.

It was the perfect time of the year for the mission, for it to be light enough in the Artic and Antarctica, and the mission was for all twenty shuttles to go to and assemble at the Martian Antarctica, going there at their different sections, and the first sections to leave would cover the current daylight region of the world, would do their first scan, and a practice scan of Mars from the Artic to the Antarctica—as all the shuttles were to scan a section of Mars from the top to the bottom, over many months, and they would all scan an equal amount of Mars, and map it in more detail than had ever been done before, giving people the ability to study anything on the surface of the world back on the Earth, and someday people on the Earth would completely explore the whole of Mars!

They had to properly check all the shuttles were working and giving them the exact information they needed, and satellites would make sure they followed the exact routes and control them.

If successful it could be used to explore many worlds and moons, and in other solar systems, and he wondered if someday they would replace them with computers, and create the ultimate probe voyager that would scan entire worlds.

It was an incredible piece of luck for them as they were getting to scan every square foot of the world and they could use it to find the diamonds there, at whatever location they were at.

He was positive it was located at the southern pole though and he was starting to believe it could be at the pole itself, and Orwell had agreed and they had eagerly joined the new mission.

The world that they were exploring was like it had no sun, and it was like there were billions of light years of space between them and the nearest stars.

Chapter 14

The South Pole.

Something startled Cronenberg, when he stepped out the shuttle and stepped onto the south pole, and he struggled to grasp what as he focused on the bright sun, over the Martian horizon at the side of the shuttle, and he gasped as he watched the glowing landscape.

Other shuttles were resting behind the shuttle and he saw that five were still landing, making it all twenty being there.

Something staggered him about the mission and he sensed something was going to occur, and he shivered, and examined the ice around him, and that it was hard and had been there a long time, and he realized how ancient the world was.

He saw the sun edge its way along the horizon, and he realized he could not avoid whatever he was going to encounter! He had to go through with everything! He believed he could survive if he did everything he could and avoided making any deadly mistakes!

The world about them was a flat stretch, with occasional large asteroid dents.

“What a place?” Orwell finally moaned, and tried laughing, and moved close to him, and Cronenberg watched him, wondering what he was talking about.

“There’s something not right about this mission!” Cronenberg confessed, considering if he could give him anything that he might have missed.

He realized it could be just Mars affecting them! It was the new things and hidden dangers there! It was exploring where nobody had been before, and the great deadly environment and mistakes they could make being somewhere with such an environment for so long! The region they were in was the least explored!

It was the legendary Martian Antarctica, and he still sensed there was something strange there! Something he had not encountered before! Something that could only exist in such a place, and in the depths of space, and it gave him chilling and weird sensations, but he could not grasp what, and he wondered if he was destined to die on the remote world.

As the shuttles completely turned silent he watched the rest of the crew rush about observing the whole south pole, and he increasingly felt a presence of something, somewhere, in the chilling distance of the alien world, and it was clear that the five other members of the crew said anything about it.

A silent vibration went through the ground and he expected to hear a sudden explosion sound in the distance, and he knew it was only a tremor, but it gave the world a feeling of being unstable.

All the crew slowly vanished behind the shuttle, over where the main shuttles were, and Orwell walked around its edge to see what was happening, and stood with his mouth open and Cronenberg wondered what it could be and if it was his reaction to nothing, and he went over to him, and he then stood with his mouth open.

All the astronauts from the shuttles, a hundred astronauts, were standing in a group discussing something and he suddenly realized, from their communications from their spacesuit communicators, that it was a search for the diamonds and he wondered how the hell they had heard of them and started watching Orwell and he realized he had to have been behind it.

But he then knew he had not by his reactions! But he had to have unknowingly done it!

He was surprised when two of the other shuttle commanders looked directly at him and started discussing something, and he gasped and realized his luck was vanishing.

Cronenberg marched in close and observed all their spacesuits standing about a central area, where there was a large meteorite boulder, and he anxiously started listening into their communications.

After a few minutes he showed a glint of humor, followed by some sadness, as he realized that they never had any real information about the diamonds he then realized that they could gain knowledge of what they had.

“Are you saying that you think that there’s treasure here too?” one astronaut that had not properly heard them asked with amusement and astonishment, wondering what they were really talking about.

Everyone listened, and some stopped doing things.

“There’s a page missing from this,” one of the astronauts broke in the conversation with, and Cronenberg watched him with astonishment holding a diary.

“Yes, and I found it,” one of the other shuttle commanders, called Tom Eagle, forced himself to reply, walking out of the crowd of astronauts, and he stood in front of them all, and they formed into a crowd in front of him, and Cronenberg and Orwell rushed over and stood at the side of them.

Eagle took the diary and held it up and took the missing page out of his pocket, and continued, “It was on the bottom of the bookshelf, where it was found!”

Cronenberg wondered what the hell he was talking about as he had not heard anything until then and he knew that they had something, and he could sense something was coming, and Eagle even seemed to warn him of it.

Eagle took the page and spread it out in front of him, and all their eyes seemed to go on it at once, and he muttered, “It refers to a clue that the scientist with Anders gave! It says it is on a map that Anders managed to get from him!”

Chapter 15

The Treasure Hunt.

Now Cronenberg entirely apprehended how complicated and messed up things had really become, and that things had gone far further than before, which he had originally not been able to accept, and he started disbelieving what he had thought as fact and what was fantasy.

He did not know if he believed there were diamonds as when he read all his notes and checked documents looking for the mention of a diary by the scientist he found nothing and there was even a suggestion there was none and he started to realize that all the information showed little of if the diamonds existed, as there was barely a proven fact in them, and the scientist could easily have been wrong or up to something else, like many of the documents claimed that they wanted the rocket vehicle.

Commander Eagle seemed to have talked every astronaut there into seeking the treasure, even though most were unsure what they were going to find or were even doing, and most seemed to think he was going to take them for himself at some point.

All the shuttles in their sectors had left as the day went on, carrying out their first scan of Mars, as the sun moved over their sectors of Mars, and Cronenberg had finally left to do his, and had sat confused in his seat, examining facts over and over, and realized that Orwell had to have let out the information about the diamonds and the map out, and he could not fully realize what he had intended to do and if he had even deliberately told them to carry out some elaborate plan, but if he had was he crazy doing it or had he made a mistake in depending on Commander Eagle?

He was surprised when Orwell approached him, when the rest of the crew were occupied, and started apologizing for his mistake, and for what Eagle had done, and Cronenberg realized that he had known the shuttle commander before they had gone to Mars, and he recalled it and that they were both connected to other influential people, and at the base.

“What was your agreement?” he asked, confused at what the situation was.

“Well, he is a distant relative of mine!” he replied, surprising Cronenberg, and he watched his face and saw his resemblance.

Orwell rested against a wall, and looked at him.

“I told him only about there being diamonds and we were searching for them! I figured we would have a better chance of finding it, as for starters we only cover one small sector of the area of Mars being checked.”

“You’re correct there! We will have to search through all the stuff recorded...”

“Exactly!” he swiftly replied. “And if we’re not able to find it on the recorded stuff we’ll not get it! But now all of them are searching with their detection equipment, which can’t be used on the map, and could very well spot something ...”

He realized that it was a good point and that they could all together detect something, and their chances of finding them alone were low, and he was sure the method the scientist that originally found them had used to get them with the satellite were unknown.

He thought of how long it would take to map the entire world and rested back into his seat, and he wondered what would happen, and if he had really blown it, giving the information Orwell and to every astronaut there, and he realized that Orwell could have made a mistake and that he should have had them looking for something else, and he realized that it was Eagle that had ruined it and he was sure he never realized what he was doing.

He thought over what he had said and realized that Eagle had only known the diamonds were there, and could be found, but he had found the scientist’s diary, and Cronenberg recalled that there had been other libraries at the base, but small ones and were not for the public, and he recalled what he had said and that the diary said it was on the map and he wondered what information was in the diary and wondered if it gave how the scientist had located the diamonds on the satellite.

Cronenberg had searched the map repeatedly for the clue, after he had read a mention of it on Anders’s wife’s letter and he decided to try to find it later and started searching for information on the scientist and other scientists of that time, on his computer, and how they might have hidden it away.

Chapter 16

The Missing Shuttle.

Cronenberg was almost asleep when an urgent communication was received and he partially grasped one of the pilot's urgent voices and he rapidly realized it was something important and started to comprehend what it was to do with!

"Our mission has been cancelled!" Lyndon, the pilot, called out.

"What?" he moaned.

"For the moment! One of the shuttles has just vanished, and they're starting to search for it!"

"Whose shuttle?" he called back.

"Wait a minute! I'll ask! Whose shuttle? It's Commander Eagle's shuttle!"

Cronenberg gasped and jumped up and saw all their faces lit up, after Eagle's name was mentioned, and he watched Orwell slowly move over to him, and he considered what to do.

"Tell them we'll search for it too!" he announced, and he asked them to go to the location where the shuttle was last seen.

He was amazed when he replied, "They're at the location we went down at!"

"What at the exact location?" he gasped, considering changing the order, considering them crashing down again.

It was a dangerous mission and he just had to go there and investigate what was happening, and he wondered why the hell Eagle had chosen that route, and he realized that the diamonds could be there and hidden at some place he had not noticed.

"It's not the exact location!" Lyndon replied, looking over at him, and searching his face. "It's further south!"

After a few minutes considering it he noticed he knew something else, and asked, "Is there any other information, and anything unusual you can find?"

He announced, "We've detected the shuttle! I cannot discover if it is damaged but there is no communications from it, and no information from anyone aboard! It seems dead!"

"If you detect anything trying to take control of this shuttle turn back! We cannot afford to crash again! We can go there later!"

"They want to explore what's there—if nothing happens—and check what's happened!"

Chapter 17

The Second Occurrence.

In the distance he spotted the crashed shuttle, and it rapidly expand in size, and Cronenberg saw their crash site over at their side, and watched the hill he had stood on, where Campbell had died, and he sensed something, even though there was no sign of what had brought them down, as well as Eagle's shuttle.

When they reached Eagle's shuttle their acceleration automatically decreased and they flew in a circle around the shuttle, and he spotted damage to the shuttle,

and signs that a fire had damaged it, and he saw there were no signs of anyone, or anyone leaving it.

It looked as though it had been brought down the same way as them but had sustained more damage, and he asked Lyndon to try to contact them again, and was immediately replied with there was nothing there to contact.

He struggled to grasp what was there and saw that the whole area was just a flat area of ground, similar to a desert region, with the hill he had stood on behind them and another hill at the same distance in the opposite direction, towards the Antarctica, and where Eagle's shuttle had come from, and he focused on the deformed sun below the window, as it went along just above the horizon, and he gasped when the pilots announced the other shuttles in their group were arriving, in the distance, and he ordered them to land!

There had to be something there! He wondered if it was the hill after all! It was exactly in the middle between Eagle's crash site and their crash site!

He looked for the diamonds and anywhere he could see that looked like where they could be and realized he could not see anything, and even wondered if they really existed.

The shuttles were new and recently built and they were still testing them for the first time over Mars!

Something staggered him about the mission and he sensed something was going to occur, and had seen it approaching, with it edging its way towards him, and he felt he could not avoid it! He had to go through with what was going to happen! He believed he could survive if he did everything he could to avoid any serious and deadly mistakes!

He watched the pilots do a perfect landing next to the shuttle, and he put on his spacesuit, and followed Orwell out the shuttle, and marched over to the other shuttle, and he wondered if they were still alive, as it looked like they had landed to fast and hard, as the shuttle looked embedded in the soil.

Chapter 18

The Second Hill.

What had he done? Cronenberg completely realized his mistake and gasped, and examined the dark Martian landscape about him, with some amazement, astonished he was on another world!

Out of the silent empty Martian night high-powered rifle blasts were astonishing, especially in the deep darkness engulfing him, threatening to totally blind him! The explosions were so powerful that he believed a powerful explosive was used in the bullets, and again he was staggered that he could hear anything in such a thin atmosphere!

Someone definitely was trying to kill him, and as he rushed furiously away through thick reddish Martian sand, with his legs sinking deep, deeper and deeper

in regions, threatening to impede him completely, and even turn to some form of quicksand!

Why he had been so stupid as to leave the shuttle without anyone else, and without saying anything, and even without any form of communications, and he wondered why he kept doing such things on Mars, which he never did on the Earth!

He had left the two shuttles, on his own, and as it was getting dark, and he had entirely underestimated the depth of the sand there, and that there was even anything there, which had impeded his speed for a long time and by the time he reached the hill, in the southerly direction, south of the last hill he had climbed, when they had crashed there.

He had to see the hill as he was sure it was really where there was something, and he was sure it had been where Anders and the scientist had intended to land, and he had known that he would never have a chance to search there again!

More high-powered rifle shots blasted out and hit the ground behind him and he realized how deep the darkness was now, and why he had survived, especially when the person had been close!

His pale cold complexion had entirely altered now and his face was bright red! Sounds of his heavy breathing and outer sounds took strange tones as he started trying to explain what they were, and he strained his eyes trying to see in front of him, and in the darkness he spotted the mountain stone was nearby, and that he would entirely escape the sand there, where he would have to escape from the gunman behind him!

While he rushed furiously on he thought of the injured state the survivors of Eagle's shuttle crash had been in, and their account of what had landed them there, and he thought of all the things they said, and when he had realized that something had definitely landed them there, as they had approached from the south, and he had worked out the distance that they had claimed it had taken control of their shuttle, and then the distance it had been taken control of at the other side, as they had approached from the north, and he had worked out where the central point was, and the hill that he was going to had been directly in the middle, and he was sure it was where there was something, and that it had been only able to use its powers on both shuttles at a certain distance, at either side of it.

Though there was no sign of the diamonds being there he was sure they had to be there somewhere, and he wondered what the hell the connection was between them and what had made them crash there.

The solid ground ahead of him increased in size, as he slowly got nearer and nearer, and he considered using his light, by flashing it, to get a brief view of what was fully there, and where to run, but he decided not to as the person would see him and could easily shoot him.

He was sure it had to be someone from one of the other shuttles, as he had the same reactions, and he realized how desperate they had become to get the diamonds and he blamed it all on Eagle and his scheme to get the treasure, and have all the shuttles search and have himself go to that site, and crash.

Something staggered him about the mission and the fact that from the very start he sensed something was going to occur, and had seen something

approaching, edging its way towards him, which he knew he could not avoid! He had to go through with it! And he somehow thought he could survive if he did everything he could and avoided a deadly mistake!

It was unexplored Mars! It had new dangers there! It was exploring where nobody had been before, with its great deadly environment with its hidden dangers! The region they were in was the least explored and the great Antarctica!

He could hardly believe he was at the legendary Martian Antarctica, and he still sensed there was something strange there! Something he had not encountered before! Something that could only exist at such a place, out in the depths of space, which might not be able to exist on the Earth, and it gave him an even more chilling sensation of something he could not grasp!

As he accelerated on, closing in on the dark stone of the hill, he increasingly felt a presence of something, somewhere, in the chilling darkness of the alien world around them, which he realized never existed earlier.

Whoever was after him had to be stark raving mad and out for the kill, and was stupid for going to such levels to kill him, as if they found his body, which they would surely discover, as they would find his footsteps in the sand from near the shuttles and would be able to trace him, and the other person's prints, and there would be someone that noticed the person had not been around, and he could not realize who was there and just accepted that he was trying to kill him to get the diamonds, which might have been detected by them!

The place had to be located in the coldest place he had been in and he detected it in places all about him, and it had the look of being the most remote place! Even in the summer the place was been highly deadly to any form of life!

He could not grasp why the person was so positive that there were diamonds, and could go so far to get them!

The dangers and the coldness made him cringe and blindly rush on through the blinding blackness, almost lost, and he wondered why people took such risks and gambled so far.

A loud explosion blasted out and a bullet thudded somewhere nearby and he had to jump through the sand into the dark landscape for his life! He dared not use his light now, and he could barely see anything!

The man could be heard over to his side behind him and he realized that he could have an infrared sight and was playing with him and when he reached the stone area below the hill he just dived at it and ran as fast as he could into the darkness, going straight to an area of small hills nearby, at the bottom of the hill, and that was covered up from being seen by the gunman, and once there he rushed round a hill and rushed towards one of another five hills, which he chose randomly, and immediately rushed around, and realized he had finally got away from him, and with delight saw many more small stone hills going over to the base of the large main central hill, and randomly kept rushing through different hills, covering up any sign he was there, and made sure his footsteps were not visible and he was not being watched, and he saw the gunman had vanished behind him.

Once he realized that he had escaped he started to enjoy going slower and being free from being attacked, and he thought through what had occurred!

Why would he go to such lengths to kill him? Surely the diamonds were not worth that much? There had to be something else! What else could possibly be there? What could be there in such a desolate place?

Suddenly it was like he recognized the place and mysteriously followed routes through different hills, and was constantly surprised that he knew things were there before he arrived and went around corners, and felt he could find somewhere to hide there and when he finally found a hiding place at the hill itself, in a small tunnel in a large pile of large boulders, and he rushed into the small tunnel going through and around the boulders until he reached the hill itself and found himself surrounded by a small hidden cavity, where he hid, and faced outwards, buried away in the boulders, seeing if he could see anything, and checked for any gaps in the boulders, and when he found there were no holes or places light could escape he turned on his light and quickly checked his oxygen supply, and spare tanks, and realized he could escape in the morning, before it was light, and realized the person would eventually return to the shuttles, if he never found him, as he saw the person never had extra oxygen tanks.

He rested and started going over everything and what had happened and he wondered if something else was occurring that he never knew of, and why they had been so determined to get the diamonds as there was no real proof of the diamonds existing, anyway, and he had seen the diary Eagle had, which had belonged to the scientist, and the diary had virtually nothing in it as far as he was concerned, and he recalled Eagle mentioning that that the location was hidden away on the map and he realized that Orwell had to have told him, and convinced him there was definitely something there, but Orwell never knew of the map, and he had not told anyone, and he had been sure Eagle thought he had it, and he recalled that someone did know he had it, and it was Rosenberg, as he had seen him take it out of Anders's spacesuit!

Chapter 19

The Light in the Night.

Cronenberg's dreams were strange and as though he was floating through mist, which shifted about beneath him, and he never recognized anything, and he was too tired to awaken, and he observed it all with amusement, and an annoying whispering sound that he kept listening to, from some unseen place, which sounded artificial when he firmly listened.

The events of the past days haunted him and he kept wondering where things were going, and it was incredible as he had not done anything like it in years, and even then it was nothing like it!

Lights twinkled through thick areas of mist on the horizon. A bright light suddenly appeared, deep in the vapor. It oscillated and intensified.

He tried imagining the astronaut who had chased him as he tried to realize something that he could not grasp about him and he was surprised that he

appeared and how authentic he was, and he studied the perfect copy in detail, with the strange light there glowing over him.

He resembled someone! He could not grasp! He realized no face features had been visible, and the person was somehow different, and he nearly grasped it when a strange loud gurgle came from somewhere. He sensed the presence of something mysterious somewhere nearby, or existing about him, and he felt danger existed and he swiftly opened his eyes and was surprised to see a light in the cavity, and he rapidly searched the tunnel where he had come in and saw there was nothing there, and turned to where he had been facing while dreaming and adjusted his blurred eyes, and sat upright staring at it trying to see what it was, and realized it was there and was not projected there, and he wondered if it was some form of volcanic disturbance, and a crack into some form of volcano, where there was molten rock, and realized it was Mars and things were different and that molten rock might not explode out, as the lava flow was nothing like on the Earth.

It was not there before he went to sleep, as he would have seen a crack there, and the crack was too new looking, and he realized that it must have appeared about when he started dreaming, and he tried to work out why and he decided that him being there, and his weight and frantic rush into the cavity might have altered the weakened rock and allowed it to break, and he realized that if it got worse it could breakthrough.

A deep thud appeared within the rock and he heard a familiar sound and realized it was the annoying whispering sound in his dream that he kept listening to, from some unseen place, which had sounded artificial, and he listened to it with his ear against the rock and he heard it was a powerful vibration from something, and when he firmly listened he was sure something was breaking through, and he checked his watch and wondered if the astronaut with the gun was still about outside, hunting him down, and he examined the crack in the rock and was surprised when he checked it lower down and his eyes adjusted and he saw a cave there and the powerful light was coming from something strange in the distance.

What amazed him was before he checked he knew he could enter the cave, and he grabbed the edge of the crack and started pulling chunks of crumbling rock away, opening the gap wider and wider, until he had a hole large enough to enter, and he stood blinded by the bright light beaming out into the dark night, and surrounding cavity, and prepared to enter it, and was surprised at the formation of the cavity and it looked almost artificial made.

As he swiftly entered the hole he was surprised that it was a very long tunnel and he cautiously marched along it, going deep into the hill.

Mind-bending sounds and echoes from what he was sure was volcanic activity increased and came through the shaft with fury and left him stunned at the dangers, and no matter how he tried to shake it off and contemplate its full identity he never formed stable recognitions of what was occurring there, and why the light was so powerful, and almost like laser light or light from the sun!

The vibration going through the rock reminded him of a fault line and he accepted it had to be some form of volcanic activity, and he slowed down and prepared himself to run if he anything came towards him, and he probed his way

through the large hole in the hill, and as he went along he realized that there was some form of breeze blowing from ahead and he realized the dangers he could be in and that there could be highly explosive volcanic gases, and that if he never caused a spark it could be ignited by the volcanic activity, and he checked the walls and ground around him searching for signs of it having occurred before, and if the lava had been through there, and he saw nothing, and there was no sign of scorch marks or anything, other than it was as if something had blasted its way through it.

Chapter 20

The Alien Sphere.

A loud screech ripped through him and he nearly leapt off the floor, and he stood dazzled by the bright light blasting into his eyes, and he had to recall what had just occurred, and that he had sleepily just staggered straight into the blinding light, in an immense cavity, situated at the center of the bottom of the hill, and he tried to grasp what was in front him!

The thing resembled a magical sphere, and he tried to grasp what was really there, and why it was there!

In the blinding light he could not grasp if it was just energy or what, and he saw a blast of stars exploding by him, as though he was shooting through space in some strange galaxy, and he gasped again, and wondered if it was causing him to imagine things.

Its formation seemed to constantly change, as though unstable, and he watched it shift around a central region, of the cavity, as though trapped in something, and some force field, and for a moment something seemed to form in it that seemed alive, and its formation kept altering, as though its energy was constantly altering and trying to control itself, and altered and whirled within occasional hideous energy surges—while it kept consistently stopping itself from vanishing.

It looked like something had been caught in some energy field there and had altered itself to survive, and he was staggered at the power the field had and what was caught in it!

It surely had to be artificial, but he could not prove it, and nothing was normal or familiar, and the cavity looked natural, but unusual, and he tried to establish if it had alien origins but could not, and he believed if it was it was of a highly advanced species of some sort.

For a few seconds he was sure something formed in it and looked out at him, and into to his very soul, and for a second recognized something, and he tried to place it and realized that it had reminded him of what had landed their shuttle, and had made them crash, and for some reason he felt it had not deliberately caused them to crash and he wondered if it was trying to communicate with him or state information like a computer.

Surely the sphere could not create such a thing!

But he was sure it was something artificial and decided to leave it until he had slept and he considered staying in the cavity, and he realized that there was air around, which could be breathed, and for some reason he unlocked his faceplate and opened it and breathed air there, which was fresh and he wondered where it had come from, but could not find anything anywhere, and he decided to leave and closed his faceplate and went back into the tunnel, and back to where he had been sleeping, considering if it was sort of entity/life form combination, trapped there, and he wondered what the scientists at the base, and the Earth, would think of it, and he realized he would be famous and remembered in history books for the discovery, and the biggest discovery ever find in outer space, and he wondered what would happen to the energy bubble—and if they could remove it what would happen? Surely they would fully check the energy bubble before it was taken to an inhabited region of the Earth!

Chapter 21

The Scientists.

The cavity was full of scientists, technicians, and archeologists going in a circle around the energy sphere, crowded around it, in groups loudly and excitedly discussing hundreds of scientific details, not going passed a white painted line circle going around its sphere, where alterations to things had occurred, and Cronenberg went behind them and took a seat at a table beside some scientists, and with the astronauts of his shuttle, and he watched the astronauts startled faces, still recalling his arrival back at the base, and his description of it, and they had immediately sensed that it was something immense of alien origins, of a highly advanced civilization, and had only been slightly surprised that he had gone to the hill.

Who had the gunman astronaut been? Who had wanted to kill him? He even wondered if someone had known of the alien sphere, and had tried to stop them finding it for some reason!

What had astonished him was that none of the astronauts had actually left the shuttles, and they were positive of it, and he had even proven nobody had sneaked away by recordings of them on the shuttle recordings, and it had left him bewildered.

He had been told confidentially that there had been occurrences at that region of the Antarctica before their shuttles had been brought down, and they had been highly classified occurrences, and Anders crash had been recorded, but they had not found their remains and wreckage.

The events of that week were incredible and he saw the whole base react to the alien discovery, and the information had appeared all over the media there, and it had finally reached the Earth, and he had even become famous there for finding the discovery, and had returned to see it with the other astronauts, and they had told them of the occurrences that had taken the shuttles down, which the

scientists believed it had been responsible for the occurrences, and they believed that the sphere had something wrong with it, which nobody fully understood, and that it had not been able to take the shuttles where it had wanted and had landed them where it was safe to land, and that the rocket vehicle Anders and the scientist had been in had been too hard to land properly, leading to its crash.

They believed it had tried to take them to where it was to have them find it, and he was positive of it now, and also going by the accounts the scientists there gave of things that had happened since they had entered the cavity, and it later enlarged the tunnel into the hill, and the appearance of strange things!

They believed it was trying to make contact with them, but nothing had been established, though it had communicated with many of them, as he had done, but they had been confused by it and had not achieved much and it revealed little, but he was surprised that the astronaut with the gun had been seen the night before and he had questioned the scientists that had seen him and they gave him a photograph of him and he had identified it as the astronaut, and they were sure it had used the generated astronaut copy to get him to go to the cavity to the discovery, which he surely would not have gone to if he had not been chased!

But he also thought it generated it to do things and they were there for some other reason, and nobody had given a full and proper explanation of why, and they never fully got the alien sphere's actual function, or if it was just an advanced life form and what it was really like, and what it was doing there and what environment had it originated from, and what it really wanted, other than the fact it had wanted to be discovered!

The scientists were mainly involved in trying to monitor and analyze everything they could about the sphere!

Chapter 22

The Cavity.

A panoramic spectacle view of the Martian landscape stretched out all the way around Cronenberg as he rested on the top of the hill, almost over the cavity, and he watched the fascinating rugged golden shapes of the world beaming in bright sunlight everywhere, and in the thin blue sky he studied stars, and where all the vehicles and shuttles were below, and below where the archaeologists were working away, checking if there was anything in the ground everywhere, and he heard their excited conversations, talking of the discovery, which had to their ultimate find, and perhaps the best find in centuries.

He liked archeology, especially there, and liked exploring the past and the occurrences that had taken place.

The world below now looked like it had been frozen in time, and was a fantastic surreal prehistoric times world, and he recalled why he had even wanted to be a paleontologist. It conjured up great visions of the original primitive worlds of the universe, with its astounding untouched magnitude.

While he moved over and rested against a large boulder he occasionally examined clouds of dust from the stone and debris, the archeologists sifted through, and he still listened for anything of interest to him, and he watched the sky in a place that he had not examined before and wondered what existed there and what other strange worlds there were to explore, and he started to realize he was starting to like the world more than his own, and that he would miss being there if he left, and the stars on the Earth would not be the same.

The cavity had fascinated everyone there and he watched them dig away the hill, enlarging the tunnel out, more and more, to allow them to get proper large equipment in.

An image was still in his mind! Something about the astronaut with the gun fascinated him, as if it had tried to kill him, and he wondered if it meant the alien sphere was a killer life form, and was it waiting for its chance to do something?

He could not grasp why it had not shown it intended to do harm, but he was sure it used the astronaut to get him there!

What had eaten Campbell and the other people at the base though, and yet the alien sphere could not reach the distance of the base and he began to suspect there was something else!

The entire outside of the cavity and the boulders there were destroyed and their remains removed, and everything there and further out was being checked by archeologists, as they searched for the remains of anything that could give them the slightest clue to the energy sphere's origins or anything else.

It was incredible that with the entire incident he had forgotten about the map and the diamonds, and he was amazed that he was actually sitting on the spot where he had intended to look for them, and he still had not done it!

He looked over to where the other hill was, where he had climbed up when they had crashed there, and looked over at where the shuttles had been, where Eagle's shuttle had crashed, and the shuttles had landed, and examined all the mess it had left.

Eagle and the other astronauts had now entirely lost interest in the treasure map, and that made him happy, and he recalled Rosenberg knowing of the map, when he saw Cronenberg taking it out Anders pocket, and he was sure it was him that had told them of it, but he had not gone near Eagle anywhere.

He spotted where Anders's rocket vehicle had come down, and where their shuttle had been over at its side.

He removed the treasure map and studied it, and the entire region about him, sure that it had to be out there or about him somewhere, and he was surprised at how bright the map was there and how details on it became visible, which were not visible before, and he studied it with some surprise, and in an entirely new light, seeing the entire area and map properly, and as not the vague jumbled muddled scrap of paper as it had been, but as the scientist had made it, as he knew what he was like now, now that he had all the information of the scientist, and how he did things!

To his surprise he spotted a mark, like a vague small hill with a cross marked on it, and it was surely the hill he was on, and he started searching about the hill for the place, and for anything that looked like it, and went to a slightly higher point behind him and he measured the hill and mark on the map and saw the

place close to him, to his surprise, and he searched where it was marked at, and spotted a bright gleam nearby and rushed over to it.

Chapter 23

The Awakening.

Cronenberg stopped dead, confused, bewildered, and he rushed down the hill, gasping hysterically for air, thinking of the diamond in his spacesuit pocket, and in the deep silence of his spacesuit it sank in that something else was occurring simultaneously with his incredible discovery, and the discovery of the first diamond on Mars and with an immense size he had never seen before!

Saliva poured down his mouth, and he had to calm himself, and rest, to see what he was missing!

When he had rested he examined everything over at the cavity entrance and watched scientists rushing out, and falling about, and technicians and archeologists swiftly removing expensive equipment, as though something deadly of immense proportions was occurring, and he tried to recall what they had been doing.

He stood baffled with his mouth open, as he had not even seen them react anything like it before!

What the hell was going on? He did not know what to do? Would he lose what he had found?

The diamond had astounded him! It was just lying out in the open, shining in the sunlight, embedded in a strange form of Martian rock, which he used a tool to hack out.

He sat down, still exhausted, thinking of all the things he could use the cash on back on the Earth and slowly started realizing the ground was vibrating and dust and stones were shifting about him, and the intensity of it was increasing, and he started to see something unbelievably dangerous was going to happen, and large boulders at his side started rolling about the hill, and as he stood he started falling about as though in an immense earthquake, and saw and heard boulders rolling down and smashing into things on the ground, and he ran down at full speed as he saw the ground starting slide down and form a landslide.

The bottom of the hill was now being smashed with more and more large boulders, and everything was collapsing about him, and he searched everywhere until he saw a place that was free from the destruction and he swiftly took the safest route across to there, and fell over, over and over, and kept immediately rushing back on his feet.

Once on the ground he used the last of his energy to escape from the hill, but he collapsed against a pile of boulders, with his eyes still on the hill, and he grasped what the incredible force behind it was like.

To his shock he spotted all the scientists and others still running and escaping for their lives—and they were further out than him—and he rushed away on his

weakened limbs and ran away from the site as fast as he had ever tried to run, and he even thought of removing the lower part of his spacesuit to get away!

When he heard the explosion he just dived straight over some boulders, to an area behind them, and covered himself by burrowing himself below the boulders, and covered his ears as the blast intensified and he felt the blast hit the other side of the boulders, and he gritted his teeth as he waited for the powerful impact to kill him!

Chapter 24

The Artifact.

Once the dust cloud slowly vanished, with no sign of anything else occurring, they all started returning to the remains of the hill, and mainly in rubble heaps across their front.

Cronenberg watched the dead and injured being taken away in undamaged shuttles, and he wondered what was going on, and swiftly approached scientists he knew.

“What did you do?” he moaned to one, and he just laughed back, feeling his arm trying to find how damaged it was, from a rock that had hit it, as they went back to where the alien energy sphere had been.

A horrendous sensation struck him as he felt energy from something pulsating through the ground – the same energy that he had felt from the energy sphere, going through the ground, but it had far more power and energy to it. He was so startled that he was not able to exhale properly and he checked his oxygen supply, and wondered what they had done to the energy sphere.

“They never did anything!” one scientist replied, and stared at him.

“What happened then?” he replied firmly.

“Nothing! They were trying to dig it up and we were setting up equipment, and massive energy surges appeared, and the ground everywhere started shaking, and we detected something was going to occur, and we had to run out and escape as the hill started collapsing everywhere...”

When they approached where the center of the hill was they all started slowing and examining there and Cronenberg saw it was different from everywhere else, and as they moved closer saw all the rubble had been pushed away from the central region by some force, and that the energy sphere was there, hovering over a black artificial object, which had been buried away under the rock, and that it had clearly used the force to free itself from beneath the hill, and they all approached it cautiously now seeing the dangers of it, and that it had clearly taken the whole hill down on top of them, killing and injuring people there.

Though as they approached it he sensed that it had not purposely killed anyone and had done its best to avoid it!

At the edge of the energy bubble, altering wildly, gleams of light shone like bright miniature stars were being held there motionlessly, and some scientists

filmed it and studied it, and started recording information about it, and he heard one of the scientists give the exact time the disturbance started and he was surprised that it was the exact time that he had removed the diamond at the top of the hill, and he realized that it had been directly above it.

Chapter 25

The Strange Black Object.

For days he watched the archeologists at work removing the black object beneath the energy sphere, and he watched them discover it was made of something they could not recognize, and none of the scientists had any proper theories what it was, as there were no clues anywhere to anything, and the energy sphere refused to give any proper communications, and most of the things it gave were beyond their understand, and it became clear to him that every time he appeared it started to give communications, which he originally thought he was imagining, and then he thought it was the scientists doing something that they wanted to do when he was there, and then the scientists started questioning him about it!

They questioned him about everything they could and never got anything, and the only proper theory put forward, by a leading scientist, was it had connected itself to him for some reason, and perhaps because he found it and perhaps it trusted him, and it had allowed him to find it, and he was the chosen one to make communications with, even though it answered them while he was there, and they tried occasionally to discover why, without much success, and they could not grasp something.

The work continued for days, and they all accepted that there was an existing danger from it, and its form altered—and shrank to nearly fifty feet across from every side—and was suspended over the artifact, in a large cavity that was dug around it.

The entire top region was covered in equipment and scientists studying the alien object and energy bubble above, trying to find what connected them, as there had to be some form of communication between the two, but they never found anything and it was agreed that it was either undetectable to them or it connected when the object was activated in some way, and some thought that the energy sphere had to be created by the object below as nothing was found that could give its vast powers.

Detection equipment was everywhere all around it and at the end of cables entered into areas of its field, where they found it could now be entered further, and the scientist reacted immediately when they received results, and one time they found that digital numbers were frozen on an atomic clock entered into its field, and even created multidimensional forms through the air, and they studied the suspension of partially transparent layers, and saw them vanish somewhere.

Paranormal scientists were even brought in and were left staggered and bewildered at what it was, and there was in fact little that was identifiable, and even after immense amounts of experiments little was found, but vast amounts of research and recordings were done, which might be used to find a solution to its identity one day, and they were sure if they could grasp some clue about its identity that they might be able to start solving their unanswered questions.

One day Cronenberg got up early in the morning with his shuttle crew, as they were to return to the base for the first time in a long time, and he was surprised to see the scientists monitoring the equipment in large shuttles there, and had just been woken up and had started checking information on what was happening, and he was about to announce that they were due to continue their mission of mapping Mars when he spotted that they had raised the object below the alien sphere.

The size of the cavity beneath the object below the energy sphere had been increased and they had removed the giant block and raised it up over the Martian landscape.

Cronenberg and his shuttle crew stood by its side examining the object with amazement.

“It must weigh tons...” Rosenberg gasped, checking the equipment that they had used to lift it over the ground.

“Well, they’ve virtually carved the entire block out!” Mitchell continued. “It was not as deep downwards as they expected, and they’ve tunneled under and around it to get it up. It’s incredible! It resembles a black version of the flying saucers they use to claim to see years ago on the Earth!”

“What the hell is it though?” Cronenberg replied, making all of them gasp, and look above it to the energy sphere floating over it, and he felt the surface of it and felt a firm vibration from something, showing it was functioning.

“It’s like there is something missing from it!” he replied. “It’s as though it’s somewhere else at the same time—and we are only seeing this part of it...”

“That could explain why they got so little information from it!” Orwell answered firmly.

Chapter 26

The Gateway.

Cronenberg sensed something strange that he could not grasp, when he returned to the alien energy sphere, with his shuttle crew, and he tried to get what it was but failed!

Before he had left on his mission he had returned to the energy sphere and he and the rest of the crew had immediately seen the energy sphere had altered completely, and its outer fringes had a sphere of energy accelerating around it at an incredible speed, and the ground below vibrated furiously, and he felt there was something about to happen.

He shuddered as he studied its powerful sphere shape, with no blemishes or openings, vibrating with colossal powers.

The abnormal antics of the scientists also captivated him—mystifying him with the depth of their nervousness—and their fear of something colossal! They repetitively studied their highly advanced equipment and an immense sophisticated laser, with alarm, and he realized it was all new stuff there, and that it had just been brought in from the Earth, and was of a highly confidential nature, and he and the others with him knew it was there for a reason, and whatever that reason was it surely was dangerous, and he finally talked a scientist into getting a leading scientist to come over and explain what was happening.

“We have successfully communicated with it!” the leading scientist announced. “There was a first contact scenario put together to handle first contact situations, and one of the outcomes was an alien source code, designed to communicate with any extraterrestrials through communications, which has been vastly improved, and we used it to make communication with it.

“Well, special equipment here was used and we found out a few things! Even though we never got what the energy sphere and artifact was we discovered how to activate it!”

“Activate it!” Cronenberg gasped.

He and the other astronauts stood stunned with their mouths open, realizing the true situation!

“You’ve the technology to properly communicate with it...” Cronenberg moaned. “What will activating actually do?”

“Perhaps make a first contact situation occur!” he replied, making them gasp more, and wonder what the hell they were going to contact and how dangerous it was, and Cronenberg gasped when he realized that the thing was attached to him and he might be made to make contact.

“Another classified element of it is we communicate with it telepathically!”

“So what’s happened?” he replied, anxiously waiting for a reply, and an answer to what was occurring.

“We’ve just started, and we needed you here to go further!”

They watched scientists activating equipment in front of them, with the energy sphere in front of them, and the artifact below resting over the ground.

A swift flash of light exploded out and a highly advanced strange laser beam blasted into the energy sphere—silencing all the scientists all around them.

In the blinding light, with him shading his eyes, he saw something was going to happen and he prepared himself, and watched it trigger it to unlock and open the flying saucer shaped black artifact below it and with a deafening bang he watched it split in half and the top half lift upwards into the air, until it was a certain position above the bottom half, which if the area between the top and bottom was filled in would make the whole artifact a perfect sphere, and they watched an energy field in the gap become visible.

Cronenberg with surprise watched the alien energy sphere above it shift down and enter the energy field, and fill the gap between the top of the artifact and the bottom, and it became a black central region between the top and bottom, and he knew it was complete and detected it from it, and from its central region where the energy sphere was.

It left them staggered, at what it was, could be, and the sheer power of it, and he watched the scientists communicating with it, and some rushed away to do things.

The whole artifact looked a perfectly symmetrical black sphere, and scientists and archeologists shifted a ramp over to it, which had been used to climb on the artifact, and they lowered it to where the alien energy sphere was in its central region.

What surprised him was they were now able to go right up to the energy sphere region, and they knew they could, and they started putting equipment there, and he spotted scientists removing what looked like a highly advanced probe of some sort and taking it to it and he realized that they intended to send it in and investigate what was there.

While the scientists were away Cronenberg and the shuttle crew decided to take what might be their only opportunity to check it and they marched up the ramp to examine it, and stood in front of the region the alien energy sphere was, and examined it inches away, and its now motionlessly perfect surface, and he tried to detect anything from it but could not, and realized that it had to be what had taken the shuttle down, and he recalled his original thoughts of it when he had sensed it in the shuttle going towards the Antarctica, and he realized it was it!

The echoes of things the scientists said about it in their last conversations haunted his mind.

What the hell had he done? Why had he done it? Surely he should have just left the thing in the cavity! They had no idea what it was, and it could be the end of mankind!

He watched the probe and a robotic device they were maneuvering there!

It had to be some form of ancient voyager, which could very well be billions of years old, which they had only been able to check a few basic functions of, which nobody had shown any proper awareness of the function of.

Even though they had found a way to activate it could they finally find a way of finding out what it was for?

For some reason, without thinking, he felt the diamond in his spacesuit pocket.

He tried to communicate with the alien sphere like he had done when he had first found it in the cavity at the center of the hill and tried to find out what its function was and what it wanted.

He thought of all the occurrences and facts about it, as he tried to grasp something he had missed, and he felt its powerful energy, like it went out across space and somewhere else, with so much force that it even threatened to make space and time warp or completely rip away, and he wondered what damage the Earth could be subjected to.

A sudden explosion of energy blasted out at him and the other members of the shuttle crew, from the energy sphere, and left them stunned, and by its colossal power surrounding them, and they contemplated its vast dangers and that they could not escape.

The strength of it was staggering, and they plunged into its confines, hurtling into a black abyss, where only a strange faint existence existed, and an explosion of movement, frenzy of activity, located them at different points in space and time,

making vast leaps across the cosmos, emerging in vast mind-bending star regions,
with a capacity inconceivable, searching for something!

