

Lincoln's WORLD

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JAMES REILLY

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As the last bell rang closing school for the three-day holiday weekend Zijo and I made plans to go and search the old foundations down in the Adrar Valley over the weekend. A giant concrete freshwater reservoir and hydro dam three hundred yards across was to be built that would flood the lower half of the valley under up to seventy to eighty feet of water while connecting it to several long access canals and locks that should and hopefully would supply just about a third of the western lands of the Inkululeko (freedom) state of Algeria with fresh drinking water and shrinking the southwestern Sahara by almost a sixteenth. Building such a large project in this part of the region was deemed necessary and the byproduct (fresh water) would eventually reach all the sections of land in the massive lower portion of the mighty Adrar Valley while minimizing to eliminating any damaging changes to the environment. Its water flow energy system would increase all the inhabitants' well-being over time. This was a likely spot for us to find something from the nation's historical past even if it was just some old bottles or broken pottery before they were lost forever under the water. The new lake would be a part

of the massive manmade water purifying river system connecting it with the Atlantic Ocean and the distant city of Tamanghasset. It would continually convert saltwater to freshwater during its journey up through seven rising lock stations, each with its own salt-filtering pond, and store fresh drinking water into three new natural and manmade lakes for times when there is no rain for months during the dry season. Simply bringing up the water level almost twenty feet above the ocean surface during high tide at the first lock and fifteen feet higher for each of the remaining six long-range locks sounds easy. They are all joined together with other manmade waterways to create the mighty aqueduct Amanzi, reaching a peak of one hundred and ten feet above sea level. Carrying almost all of what started as salt-contaminated ocean water up from the coast of Morocco almost nine hundred miles through the Atlas Mountains naturally lowering its salt level to nothing through the first hundred miles as it travels further up and across Algeria's dry inlands, it would end dangerous drought conditions for many regions in the western Sahara like Adrar. Where the desert ended and the hills and valleys began there had been no large amounts of rainfall on record for hundreds of years due to the air currents. This freshwater project would in return bring life to the soil and wealth to the newly relocated farmers and manufacturing salt traders in the region for generations. Also it was predicted to expand the jungles of northern Mali another fifteen miles to the north per decade, drenching what was once dry, parched desert terrain unfit and unsafe for human habitation to a tropical paradise.

The Hunt



We were planning on searching the remains of the old long-abandoned village which was built at the base of Fort Hylashe in the giant valley of Adrar. The fort and the villagers were relocated to outside the valley long before we were born and know the larger more modern town thirty miles away was the new tourist town Hylashe, where people could see life as it was in the late eighteen and early nineteen hundreds. We imagined finding things like some arrowheads, old bottles, or maybe even pottery artifacts that we could maybe sell to the museum or even some collector passing by our table we often have set up at the weekend farmers market. Even this far inland the shells and driftwood carvings were not moving very quickly, so we needed something special. Something that would catch people's eye in our "unusual object selling section" as they passed by to one of the big collectors' booths along with a free snack waiting on them just to browse at their products. We set off for home on our trail bikes for a long weekend of adventure. Leaving the school parking area it was a straight, mostly flat road through the "Multilevel Crop" farm fields for a few miles and then a couple

of small hills along with one underpass tunnel to my house. The hover trails were made for cyclist traffic as well as foot travelers, so we were at my home in no time flat as my dad says. There was a giant oak tree in the center of my front yard where we had built a small fort hidden high in the branches. Smaller but much more modern than Zijo's it was hidden by the leaves and unnoticeable high up on the thick foliage, making it our private clubhouse. It had an awesome view of the valley with the largest and one of the oldest living redwood trees in the world way off in the distance, dwarfing the ones on the North American West Coast. It can be seen for miles and the native people call her Amein or the first one. Her mighty branches have been written into the myths and folklore by the people here for centuries.

As we sat in the tree house we agreed that our adventure would start early the next morning and could last longer than a school day, so we needed to eat a big breakfast. We wouldn't be eating lunch and there were no hover trails or canopy wind roads going that close to the side gorges of the valley where we were heading. The plan was to ask my mom nicely to see if Zijo and his dog could sleep over with me in my backyard for a campout. After getting permission from her the next step would be to make our way over to pick up his dog Rexen from his house and ask his mom if it was okay for them to sleep over. We knew she probably would also say yes. Anyway my mom knew his family pretty well and didn't seem to mind as we carried the huge tent past her and out the screen door into the backyard. We began to air the tent out along with our sleeping bags and then left to let Zijo's mom know of our campout. With the okay from his folks and after doing a few chores we were off and the three of us returned to our backyard campsite as the sun was about to set.

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Before long it was dark and a campfire was lit. Then we started cooking some meat patties with toasted bread and leaf foil-wrapped corn on the cob, which was Zijo's specialty. Well, Rex did mostly watching and eating although he did carry a piece or two of some firewood earlier when we were collecting them from the fallen tree branches in the woods behind the back fence. If he had to cook it he would just have eaten it raw with no complaints either I'll bet. If we were in Zijo's backyard his older brothers would have been sneaking around on us listening to what we said and eating the food through brotherly brute force if you know what I mean. Here we could talk in private about anything with no one bothering us, especially my sister. She doesn't even like going on the porch to call me for dinner or whatever.

We just watched for shooting stars as the fire burned down, talking about tomorrow's adventure and what might be there to find. My dad came out to ask us how we were doing and if we needed anything before they called it a night. After we said everything was going fine he said good night and turned out the porch light as he shut the back door. Finally by midnight or so we called it a night too and zipped up the flaps on the tent before turning the lanterns down and getting in our sleeping bags for some shut-eye. Rex even had his favorite blanket under him as he slept outside by the unzipped entrance of the tent.

The Valley of Adrar



The next morning just before the first light of the sun and with full stomachs from our predawn campfire breakfast of eggs, toasted bread, milk, and cereal, we got our trail bikes and without making too much noise we quickly made our way through my still sleeping neighborhood village and the six-mile bike ride over to the ancient mining valley of Adrar. Zijo always had his dog Rexen, or just Rex, with him when he traveled through the nature preserves and that made us both feel safe as we were out in the wild zones. Rex traveled in a side cart that was attached to Zijo's bike specially made for him. He was a little slow but his loud barks coming from that 125-pound body scared most everything away, including any strangers who come across his property line. Deterring even any of the much larger cats we came upon no matter how big (without us having to throw our sound defense caps) and sending them back the other way faster than they approached again made us feel pretty safe.

With an assortment of digging and woodcutting tools from my dad's workshop, we checked around the smaller structures inside the overgrown walls of the crumbling, abandoned area once

densely populated and then entered the first and seemingly the biggest structure with Rex leading the way. It must have been deserted long before even our dads were born from the looks of it. Noticing the worn-out spots of what looks like several seats, we thought it seemed to be some kind of gathering place as we moved closer to inspect the area. Just then Rexen saw a small rodent that was hiding there and quickly gave chase across the foundation that we were going to search. It was too fast and slipped through a crack in the base of the foundation and back into one of the rear walls of the crumbling, dried-out vine-filled structure.

As Rexen scratched at the crack his rear paws were digging almost as hard and revealed that below the crack was the partial outline of what turned out to be a small rectangle grooved shape in the stone floor. Something long ago had been covered by what seemed to be several layers of a wall or floor sealing material which was now dry and crumbly. We quickly moved Rexen away and cut the foliage from around the area. Clearing all the dirt away we realized it had to be a door or cover, but what could be on the other side? Zijo and I got excited at what it may be such as gold or coins. We both petted Rexen for making our first find and gave him a few treats. We quickly took out our trusty Trail Scout knives and cut the remaining roots away. Then we both used our bare hands to clear the rest of the dirty what seemed like mold away a small piece at a time. The little door-shaped opening seemed to be made of the same hard rock as the surrounding floor and wall almost as if it was just a mistaken carving cut on the top of the stone and then covered a long time ago. Clearing a large area around this hatch frame, we attempted to open the cover by trying to force the shovel into the exposed corner of the stone cover. It just bent our thin metal shovel without budging at

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all as if a waiting spirit was announcing to us through the wind and the chatting noises from some monkeys in the treetops on the other side of the clearing that its secrets must be forced into the sunlight. This stone-covered vault wasn't going to give up its treasures that easily. Wiping the sweat off my brow I realized there was nothing in the area to use and we were not going to unseal this discovery—not without the proper tools anyway.

Making Plans



The wind felt good, cooling our sweat on a summer day, and we decided to cover our find and bring a hammer and chisel the following morning. We knew that by this time we could not make it back home and get the proper tools, then back to the valley and back home again before Zijo's brothers caught wind of our activities, so we had to wait till the next day to see what we discovered. As we journeyed forward through the rubble, Zijo said he thought we—well, Rexen—could have found gold or diamonds or something like that, as he was petting his head. After what seemed a few hours of searching the area, we decided to stop for the day and search some more tomorrow after we uncovered whatever was hidden at our first site. We agreed not to tell anyone of what we found, and I made him swear to it while he made me swear to it in the same breath and we both smiled, shook hands, and praised Rexen, followed by a slower scan of the area looking for any possible claim jumpers. I knew how his bigger brothers could always make him tell any secrets, so we made up a story about being at old man Masho's barn across the river playing music. We knew they hated that place as he always put

the older boys to work with chores and things.

We decided to cancel the campout. I would sleep over at Zijo's house so that we could get up before the sun, get his dad's stone-cutting tools, and head back over to the search site as soon as possible. Plus, his older brothers didn't pick on him as much when I was there—usually just a punch in the arm as they would pass by or maybe a flick on the back of his neck with their finger to try to get him mad—so he got some rest when I spent time over there, especially if I stayed past dinner.

One day a few years back, our dads, along with some other men, were talking and having a beer at the fair right after the harvest auctions as was quite normal. The men would always get together and talk shop. That day for some reason Zijo and I had switched hats and were messing around with some ropes in front of them. Well, one of Zijo's six older brothers knocked me down thinking it was his little brother. It didn't really hurt, just kind of knocked the wind out of me. I always knew what he had to put up with from his older brothers, and that time I even felt it. My dad, having two older brothers himself, was cool with it after he apologized to me, but Zijo's dad wasn't as forgiving and he didn't take family disrespect from any of his boys. I heard his next oldest brother to him couldn't sit down for a week. So every time I spent the night or spent some time at his house, they would find other places to be, except dinner time. That's when they all sat together at the dinner table and discussed the happenings of their day. His oldest brother was named Atan after his uncle who served in the African marine core during the battles of the great canal war. He was home on vacation and had been working his new job for six months now as the senior audio air rider at the Hyatt Arena Hotel downtown

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Mali in the biggest and, he said, the best resort bar and grill for a hundred miles, serving the best roasted chicken and ugali (fufu) west of Kano. In case you were wondering, an audio air rider has all the radio stations within the bands of the radio spectrum on his base receiving power box. He controlled the speakers and the surround sound systems while using the dozen or so radio feedback channels without any unwanted delays. It can allow the customers at the resort to enjoy the most recent upbeat music with fewer breaks through the many different styles and sounds in each conjoining section of the establishment, assuring guest satisfaction. The air rider was connected to all the public airwave stations that were displayed on his screen and he could avoid all the commercial interruptions, assuring that the music kept flowing with almost no breaks between songs, only a quick announcement of which regional station it came from, keeping the guests in a happy and even relaxed mood as they danced and partied in the entertainment sections, bathed in the sun sections, or dined in the sky-top rotating restaurant during their stay at the resort. He learned and mastered the trade from his music teacher/inventor who also recently served as the head uplink communication consultant for the three recent successful Cazon support missions to the planet Mars.

Atan was home visiting after he moved away to the west coast about seven years ago to work at one of the big hotels on the beach. It took him a few years and a change in location but now he was the main sound manager for the entire inland resort and its many charitable events. Zijo's whole family had a weeklong reunion party every year at the resort and he would tell me about things Atan did on the days he wasn't working or in his free time. One of his hobbies was searching for air wave recalls from any

one of the hundreds of stations across the country with his FZX multichannel base receiving station in one of the two sheds behind his house. If anyone could prove a “statement of untruth” was knowingly broadcasted over the airways and out into space, they could be rewarded with a cash award from the government and free nationwide air time during the Sunday afternoon radio talk show *This Is Africa*, which was broadcasted out of the Kabu studios from high on the mountaintop city of Marrah in the land known to the people as the heart or center of Africa and is said to be one of the main starting places for this recent civilization on Planet Earth over twelve thousand years ago. The false broadcast couldn’t be retrieved and therefore such persons responsible if found guilty must forfeit 10 percent of their personal collected wealth to charity and relinquish all connections with any exposed broadcasting organization for a maximum of two years.

Zijo would tell me Atan would say things like, “Can you see it, can you hear it, sonny boy? You can almost taste it; there’s gold in the air and I’m going to strike it rich,” as he walked around like an old American prospector. Zijo would also tell me how his dad would just laugh and say things to him when they got going like, “Well, how much gold did you breathe in today, boy” or start whistling the song “A Fool and His Fools’ Gold” and laugh some more. He used to find things when he started years ago but now just about every aerial broadcasting contained only true statements, so his statement alarm (SA) didn’t trigger much anymore, and if it did it was most often a sensor malfunction or a word arrangement issue.

I think Zijo’s second oldest brother, Lomax, was the fastest person I ever met. He played third base for the Madagascar Lions pack during the last of their three in a row first place championship

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seasons which he played in against the Kinshasa Aardvarks. In the history of the games played in the Africa nation's seasonal finals, never before had the same team ever completed a three-season sweep of the best in class positions from both regional and country baseball tournament events. The mighty Madagascar Lions did it from '36 to '38', and still to this day no team had gotten to the three in a row mark like his Lions. His college also won the African Baseball League (ABL) championship finals that same year due to his speed and strong swing of his Nyala slugger against any pitcher's fast ball. He lived there on the island where he runs a baseball training camp for future athletes from all across the island just outside the town of Morondava in the spring months while the schools were on their seasonal breaks. That's where all the countries' different teams went for spring preseason training and the town turned into a small city for two months every year.

Anyway, I helped Zijo with his chores, so before long we were done and we then spent the rest of the night hanging around in his part of the bedroom, listening to music on his radio while avoiding his older brothers and wondering what could be behind the door, using codes so no one got suspicious. "It had to be there for a long time, wouldn't you think, to be covered in so much dirt," I said.

Zijo replied, "Maybe we would not have found it at all if it wasn't for Rexen chasing that rodent and uncovering the outline on the secret cover, which caught our attention." Rexen was happy with his weekly bone from the butcher shop in town, down the street from the music store. He got one just about if not every time he came with us into town. Being around and sometimes protecting Zijo was all he cared about doing. He got a lot of extra pets and pats from us that night as we sat and wondered what

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we would find behind that heavy stone cover he led us to, and did that mouse already know what was hidden there? We drifted to sleep wondering what we would buy if we were rich—maybe even become world travelers.