

# Revelation

Book five of the Endosym series

<https://endosym.com>

By J. Henry Thomson

*The continuing journal of Amy Brown*

## Chapter 1



I could hear the woman's voice in the distance. "Amy, Amy wake up."

"What?" I asked.

"It's time to wake up."

I could hear a roaring sound in my ears. Funny, the woman's voice was not mom. Who was she and where was I?

"We'll be landing in two hours," said the woman.

I opened my eyes. The cabin was dark, but I could see light streaming beneath the covers that were pulled down over the plane's windows. The woman started to open the covers and bright sunlight streamed in lighting the cabin.

I looked around. I was lying on the bed that formed when the facing chairs were reclined and pushed on rails towards each other. I was covered with two blankets and I was lying on my back, my head resting on a pillow.

I watched as Emily opened the rest of the window covers filling the cabin with sunlight. She was wearing blue slacks, a white short sleeved dress shirt, a four-in-hand black tie, and wore first officer epaulets on her shoulders. I watched her walk down the aisle back towards the cockpit. She is a nice-looking woman. She's a 33-year-old brunette, five eight and wears her hair in a bob cut below her ears. She has an athletic build, and I'll bet the old guys all give her a look.

Emily Ferguson was one of our two pilots. Kevin Hicks, our other pilot, is 54 years old and the captain of our two-pilot crew. Kevin looks like a captain. He is six two, has brown hair greying at the temples and a neatly trimmed mustache.

Both Kevin and Emily were former Air Force pilots. Kevin retired from the Air Force where he flew C-17 cargo planes, and Emily got out when she got married. Would you believe that Emily flew fighter jets in the war?

Kevin must have been at the controls of the plane.

Our company, Backer Security, leases a corporate jet full time, but we use a smaller Lear Jet. For this trip, we had upgraded to a larger jet to give us the trans-oceanic range. Since we paid a monthly lease, the upgrade was only \$15,000.00 plus fuel at \$6.72 per nautical mile. Which means the flight from Spokane, Washington to Monrovia, Liberia would be about \$60,000, which of course would cause our budget office to do flip-flops. You bet, considering the return trip would be another 60 grand and all that cost just to fly me and one 20-pound gray tomcat named Mr. P to Monrovia, Liberia.

So, I am spending \$120,000. Yet, when you possess over a billion dollars, 120 K is no big deal.

I threw the covers off, slipped my feet over to the side and stood up. In a plane, you have to be careful you don't lose your balance. The plane has six feet five inches of headroom so at six foot one, I could walk without stooping.

The jet seats up to 8 passengers and can sleep six and I walked back to the lavatory through the empty compartment. Mr. P, my cat, followed me. He's been following me since I found him when I was eleven.

There was a cat box in the rear and he made a beeline for the box. Thank God for clumping scented cat litter. If you're going to travel with a cat, all you have to do is scoop out the clumps and place them in a Ziploc bag.

I selected jeans, New Balance running shoes and a tank top.

I've never been to Africa. As a matter of fact except, for one trip to the east coast, I've never been out of the Pacific Northwest. But, from what I read, Monrovia's temperature is in the high 80s in the day and high 70s in the night, so a tank top should be enough.

I went into the lavatory. In a 67-million-dollar corporate jet they even have a shower. Our neighbors in Spokane had a huge RV. The bathroom in the plane was designed like the RV. You walked into the shower and used a flexible shower head. Of course, they remind you to use the water sparingly, but it is pretty cool. I quickly showered, dried off and got dressed.

I looked in the mirror as I put on my lip gloss. I wasn't using any other makeup. I figured I would just sweat it off. I looked at the face staring back at me from the mirror.

It's funny. How often do you really look at the face that stares back at you from the mirror?

The face in the mirror looking back at me was female. It had a clear complexion with no zits-I never had that problem. The nose was straight and small. Clearly Caucasian. I got that from my dad. The lips were full. Not thick, but fuller than most women I know. The skin was a light mocha. About the color of a Native American, but lighter than an African American. It would pass for white with a good tan. The hair was a light brown, almost blond.

Some of my friends asked what hair color I used. It's my natural color.

The hair was coarse and could curl if it got wet. Right now, for the first time, it was in a pixie cut. Since as long as I can remember I wore it long and straight.

Damn, the pixie cut makes me look too young.

As the co-owner of a large security company, I wanted to look older. Quite a feat when you just turned 18 and want to be a sophisticated executive.

Finally, there are the eyes, they're green. That's right, green. Would you believe that less than 2% of the human race has green eyes? Even stranger is the fact that neither mom nor dad had green eyes.

"Who are you?" I asked the face in the mirror.

## Chapter 2

Two years ago, I was a senior at Freeman High School near Spokane, Washington.

I was a happy single child of a middle-class family living near Hangman Hills Golf Course. My biggest concern was what clothes to wear for the next day at school or what we were going to do on the weekend.

Now, here I stand, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, co-owner of Baker Security Company and on a quest to save the world from creatures called *endosyms*, which have infiltrated key positions in governments and have a plan to enslave mankind.

Then, on top of that, not everyone can see these things.

To the majority of the human race, they look no different than you and me. But, when I get close to one, I can see an aura around their body.

Oh! I almost forgot, my cat that doesn't look any different than any other grey shorthaired tom, may be something else that I can't even explain.

Then there is the leopard tooth and the small piece of leopard hide that no one can touch without getting a shock.

This piece of leopard hide showed up on my pillow after a dream where an old black witch doctor called a *zo* gave it to me.

You're right, I must be crazy. I never even went to the Twilight movies and I don't believe in ghosts. At least I didn't until two years ago.

Now it even gets worse. According to this old witch doctor, I was not born in Spokane as my birth certificate says, but in a Village in Liberia called Zigda. And, my parents were murdered two years ago by henchmen of an *endosym* called Duncan McDougal because he believes I am the person who can stop their invasion.

You thought President Obama had problems with the birthers who claimed he was born in Africa.

## Chapter 3

I stepped out of the lavatory into the cabin.

Emily Ferguson stuck her head out of the cockpit door. "We're getting ready to make our descent to Monrovia. Would you like to ride up in the cockpit in the jump seat?" "Could I?" I asked. "Even when you're landing?" "Of course, you're the boss. This isn't a commercial jet. We can do what we want," said Emily smiling. "Besides, you already have an hour under your belt flying the plane."

I walked towards the cockpit. Mr. P started to follow. "You stay here cat." He gave me one of those cat looks and jumped into one of the seats and curled up.

I walked into the cockpit and strapped myself in the small seat behind the pilot and co-pilot and put on my head phones.

When we left Spokane yesterday, we flew to Stewart International Airport in Newburgh, New York, where we stayed overnight before leaving for Monrovia.

After leaving Spokane, we had been in the air two hours when Kevin came out of the cockpit and said he was taking a break. He then asked me if I would like to sit up front with Emily. "You're joking?" I asked. "No, come on, she'll enjoy your company." "Okay," I said as I undid my seat belt.

We walked into the cockpit.

"Wow!" was all I could say.

In the cabin, the small porthole windows let in some light, but in the cockpit were huge side and front windows with bright sunlight streaming in.

To my right was a seat sitting sideways. I guess it was there so a third person could be in the cockpit. Up front were two bucket type seats with high back rests facing the front windows.

Between the seats was a large center console with all kinds of switches and two levers that were the throttles for the two jet engines. Below the high dash were four computer screens showing all kinds of information. Then there was an overhead console between the seats and more switches and things above the front windows. There were even controls in the armrests by the side windows. Gads,

there must be a zillion buttons and controls in the cockpit. How could you ever learn everything they did?

As I absorbed the impact of my first impression of the cockpit, for the first time, my eyes saw what was outside of the windows. At first it looked like we were standing still, suspended miles above the earth's surface. Below was the surface of the earth, to the front of the aircraft the ground seemed to curve away to the right and left. We were far above the fluffy white clouds that were interspersed like small islands. Laid out before us was the brown and green patchwork mosaic of the farms of the Midwest. The greatest impact was the sky whose blue colors turned darker as I looked up to where the atmosphere ended.

It would be hard to be an atheist as you viewed this site. I was reminded of Josh Groban's lyrics:

*"And He will raise you up on eagle's wings,  
Bear you on the breath of dawn,  
Make you to shine like the sun,  
And hold you in the palm of His hand."*

I gained my composure and walked over and started to sit down in the jump seat. "Not there, up front," said Emily.

I had to ease over the corner of the center console to get into the front seat. Emily was sitting in the left seat. As I eased into the right seat, I discovered that the seat was covered in lamb's wool.

Emily leaned over and helped me adjust the straps that came up between my legs and over my shoulders. They were like seat belts with retractors so there were no manual adjustments.

She handed me a pair of earphones which I put on. There was a throat mike so you could talk. "So, what do you think of the Gulfstream G650ER?" asked Emily. "It's overwhelming," I answered. "You're right," she answered. "This is the coolest plane I've flown since I got out of the Air Force. It has twin Rolls Royce turbofan engines each with 16,900 pounds of take-off thrust. I can take off in 5,000 feet of runway. We're flying at 600 miles per hour 8 miles above the earth and we can fly

7,500 nautical miles on full tanks. What a jewel, and she is so easy to fly." I almost laughed out loud; Emily was talking like guys do about the performance of their cars.

Just then I felt the plane begin turning to the left. The steering wheel in front of me was rotating to the left as the engine controls also moved by themselves. What shocked me was that Emilie's hands were folded in her lap.

"What's happening?" I asked clearly with concern in my voice. "Oh," said Emily, "the computer is just changing our course. This plane has the same avionics as the Boeing Dream Liner. You can program in the entire flight from Spokane to Newburgh, New York. The computer can even land the plane on a modern up to date International Airport without the pilot touching the controls. Of course, we will have to do it the old-fashioned way when we get to Liberia since the country lacks the modern systems.

"So," said Emily, "I understand that you drive a hot Mustang." That seemed like a strange question, but I answered, "It's pretty cool, it has 460 horsepower." "Would you like to drive something with about 8,000 horse power?" She responded.

"What?" I asked. "How about you fly the plane for a while." "I couldn't do that; I have no idea what to do." "Oh, I think we could have a little fun. Sure, to learn everything will take time, but you can handle the controls with a little instruction."

"Okay," I said, "I guess I could try." "Great!" said Emily, "Let's start. First, look at the steering wheel in front of you. That is called the yoke; we use the yoke to control the attitude of the plane, usually in both pitch and roll. Rotating the control wheel controls the ailerons and the roll axis. Fore and aft movement of the control column controls the elevator and the pitch axis. When the yoke is pulled back the nose of the aircraft rises. When the yoke is pushed forward the nose is lowered. When the yoke is turned left the plane rolls to the left and when it is turned to the right the plane rolls to the right."

"There are also rudder pedals on the floor in front of you, but today we will just use the yoke so you can feel what it is like to control the action of the aircraft."



She spoke into her throat mike. "Denver Control, this is whisky, charlie, foxtrot, niner, four, seven." "Go ahead WCF 947." "We will be coming off cruise for approximately six zero mike. Will maintain current heading but will deviate in altitude 5,000 feet and 15 degrees starboard and port." "Roger WCF 947 notify us when you return to cruise." "WCF 947 wilco," said Emily.

She explained to me that after 911 all jet aircraft were monitored during flight and any sudden deviation from course sends an immediate red flag.

Then she placed her hands on the yoke in front of her and pressed a button on the left side. A bell rang three times and a voice said "*cruise control deactivated.*"

"Ok Amy place your hands on your yoke. The yokes are linked to the controls so either the pilot or co-pilot can take control of the aircraft. All controls are duplicated for both seats."

My heart was beating like I had just run a hundred yard dash and my hands were sweating as I gripped the yoke. Emily released her hands from the yoke. "Amy, you are now in control of the plane."

She pressed a button and told me to look at the computer screen to my right. There was an image of the plane as viewed from the rear situated in cross hairs. "As the wings dip or the nose or tail comes up you will see it on the screen. Right now, we are flying level. On the other screen, you see the ground looking radar showing the terrain in front of the plane. Now I want you to turn the yoke slowly to the right."

As I turned the yoke, I could feel us gradually tipping and turning to the right. We went through a number of maneuvers. Pushing the yoke forward caused the nose to dip downward, pulling back, caused the nose to come up. I even moved the throttles to the engines, changing the speed that was also indicated on the GPS screen.

For one hour, I had flown a 67-million-dollar jet. I had never felt such exhilaration. Then it was over and I had to go back to the cabin, but what a thrill.

Now, here I am watching Emily and Kevin prepare to land at Roberts International Airport in Monrovia, Liberia

I watched with fascination as Emily and Kevin took the plane off autopilot and began our descent. They gave me a set of headphones so that I could listen to the conversations between both pilots and also ground control.

As the plane continued its descent, out the left side windshield of the plane I got my first look at the continent of Africa.

We were now at 10,000 feet and you could see the coastline. What struck me immediately was the lack of cities. Green jungles rose from the coast, and I could see green mountains to the east. Occasionally I would see a small settlement.

We continued our descent. Then I saw Monrovia. It was a large city with lots of buildings.

At three thousand feet, I could see the Atlantic Ocean and the sandy beach with the surf crashing against the shore. I could see roads. Emily pointed out all the rubber trees neatly planted in rows. There were thousands of acres adjacent to the airport.

There was a roar as the landing gear was lowered. I could hear Kevin and Emily checking off a list of things in preparation for landing. Then we began our approach to the runway.

I was hooked. I wanted to become a pilot. It was so cool sitting and watching the runway getting closer. I could see the ground rushing up. There was a bump and we were racing down the asphalt strip. The roar increased as deflectors reversed the engine's thrust and we rolled to a stop before taxiing towards the terminal.

## Chapter 4

I saw a lot of new construction around the airport. A new larger terminal was even being constructed.

With all the wealth from oil, Liberia was moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And this was how I was going to get Mr. P and me into Liberia with the Liberian Government excited about our arrival.

It was Mark Baker's idea. Mark is both my business partner and sort of my stepfather. Since Liberia's vast oil revenue was bringing in a steady stream of investors, in comes Amy Brown, wealthy eccentric heiress who travels with her pet cat and wants to purchase property for a boutique in Monrovia's Business District.

The Minister of Commerce would be at the airport to meet me.

Of course, Joe Weah would also be there to be my escort on this business trip. Joe is the son of Sabo Weah, the Liberian Ambassador to the United States. Six months ago, I met the Weahs at my grandmother's house in Washington, D.C.

Joe's father Sabo and my father escaped the clutches of an *endosym* 25 years ago. Then, in Washington, D.C, Joe and I almost became victims of the *endosyms*.

The Weahs knew what we were facing and would help get me to Zigda.

Of course, what helped this plan work was the fact that Joe Weah was the grandson of Morris Kerkula, the richest man in Liberia. Kerkula had purchased hundreds of acres of swampland in the Saint Paul River Delta. Now, the estimated oil under the delta surpasses even Saudi Arabia's reserves.

If that didn't help, then the fact that Joe's uncle was the former Liberian President Charles Morray and his second cousin Nah Weah was the Chief of Zigda would certainly suffice.

All this should make my trip to the village of Zigda a piece of cake.

Kevin went back and opened the door and lowered the steps. I could feel the humid air rush in. I felt a touch of excitement. This was the first time that I knew of when I had ever been on another continent. Obviously, even if it was true that I was born on this continent, I was too young to remember.

Africa! I could not believe I was here. I walked to the cabin door. The humidity was oppressive. It almost took my breath away. Even this early in the morning the temperature had to be in the eighties. I could smell charcoal from fires; there were also other odors that were not exactly nice.

As I stood there, two vehicles pulled onto the tarmac and headed for our plane. One was a black Mercedes limo with official government plates. The other was a red BMW two seat sport car. Both cars came to a stop.

Doors opened. A driver got out of the limo, walked over and opened the back door. An older African man in a dark suit got out and walked toward the plane. My God, how could he wear a suit? I had been standing outside the plane for less than two minutes and the sweat was already running down my back.

In Spokane, even in the summer on the hottest day, the humidity was low; nothing like this.

The man in the suit walked up to me. He was portly with short white curly hair and was maybe 5' 6" tall. "Miss Brown, I'm Edward Succor, the Minister of Commerce. Welcome to Liberia." "Thank you, sir, I am delighted to be here," I said.

Then I saw Joe Weah getting out of the BMW. He was wearing an African tie-dyed shirt, black slacks and black Italian shoes that must have cost 500 dollars. He had diamond earrings like the professional football players wear.

Joe was a striking man. He obviously worked out with weights. His muscles bulged from his shirtsleeves. I would bet he had six pack abs. There was no fat on Joe. Despite his good looks, in my opinion, Joe is a spoiled, rich snob. Worst of all he has the hots for me.

"Amy," he said smiling as he walked up. "Minister Succor, so good to see you again."

Joe then walked up to me. He kissed me on both cheeks European style. He whispered, "You look taller." Joe was five ten and I think it bothered him that I was taller.

Six months ago, I was shorter. Now I had grown another inch. I smiled and answered' "It's the new haircut."

Joe turned to the Commerce Minister. “What does Miss Brown and her crew need to do with Customs?” “That has already been taken care of. Your father, Ambassador Weah forwarded all the necessary documents. I have prepared diplomatic IDs for Miss Brown and her two pilots. They will have no problem during their visit. Ambassador Weah even provided the health certificate for Miss Brown’s cat,” said Minister Succor.

The minister looked around. “Where is your pet, still in the plane?” “Just a minute,” I said. I called out. “Mr. P come here!” The cat appeared at the cabin door. He walked down the steps and sat down beside me. Minister Succor looked down at the cat. “I have never seen a street deer that obeyed commands like a dog.”

I started to ask what was a street deer when Joe nudged my arm. “I’ll tell you later,” he whispered.

The Minister shook our hands then got back in the limo and drove off. I handed the diplomatic IDs to Kevin and Emily and placed mine in my hip pocket. I have gone to carrying a small slim wallet, getting rid of my purse for this trip.

“Kevin and I will be staying at the Ducar in downtown Monrovia. When you’re ready to return, give us a call on the satellite phone,” said Emily. “We’ll rent a car and keep our phones on. Good luck.”

The pilots knew something bad was coming, but they didn’t understand the full impact of what was about to happen.

Everything pointed to the *endosyms* taking over the world on December 21<sup>st</sup>. That was less the seven months away.

I still didn’t understand what I was going to find in Zigda. It seemed crazy that I would be following the advice of a dream. But nothing is what it seems and I just prayed to God that I could stop whatever the *endosyms* were planning.

## Chapter 5

While Emily and Kevin fueled and secured the jet, I placed my suitcase and second suitcase with cat food and litter in the trunk of the BMW.

I climbed into the passenger seat and settled into the plush leather. Mr. P curled up on my lap.

Joe pushed the start button. Quickly, the cool air from the AC flowed into the compartment.

We drove past a security gate where the security guard waved us by without stopping us.

“So, you can just drive onto an active runway?” I asked.

“Being Morris Kerkula’s grandson has its perks and Minister Succor owes his position to my uncle Charles Morray,” said Joe smiling.

Joe looked at Mr. P sitting on my lap. “You brought the *Nangma* with you.” “He’s not a *Nangma*, he’s just a cat,” I said. (The *Nangma* is a powerful Poro spirit and part of the superstitious beliefs of the secret society of the Kapel people that live in Zigda.) “Right,” said Joe, “Remember he killed those cops under the control of the *endosym* in D.C.”

“We never saw him do that, we have no idea what happened that night,” I answered. “You know that he is more than just a street deer.” “All right, first, the Minister and now you. What’s a street deer?” “Food,” answered Joe. “Food,” I squeaked. “Right,” said Joe. “In Liberia we don’t have cats as pets. As a matter of fact, except for the wealthy in the big cities, even dogs might end up in the pot. But don’t worry; no one’s going to eat that cat. He’ll become a *Nangma* and eat them.” “He’s not a *Nangma*,” I said.

I stopped talking. We were just pulling out of the airport road onto a main highway. “This is Tubman Boulevard. It’s 28 miles to Monrovia.

“I’ll give you a quick tour of the capital then a late lunch at Tony’s,” said Joe. “Tonight, there is a party at the house. You’ll get to meet some of my friends. Tomorrow we will go upcountry to Zigda.”

For the first time, I began looking around. The road we were on was six lanes wide and there were signs of new construction. We passed several new buildings. But also, there were tin shacks with naked children playing in front of them. I saw more poverty than wealth.

As we got closer to Monrovia, there were more and more people. The main streets still had numerous construction projects going on, but off the main road it looked like nineteenth century Africa. It was obvious that the oil wealth was only going to a few, while the rest of the nation suffered. What a bummer. Joe didn't seem to notice or probably didn't care. He was definitely a spoiled, rich snob. Well, I couldn't change things, and I had to find what waited for me in Zigda.

Spokane has blacks, like mom was African American and, obviously, I was part African American, but I lived in a white world. In our church, there was only one other black family. So now, everywhere I looked, all I could see was black people. There were women wearing colorful wraps and carrying baskets on their heads. Standing along the street, I saw several teenage girls bare to the waist and covered with what looked like white wash. Joe glanced at them and said, "They're initiates for bush school. The Mende society is the women's equivalent of the Poro society for the men. When you reach puberty, you go to bush school to learn the ways of your people. In the old days, bush school lasted a year. Now if your parents send you to bush school, you go during spring break. Most families no longer even participate."

We came to a traffic light. In a big open area was what looked like a huge farmer's market. There were hundreds of people milling around. Tables were set up and there were fruits, vegetables, fish, and hunks of meat hanging from poles. Even pots and pans were for sale. "The markets are all over the country and people exchange their goods. The barter system still works in Liberia," said Joe.

As we drove into Monrovia, again there was the mix of new construction with older buildings. Some of the streets were filled with junk. "This is not the better part of town," said Joe. "Once we get into the city you will see the difference." He was right. There were streets with a center strip with grass and palm trees. All kinds

of chic shops. There were white people; I guess Europeans and Americans shopping. We pulled up at a 'no parking' sign. Joe put a placard in his window.

"How about a late lunch?" "Wait a minute, I can't leave Mr. P in the car, it's too hot." "Not a problem. Remember you're a rich woman with money to buy a business in Monrovia. Rich people can do anything they want. Usually it's a white miniature poodle that they walk in with, but why not a cat?" "Ok, I'll put on his harness and leash." "You're kidding, he's leash trained?" asked Joe. "Of course, just like a dog," I said. "Or a *Nangma*," said Joe smiling. "Knock it off Joe he's just my cat." "Right Miss Brown," said Joe smiling.

We got out of the BMW and walked down the wide sidewalk past several cool shops. At the intersection, we crossed the street. There were dozens of people on the street. Mr. P was walking beside me just like a well-trained dog. In Spokane on a summer day on Riverside Avenue, people would have stared at a cat on a leash. Some would have even stopped and commented. Yet in Monrovia, no one seemed to notice. Maybe even if I were walking a leopard, still no one would have paid any attention.

As we were crossing the street, I noticed an older building that looked almost English, Old English, like in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A sign over the door was one word. "Tony's"

Joe explained that before the Coup thirty years ago this was an English pub. Some might think it odd to find an old English pub in the heart of West Africa. From the front facade to the smoke-filled interior, complete with high-back wooden booths, it could have been 1940's London. An expatriate, Billy Thompson, owned and operated the place. Only foreigners and wealthy Liberians frequented the pub. Then it was boarded up for years until a Lebanese named Tony Abrahams purchased the place. Once again, it was a place for foreigners and wealthy Liberians. The décor had not changed but now the cuisine was more Middle Eastern.



## Chapter 6

We walked through the door. It was cool and dark. So, dark that it took a while for my eyes to adjust. I could hear soft music playing, something from the Middle East. Even this late in the afternoon it was crowded. "A lot of people eat a late lunch," said Joe. We looked around for an empty booth. "Hey Weah, over here," said a woman's voice.

Sitting in one of the booths were two women and one man. Two were black; one woman was white. We walked over to the booth. "Come on and join us," said the man. Joe and the man shook hands. "Gabe, how are you doing?" asked Joe. "Not bad cousin, you still having the party tonight at your house?" "Big time, kicks off at nine," said Joe laughing. As they released the handshake, they popped fingers. It's a Liberian tradition. The Weahs showed me how to do it in Washington D.C. Apparently, it goes back to a time when warriors popped fingers to show they had no poison under their finger nails.

Joe leaned over and kissed the one woman who was a petite black, on the cheek. The other girl was an attractive blonde with long hair. Joe planted a kiss on her lips, a kiss that was held for several seconds.

Obviously, Joe must know her well, quite well.

"Who's your friend?" asked the blond. "Guys, let me introduce you to Amy Brown from the USA. Those two are my cousins Gabriel and Angela Mayson. This is Teri Mortenson; her dad is the general manager of LAOC." "LAOC?" I asked. "Liberian American Oil Company," answered Joe.

"Can we join you?" asked Joe. "Sure," said Gabriel.

The benches were wide and would accommodate three people. I slid in next to Angela and Gabriel. Joe slid in next to Teri.

Teri looked at me and said, "What's with the cat?" "Easier to travel with than a dog," I said, "I've owned him for years." "You've got to be kidding me," she laughed. "You brought a mangy cat with you from the USA."

All right, I immediately did not like Teri Mortenson.

"You guys ordered yet?" asked Joe. "No, shall we do crabs?" asked Teri. "Great idea," said Joe, "Crabs and beer." "Hey Tony!" yelled Joe. A portly

gentleman walked over to the table. "Joe, how's your mom and dad?" asked the man. "They're doing great," said Joe, "still in Washington D.C."

"So, who is this beautiful lady with the trained cat?" asked Tony. "Tony this is Amy Brown. She lost her parents a couple of years ago and wants to invest some of her inheritance in a business in Monrovia." "Wonderful," said Tony, "Welcome to Liberia."

"What can I get you folks?" "Crabs for five. Heinekens", said Joe. "I'd rather have a Coke," I piped in. "Me to," said Angela.

Teri laughed. "Good move, we don't want you teenyboppers drinking booze. I'll bet you're only about sixteen." "No, I'm 21," I said. "Sure, prove it." I reached in my hip pocket, and pulled out my Passport. Teri looked at the birth date. "All right you're 21," she said in a disgusted voice. "You sure look younger." Damn, I knew, I should have never cut my hair. Actually, her guess was close. I was really only 18, but Mark had doctored my IDs saying I was 21.

Two Liberians came over to the table and laid a plastic tablecloth out on the table top. They handed us plastic bibs and sheets of plastic to lay in our laps.

Tony returned with the drinks and individual loaves of bread. Next came a small wood mallet, a pair of pliers and picks that were placed in front of each of us.

I looked at the tools and frowned. Angela whispered to me. "You ever eat whole crabs before?" "No," I answered. "I'll show you what to do," explained Angela.

While we waited for the crabs, she said, "You have African blood." "My mother was black," I said. "Do you know from what tribal group?" she asked. "No," I said.

"My brother and I are Kruman, Joe's mother is our aunt. Joe's dad is Kpelle, so he is both. You are very tall Amy. Maybe you are Mandingo." "I really don't know," I said, "I know little about mom's kin."

I was about to ask her if she had been to Zigda, but I wanted to keep that to myself. For the first time in my life, someone had said, "you have African blood." Funny, we in the United States who have black family members call our ethnic background African American. I wondered if the blood in my veins had the

DNA of the ancestors of people who once lived in Zigda. Maybe that is why I had the strange dream.

My thoughts were interrupted when Tony returned carrying a huge platter. It was piled high with steamed crabs. The whole platter was covered with a red sauce. He set the platter on the table.

Everyone grabbed a crab off of the platter and placed it on the tablecloth in front of them. Then they took their mallet and smashed the shell of the crabs. Juice and sauce flew everywhere. Next, they began ripping the legs off of the smashed crab.

Angela picked up the mallet and smashed my crab. I cringed and made a face. Teri looked over and laughed. "Hey girl, never eat crab in the shell before?"

I looked at her and smiled. She just dropped another notch in my opinion poll. Then using the pliers, they cracked the legs and used the picks to pull the meat from the legs. I tried to follow suit. Gads, suddenly my hands were covered with the red sticky sauce, and the leg slipped out of my hand and slid across the table. Laughing, Angela reached over. "Let me show you how to do it." After a few minutes, I could at least fish the crabmeat out of the legs. The meat was sweet and quite tasty.

Angela pulled the broken shell from the crab's body exposing the insides; I was looking at the most disgusting site. Don't eat that green stuff said Angela. Just the meat in the pockets. Guess what, I had just lost my appetite.

I pretended to eat more crab but stuck to the bread. It was warm and delicious.

I watched Joe and Teri. She was feeding Joe pieces of crab. She had sauce up to her elbows. A couple of times she held a piece of crab in her mouth then Joe would take it into his mouth. I expected her to jump on top of him right there.

Finally, there were no more crabs left. The table was covered with crab parts, broken shells and sauce. We removed our bibs and the plastic covering our pants and placed them on the table. Two guys came over and cleaned the table off. Towels and bowls of warm water scented with lemon juice were brought to the table. We all cleaned off the layer of sauce and crab juice. Then the bowls and used towels were taken away.

Now, the waiters brought a large tray of fresh fruit including dates and placed it in the center of the table. This part of the meal I could handle. We sat there munching on the fruit.

Teri suddenly looked at me and asked. "How'd you get here?" "What?" I asked. "Joe said you arrived this morning from the United States. The flight from the United States doesn't come in until tomorrow."

"I have my own jet," I said. Teri frowned. Joe looked at her. "She does," he said.

"So how rich are you?" asked Terri. I was about to tell her to stuff it, and then I said "Oh around 1.2." "One point two million, that's no big deal, daddy makes that each year working for LAOC," answered Teri with a smug smile on her face. "1.2 billion dollars," I said smiling back. Teri Mortenson's mouth dropped open. For the first time since I met her, she was speechless.

When Tony brought the bill, Joe handed him a Gold American Express card. Once the bill had been paid, we got up and worked our way to the front door. We stepped out into the humid afternoon. I had to squint to see after the dark interior of the restaurant.

When I turned, Terri was talking to Joe with her hand resting on his arm. In the bright sun light, I realized how stunning she was. Her hair was long and silky. She was taller than Joe. However, she was wearing open toed four-inch heels, so I would guess she was 5' 9". She wasn't thin like a model, yet she wasn't overweight. The only word I could come up with was 'voluptuous'. Her complexion was spotless; she was wearing a bare midriff turquoise tank top that revealed a diamond navel ring. Her white slacks looked like she had been poured into them. They were so low that the I bet that the crack of her butt showed when she bent over.

Teri turned and kissed Joe on the cheek, her hand resting on his butt. "See you tonight big boy."

She looked at me. "You'll be there won't you Amy?" "Sure," I said, "I'm spending the night." The look Teri gave me would have melted steel.

Teri, Angela and Gabriel turned right. We turned left and headed back to the car.