

*a weapon of bizarre consequence by*  
ZACC DUKOWITZ

# TEN DAYS IN THE SUBMERGED CITY

DECREE 7,936

Every citizen, original, ambulatory, or otherwise, must carry this document on her person at all times, and if asked, as evidence of her loyalty to the government and its agents, be prepared to demonstrate an intimate knowledge of its contents, up to and including our great canon, its AMAs, and the history of our Divine Mother's ineluctable rise to power over the ambulatory oppressor and his machines of war.

THUS IT IS DECREED.

10 March AW 296

*Begin Document*

This text has been excerpted from the journal of Colonel William Hooker, written during his first visit to Pa'Jaibal, our great capital. Annotations and Appropriate Moral Aphorisms (AMAs) provided by the undersigned, Cleric Tomas Meekly.

Given the importance of this account as the Second Revelation of The People, I have endeavored to leave the text as intact as possible, only making emendations where the original document was illegible or where what is written required elaboration for the sake of clarity or moral edification. Such changes are indicated [thus].

Cleric Meekly, of The People

19 April AWBC 187

Begin original text:



3 JUNE 2044 A.M.

Bad start. En route to Submerged City. Samabaj. Looks like will be late.

First, flight from Albuquerque to Mexico City was delayed. Missed connection and landed late in Guatemala City. Took helicopter straight to Lake Atitlan. Hardly slept.

Second, Station Commander Slipson [of the First Revelation] not present at Santiago Atitlan town center at 0600. Slipson was promoted hastily due to lack of good candidates, post 2019. Lesser figure in The Counsel. Wonder now if we made the right choice. At 0620 departed for lake alone with standard issue hydrophobic tote bags, fearing robbery and murder whole time.

Third, submersible transport pod at public *muelle* grown over with hypertrophic cyanobacteria. Terrible mess of green muck. Took hours to clean.

Fourth, driver was late.

Fifth, once moving could smell stale odor of Red Label emanating from driver. Insisted on turning back. Threw a fit as in old days. Had him demoted and replaced. Felt damn good.

Sixth, it's a goddamn mile to the bottom of the lake. No one told me. Driver so cheap he cut the engine after five minutes, just let the craft sink. Water darkened. Felt

claustrophobic sinking like that. Took up my digiform to write this as a distraction.

Also—

Must note that since entering the sensory void of black water I have begun feeling a great deal of internal motion. So much that I am reminded of my younger self, the prolix idealist who wrote bad poetry for his wife. Who tried to kill himself when she disappeared. 12/21/2019. The mass detonation of the [righteous Weapons of Bizarre Consequence]. Reports say the weapons transfigured some into animals, birds and dogs and so on, that some had even changed into ideas, states—whatever that could mean—but I refused to harbor hope for such ridiculous possibilities. The truth of the world is that she died then. Bizarre as they may have been, targeting the weapons of the world, replacing them with lakes and groves and other natural phenomena, I cannot believe that a human being could be so transformed. It is my sworn duty to protect the survivors from other such attacks.

AMA:  
Organization is key!



3 JUNE 2044 P.M.

After arrival in SC and going through requisite pressure stations, walked around a little. Can't say I enjoyed it much. Too heavy in the suit. Six months of training in that can and my mind is still as weak as the first day. Thank god the rooms are pressurized, oxygenated, odorized, catheterized, etc.



At first blush the city is a mess of relics. Stelae and crumbling temples, ancient Mayan glyphs etched into worn stone. Not too impressive in terms of modernity.

But the real city is beneath the ruins in a massive system of tunnels and chambers of various shapes and sizes. Warm yellow lights track your progress. Pressure stations, bur-nished metal. Touch technology on every surface tells you where you are, answers questions, etc., accommodates even the gloved hands of my diving suit.

The decrepit structures above are apparently used for official purposes, meetings and worship. And in this they are not unlike those of us on the surface who live so close to our history, in Rome or Asilah, Detroit or Antigua, where the remains of the Old City are preserved, sometimes even used for certain functions, while more modern dwellings sprawl outward—or downward, in this case—from that point.

AMA:

A good citizen pays homage to the past  
while keeping her eyes on the future.



4 JUNE 2044 A.M.

Woke early, drank protein shake, did calisthenics. Feeling a spry 67. Even did my kneebends. As one of the last leaders of the last great army in the world—even if we do number at only 2,000 or so—I often feel the heavy weight of my responsibility. But this morning I am invigorated.

Cap't Johns arrived at 0700 to check in. Said there was another rumble on the surface, and would I mind signing a digiform approving martial action. Ate quickly in quarters—seasoned cyanobacteria and a mound of fish eggs—and was on site by 0735.

To my great relief, no strong or unsettling feelings this morning.

Correction—

In yesterday's entry indicated pod driver was demoted and replaced. In fact he was a civilian, so the only recourse available was to complain to his supervisor, a fat man in a floral shirt. Supervisor not likely to act on my complaint, evidenced by the way he blew air at me to produce the sound of flatulence. Sadly, though I continue to wear my stars, they do not induce the same awe.

Another—

I continue to experience deep emotion thinking on 2019.  
Excitement or unsettlment?

Re: above—

I must be careful to maintain my moral bearing. If I lie here in private, what will stop me from deceiving my fellow man?

AMA:

One ought not lie.





4 JUNE 2044 P.M.

Body proving strong. At least I can thank the training for that. Mind adjusting too.

After breakfast Cap't Johns had the men do drills and demonstrations for my benefit. All was in order, and they seemed in fine trim. My instructions from The Counsel were simply to evaluate the army, their weapons, and their level of training. Nominally to see if we might pursue an alliance, but also to see if they might prove dangerous.

With so few weapons and so few soldiers it is essential to know who are our enemies and who our friends. So far, appears those of SC could make good allies.

If only they didn't insist on wearing the diving suits. Cap't Johns' visor is so worn and scratched I can hardly see his eyes, and he leaves his respirator floating out behind him. As if I can't see the bubbles at the sides of his neck, from whence he is in fact respirating. Wearing a diving suit when your genetics do not require it. Such an affectation does not become a military man, bespeaks a certain vanity on the part of a leader. A vanity that will be duplicated a hundredfold in that leader's men. That is, to say the least, distasteful.

And it also has an effect on the mind. I would be less uneasy altogether if it were simply one thing or the other. If either he wore the suit correctly, or did not wear it at all.

AMA:

Sometimes one must dwell in darkness  
for the Light to become visible.



5 JUNE 2044 A.M.

More drills this morning. All in good order. But I can tell many of them are distracted by the growing trouble on the surface. From what I can gather by eavesdropping, fighting has begun in earnest between the indigenous Mayans and those who have been referred to only as The Company.

Cannot discern how SC is involved. Why was I given no intelligence on this? And still they ask me to sign more forms, as if my consent means anything. (Though I must confess, I am gratified by the deference.)

AMA:

Give yourself up to those who govern.  
If you do not possess the answers, it is because  
you are not meant to possess them.

Correction—

Looking back, I notice a fallacious causal relationship implied in the morning entry of June 4. My statement about feeling "a spry 67" being placed just before my statement about doing kneebends. I did the kneebends with great trepidation, and doing them made me feel very old.

The truth is that the cause of my buoyant feelings and the cause of forcing myself to do kneebends despite the alarming crackling sounds they produce lies solely in Lieutenant Adams.



Lieutenant Amy Adams. A mermaid, if I may permit myself the phrase. A regular goddess, she is. What she has done to me is marvelous. I find myself feeling the old fear, that wonderful fear I once felt when a schoolboy and confronted by a pretty girl.

Keep your wits about you old man.

AMA:  
These people are People too.



5 JUNE 2044 P.M.

To inform myself of events on the surface, touched a wall panel and began querying SC database. Summarily filled in on history of [indigenous revolution] against government and private interests. Read: Guatemalan fruit company, according to the machine. Perhaps it is mistaken? Regardless, SC believes Santiago Atitlan to be epicenter of 90 year war.

Their history, in brief: coup in Guatemala, secretly backed in 1954 by a long-extinct empire [USA, defunct empire of the ambulatory]. Indigenous Mayans reenslaved, fought back, and genocide perpetrated upon them. 1980s, approximately 300 Maya "disappeared" from Santiago. War declared over in 1996 but fighting continued in secret. 2016, two hundred massacred. 2018, private interests forced indigenous to resurrect defeated 1960s hydroelectric project to dig hole through center of Volcan San Pedro.

Project would drain very lake above us to unlivable conditions. World's armies decimated in 2019. Conflict continued with private interests.

Incredible. I was not briefed on any of this by The Counsel.

Also—

What is this great wave of emotion coming over me?

I feel as if I could write a poem. As if I could write many.



6 JUNE 2044 A.M.

[No AM entry exists for this day.]



6 JUNE 2044 P.M.

Drills continued today, but something odd happened. As the men were marching for me, I asked Cap't Johns how he could spare so many of them at such a crucial time in their fight.

He turned and looked at me through his visor, and it seemed I had never before seen his eyes. They were piercing, and I wondered at their intensity. He smiled warmly—so warmly that for a moment I felt as if I was being embraced—and said he was glad I'd noticed their plight, but that there were plenty of men, and even more could be called if needed. At



first I assumed he was making a show for my sake, in the hopes that I'd believe their army huge and make a good recommendation to The Counsel.

But can he truly believe that we have any kind of might? That we would be worthy allies? It is no secret that we have no guns, hardly any soldiers. Not a single aircraft carrier, not a single tank, not a nuclear warhead nor ICBM [ , all terrible machines of war]. And our men? Scattered to the wind, twisted into all kinds of [beautiful] shapes.

A militaryman cannot brook such nonsensical thoughts. But I do find myself wondering what I would see if I ventured into the no-man's-land of the American northeast. Would I find my old compatriots as cows and birds, as otters and elk, as the rumors say? Would I find my wife, my Gwendolyn, long gone these thirty years—and what form might she have taken?

*If there were justice in the world*

*She should have ended up*

*As one of these beautiful creatures*

*Swimming along beneath the dark waves of Atitlan.*

And perhaps that would have been the right thing.

For I've now seen how they move when unencumbered by those ridiculous suits. They are beautiful. When you witness one of the city dwellers gliding through the ruins, not a movement wasted, you feel most viscerally that this was the way men were meant to be. All of this fighting gravity that we do on the surface, these bad backs and knees and etc.

from struggling to hold ourselves upright—when you see them swim you begin to feel that it's us, the [ambulatory], who are the aberration.



7 JUNE 2044 A.M.

Lt. Adams appeared at my quarters at 0700, rather out of breath. I marveled at the way she floated before me, her chest heaving (she is a proud woman—she does not deign to wear a suit) as she spoke rapidly about the situation on the surface.

When I addressed her as Lt. Adams she turned away with an expression of no little vexation, exclaiming that she'd already told me she was not a lieutenant, that there was in fact no comparable word, not even a comparable idea, in the SC for such a position.

She held her hand flat in the air, attempting to illustrate the structure of their society. I laughed, and gently tilted her hand up to make a diagonal of it, telling her that this is the right way of things, with the strongest at the top. I gently stroked her thumb, which stood at the height of the incline, indicating that this is where the leader rightfully sits.

This vexed her further.

She pointed at me, and said that if I was such a leader, where had my world gone? Why was I alone here in the SC? Why did all the power now lie with her people?



She calmed herself and took my hand. She felt warm, and I trembled at her touch. I looked up and for a moment I thought I saw Gwendolyn's face transposed upon hers, flickering across it. Then she asked in a soothing voice, intertwining her fingers with mine, if I could see in the events that led us here a purpose, a glorious purpose, in having the machines of war destroyed. A return to harmony.

These words, or perhaps it was her touch, sparked an overwhelming emotion in me. I'd felt it when Cap't Johns looked at me yesterday, but this was much, much stronger. I withdrew my hand and returned quickly to my chambers, where, I am embarrassed to admit, I buried my face in my hands and wept.

But for what? For all I have lost? Or—Unthinkable thought! Unspeakable idea!—for the realization that Lt. Amy Adams may, in fact, be right?

AMA:  
The wellspring of our feelings  
are as a cenote for the mind.  
We do well, both man and woman,  
to go there often for instruction.



7 JUNE 2044 P.M.

Have I mentioned the streetlights in the Old City? They run on fish!

AMA:  
Approach the world with wonder.



8 JUNE 2044

[No AM or PM entries exist for this day.]



9 JUNE 2044 A.M.

Woke thinking of Gwendolyn. How very odd that after 25 years this small pressurized chamber should remind me of her. Perhaps it is these old Indian blankets they have put in my room, so much like the textiles she brought home that summer from Santa Fe. How I missed her on that trip! And wrote her—

*Wrote line after line,  
Describing her face,  
Her lovely face!  
And championing all the feminine  
Describing love as a union of equals,  
As a balance that requires work.*

How naïve I was—hadn't yet realized the real way of the world, that all is power and force. 2019 showed me that. 2019 pushed me into the armed forces, few as they were. If Gwendolyn had survived, if 2019 had not happened... but I cannot allow myself to think that way.

2019 did happen, and there is no other world but this one. Yet I have an image in my mind, when I think on what she might have become, if people truly did transform following



the WBC. I see something like silk, something diaphanous, full of light—a creature of harmony and peace. And perhaps this did happen. Perhaps she did change. If anyone could have, it would have been her. I wonder, could she still be out there, floating in the ether above the Catskills? And if I found her, could I change her back?

Even as I write this, I feel that she is here in the room with me—guiding my hand, stroking my cheek.

AMA:  
Women are the soul and psyche,  
men the tool and machine.



9 JUNE 2044 P.M.

But would she even wish to change back? Would I wish to take her form instead?

I've been asking myself these two questions all day, as if they've been presented to me as real options, and all I have to do is choose.

And then I see Lt. Adams swimming by my chamber door, and my cur of a heart does cartwheels to see her move. It would be wrong to say their shimmery bottom halves are fish, because they seem as much serpent, and then as much mammal too, somehow. The Lieutenant—Amy—has in fact a fine and fully perceivable clefted bottom, but beneath is one large, teal-colored muscle, tapering down to a kind of

solid end point, which is now directed at me as she swims away from my cell.

The body and the soul—Amy and Gwendolyn—how these two war inside me this chilly evening!

AMA:  
Duality muddies the water.  
When in doubt, look to your Cleric  
or nearest gov't agent for advice.



10 JUNE 2044 A.M.

More drills. Not much to report. Feeling bored at this point. Ten days! I should have suggested five.

One odd thing—I am starting to feel wonderful down here. When I see them swimming, see them moving with such ease, I want to strip myself of this suit and follow. As if the suit were a mere contrivance for me, just as it is for them!

AMA:  
The ambulatory love it under the water!



10 JUNE 2044 A.M.

Such a strange night. They've gathered outside my chamber and begun to sing. Their voices are seraphinous! The noise reminds me of the eerie stillness of whalesong, those long calls that seem a very quality of the deep, not sound moving



from one point to another but rather sound as much a part of the water as the color blue is, or the motion of a wave is.

And strangest of all, they do not seem to move their mouths. As if the song comes from within them, and is made audible simply by their being present. I am not unsettled, instead rather calmed by the experience. It feels a great honor, to have had them sing thus for me.

AMA:  
Those who listen, hear.



II JUNE 2044 A.M.

Cap't Johns appeared precisely at 0700 and told me to spend the morning preparing my soul—those were his exact words—and then smiled in the warmest way imaginable, as if we were long lost brothers, and he had been waiting for just the right moment to reveal himself. I am almost growing used to these accesses of emotion down here. The strong feelings I had when Cap't Johns laid his piercing gaze on me the other day, and then again when Lt. Adams interlaced her fingers with mine. And now, this smile.

His smile really was a boon, and at a time when I deeply needed it. Down here below the water, I had not realized just how unmoored I have become.

For I feel certain Gwendolyn visited me last night. She sat beside me on the bed, her weight pressing down the covers, and spoke at length about the rightness of not buying a house

in the Catskills and continuing to rent in Mamaroneck (a decision we agonized over for a year, which ~~2019~~ subsequently rendered irrelevant). We were both very pleased that we hadn't bought. We talked about that, and then she told me I must prepare myself for something grand. She touched my cheek and said it again, and I could tell she meant it. That was always Gwendolyn's way, to use a word like that, which no one else would use without some irony. To insist on using her full name when anyone else would just go by Gwen. And I loved—do still love—her for those things.

So when the day began with Cap't Johns and his uncanny smile, and his notice to prepare my soul—such a very odd thing to say, that echoed so closely what Gwendolyn said last night about preparing for something grand—well, I do admit to some jitters this morning.

AMA:  
To face great challenges with equipoise,  
one must have the heart of the serpent  
and the wings of the Quetzal.



II JUNE 2044 P.M.

Here is what happened.

Just before 0700 Lt. Adams appeared at my door and told me to accompany her. I assumed we were going to see more drills, as has been our usual routine.

As we proceeded down one of the great tubes of burnished metal, I mentioned to Amy that she was looking quite lovely



today. She whipped around to face me, suddenly asking if I spoke her language. It was a mixture of Kaqchikel and Tz'utujil, she said, languages spoken by the ancestors of the SC and still spoken on the surface by the Mayans.

I had no idea what she could mean. Spoke her language? We'd been communicating since I arrived, and I simply hadn't thought about whether she had a language. I said no, of course I didn't, and she asked if I believed that she spoke mine. For how else would we be speaking?

She told me to watch her lips, and I saw that, though they did not move, I could clearly hear her lovely voice, as if she were in fact speaking. At this I remembered the singers outside my chamber, how their lips had not seemed to move, and how their song had seemed to be as much inside me as out.

But still I could not believe her, and said there must be some trick, that their biology must allow them to generate sound without opening their mouths. She replied that she was not generating sound at all, that she didn't need it to communicate with me or any other creature. Her dark eyes opened wide, and I felt I was falling into them, that I was being subsumed by them.

And then Cap't Johns appeared, and so did all of the soldiers that had been drilling for me since I arrived. Amy gestured at them and said it had all been for my benefit. To help me open my eyes. The city, the drills, even the suits (and in this I'll mention now they could have spared themselves the effort,

but I was too in thrall to say so at the time). As she gestured the soldiers dissolved into the water. Cap't Johns dissolved. The tube we stood in dissolved, and we found ourselves standing among the ruins of the Submerged City, but without any of its modern trappings. Even the streetlights were gone.

As I stood in wonder, struggling to understand what was happening, Amy told me that this was an old story, the world created for the foreigner, who sees what he expects to see and who does not notice, does not expect to encounter any culture other than his. She began to say something about Spain but then stopped herself.

I fought to make sense of what was happening, asked her about Gwendolyn, about the conflict on the surface—about the machine that I tapped to get information, and the entire city itself. How could all of this be contrived? How could it not be real? She laughed. They only showed me what I wanted to see.

Then she touched my face, and I knew. I knew everything. I knew that Gwendolyn was well, that she had become some creature like what I had imagined, but that I also would not see her again in this life. I knew that Amy was not mortal, that she looked nothing like the beautiful creature before me but was much more terrible, and awesome. And I knew why the world's armies had been destroyed. But knew isn't strong enough. I saw, I felt the inevitability of the actions of 2019, the extreme ineluctability of it and all that had passed. She took her hand away and admitted they were all impressed by my progress. They wouldn't need the full ten days.



And then new creatures appeared, creatures of the water that were [People, but] so unlike what I had imagined I would see when I first descended. I have trouble even now describing them. They were—they were like I had pictured Gwendolyn, floating over the Catskills. They were as much light as substance. Like that, but of the water. They could intermingle with each other and separate, and they did so as I watched. Like a school of fish they swam in unison into Amy so that she grew to a great size, and then swam out again so that she became smaller, and they did so over and over, with a steady cadence as of inhalation and exhalation.

They asked me if I remembered Slipson, and I nodded. And I knew he was here as well.

Now go and write, they said. And [I did].

And then I [swore allegiance to the great Empire of The People], and promised [the Divine Mother that I would spread the Good News of Her arrival throughout the land of the ambulatory, until every sentient creature was aware of Her ineluctable ascendance to power over the ambulatory and their heinous machines of war.]

ANA:  
There is only one God,  
and She is the God  
of The People.