

Opening Pages of the Book - "THE TRUTH TO SEEK"

PROLOGUE

They were walking around the chamber. The Soldier carried the torch and the Officer looked around. His investigation had led him to this chamber in the ground. He had spent two years searching, investigating and killing to reach this chamber. The General would be in this area in two days, hopefully he would be here before the enemy overruns this territory. He could see nothing in the room, but the informer who had died under his questioning had sworn with his dying breath that this chamber was the key.

"Goodbye."

The Officer looked up and at the opening in the ceiling that he had used to enter down into the chamber. He saw the outline of the person from the sun and then the light slowly disappeared as the opening was covered by a slab of rock. When the only entrance to the chamber was completely covered the two men looked at each other in the flickering torch light.

Outside the chamber the man who had placed the stone slab over the hole looked up and saw the scouts from the invaders of his land. He tried to defeat them all, but there was just one too many of them for him to succeed.

BOOK ONE

TRUTH

Ernie was sitting in the kitchen of his Grandfather's house waiting for his Grandfather to return from the basement. He was sipping cola from a can and wondering why his Grandfather had called him over to visit. They lived in the same town, but he and his Grandfather usually only had a monthly lunch get together. But this time his Grandfather had insisted that Ernie come and see him.

Ernie looked around the kitchen. His father, Ted, had told him that this was where he had met Ernie's mother, Julia. Julia was selling Avon and was trying to sell Ted's mother whatever Avon sells and Ted came home from work and saw Julia sitting there. His parents were now living in Myrtle Beach spending his inheritance, which was their standing joke when they talked.

The kitchen probably looked better back then, Ernie thought, but it did have a comfortable, used feel to it.

He heard his Grandfather walking up the wooden stairs from the basement. The basement was his work area. His Grandfather was an archaeologist. He had worked at and had specialized in sites located in Italy. He couldn't convince Ernie or Ernie's father to follow in his field. Ernie being the only remaining relative of his Grandfather remaining in this town so that someday he

would be the one in that basement cleaning it out.

Ernie was a sophomore in college, a small, local community college where he was taking courses that interested him before he had to declare for a major.

His Grandfather's labored breathing coming up the steps caught his ear and he got out of the chair and called as he walked to the basement door, "Do you need any help?"

"No. Not now anyway. I'm almost at the top. Stupid cold I'm getting is taking my breath away."

His Grandfather came through the door and entered the kitchen. Ernie was always taken aback when he saw his Grandfather because he looked so much like Ernie's father. Ernie saw a small package in his Grandfather's hand, wrapped in brown wrapping paper.

"Ernest, this is what I want you to see." His Grandfather said.

"And what might that be Grandfather Albert?" replied Ernie. His Grandfather always used his formal name, so Ernie always liked to reply in kind.

"Don't be smart. Let me sit down first."

His Grandfather went to the table and took a chair and sat down. He motioned for Ernie to sit and Ernie took the chair that he had occupied earlier. His Grandfather put the package down on the table.

"Ernest, this is important. I've had this little statue for more than ten years trying to understand it and figure it out. My old partner in the fields, Glen Ivory, found it and we added it to our own collection. After Glen died, I've kept it in the basement and no one outside your father has ever seen it."

"Is it priceless?"

"No. Not as it is. But I think that it does have some value. I've researched myths, legends, stories and Roman history to find what value this statue has and I think that I've finally found it."

"What is it?" Ernie asked.

Albert had been fussing with the paper and he pushed it away from his hands. He said, "Glen and I found this statue on a dig outside of Rome. You've seen Glen in some of my photographs that I have around the house. He was a good man. The level that we excavating was roughly dated to be twenty-five hundred years ago. But I don't know the age of the statue."

"Didn't you carbon date it?"

"There is nothing organic on the statue to test with carbon dating. And besides, it's stayed here. I've told you that." Albert stressed impatiently.

"Excuse me. But I assumed that you had run it through some testing." Ernie took a sip of his cola, slightly miffed at the rebuke from his Grandfather.

"No. It's mine and now I have to take the next step with it. It didn't work for me."

"What didn't work?"

"Let me continue. As I said, we found it on the dig. Glen and I were sifting a load of dirt when this statue remained on the screen. We both handled it, but it didn't do anything for either

of us. We were going to do more research into the statue together, but Glen died soon after we got back to the States. I've only worked on it periodically over the years until I formally retired from fieldwork and I've had the time to do more intensive research."

Ernie interrupted, "That sounds fine, but you know that I'm only peripherally interested in your collection in the basement. I understand it's your work, but---" Ernie shrugged.

Albert smiled, "I understand that and I wish it were different, but stick with me and I'll let you try what Glen and your father and I couldn't do."

Albert reached for the package, his hands quivering slightly. Ernie noticed that and his attention level raised up a notch. His Grandfather had worked for years on the artifacts that he'd found and his hands were always as steady as a surgeon's. This must be important to him if his hands are shaking, Ernie thought.

Albert started unwrapping paper. Then he pulled a statue out of the paper packaging and sat it on the table. Ernie stared at the statue and then looked at his Grandfather. Ernie's eyebrows raised in a questioning look but Albert was looking at the lady on the kitchen table and he said, "Ernest, do you see it?"

Ernie looked down at the little statue and studied it before answering. It was the figure of an old woman, about four inches tall. She was wearing a wreath around her head and holding a basket with round things in it. He figured that she was holding a basket of fruit. It was carved out of rock. Not a precious stone or metal. The lady was ugly.

Ernie replied, "I see it. So what? You have dozens of statues made from rocks downstairs."

Albert slammed his hand on the table and Ernie sat back in his chair, startled.

Albert took a breath and said, "That's not important. Look at the statue. Don't focus on the small details, look at it and clear your mind. Shouldn't be that hard."

Ernie replied with a small smile, "Ha ha. Am I looking for something special on the rock?"

"Just look for a minute."

Ernie sighed and looked back at the old woman. One of the classes he took at school was aura reading. It was non-graded and it filled some time between classes. He could not read auras of people, the best he could get was seeing a halo around a person. The halo was all white, but he was not able to take the next step to see anything beyond the halo. He thought, why not, maybe the trance stare he used for the class would be what his Grandfather would like him to use now. Ernie stared at the old woman with his eyes unfocused. He stared for thirty seconds and did not see anything. He stole a quick glance at his Grandfather and his Grandfather had his eyes closed. Ernie went back to the old woman and at the white table top at the feet of the woman he picked up a faint blue blur.

"Hey," he said.

Albert opened his eyes and leaned forward, "Ernest, what do you see?"

"I saw a blue aura around the feet. I could see it because of the table's white surface for a background."

"You can really see it?"

"Yes. Haven't you seen it?"

"No. I know it's there. Glen told me he saw it. Your father couldn't see it, but you can. That's interesting."

Ernie took another sip of his drink while looking at his Grandfather. That was the last sip left in the can and he put the empty can on the table and pushed it away from himself. He said, "So what does it mean?"

Albert hesitated before answering, "The statue represents Fides."

"Who?"

"Fides. A Roman goddess. We determined that the area we were excavating when we found her was the home of a businessman and he had this little statue."

"She's helps businessmen?"

"She was a goddess representing truth and honesty. No two people could do business unless they trusted each other. She's an old goddess from Roman legends. No community can function unless there was honesty and trust between the individuals and groups doing business."

"Okay. So?"

Albert shrugged and continued, "Quit interrupting my stories. You know they'll just get longer. Anyway, her feast day was on October first and her priests lead the prayers for peace and prosperity. For ten years I've tried to see the blue aura for myself, but I never was successful and I think I know why. But that's not important. What's important is that you can see the blue aura."

"Why's that important?"

"Let me show you." Albert picked up Fides and looked at it as it laid in his hand. "Glen could see the blue. But we didn't know the prayer needed to continue. I found the prayer in my research. Give me your hand."

Ernie hesitated a moment, then stretched out his right hand. Albert lifted the statue to his lips and gave it a kiss. He lowered it down and placed it into Ernie's hand. Ernie could see the blue all around Fides as she laid in his hand. He saw it easily now. He did not require the effort to see the aura that he needed a few moments ago. He looked up at his Grandfather.

Albert closed his eyes and said in Latin, "fides veritas fides."

Ernie felt some heat in his hand as the figure got warmer. Ernie furrowed his brow and said, "What the ----"

Albert interrupted Ernie to continue, "fides probitas fides."

The statue got hotter. The blue aura had deepened to a vivid blue around the old woman instead of the faint blue that preceded the prayers. Ernie turned his hand to drop Fides but she didn't come off. He stood up and shook his hand but she still stayed on his hand. He tried to pry it off with his left hand, but he could not remove it and he finally pulled his fingers back from the

hot statue. It got hotter.

Albert said for the third and last time, "fides mandatum fides."

The pain became excruciating. Ernie rolled off the chair and dropped to his knees. He looked at his hand through slotted eyelids. The old woman was melding into his hand. The back of the stature was already through his flesh and the rest of it was sinking into his hand.

Ernie looked at his Grandfather and gasped, "Why?"

Albert replied, "Because you can see the blue aura."

Ernie's face looked bewildered until another spasm of pain hit him and he fell to the floor of the kitchen and passed out.