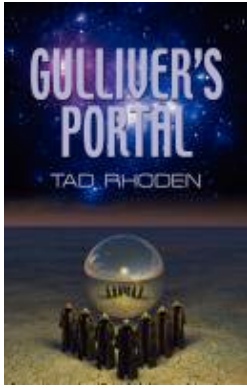


GULLIVER'S PORTAL

TAD RHODEN





Ho hum, a portal to another world; how unoriginal. But this is not your father's portal, it has issues. Anything that passes through it, plant or animal, comes out dead. The inhabitants are only three inches tall and technically about where we were in the seventeenth century. The good news? They can easily perform intricate micro miniature assembly work, and they'll work for peanuts - literally. Linguistic professor Allan Flores is tasked with establishing verbal communications and discovers that they are in some ways scientifically ahead of us. When they are invaded by a neighboring kingdom, Allan's Engineering Project Manager (a hot career woman) authorizes arming them to protect the company's production ability. Enough told. Industrial espionage, romance and high speed chases.

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GULLIVER'S PORTAL

A novel

Tad Rhoden

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First Edition

Chapter 1

“We were doing on the high side of a hundred when the security car accelerated past us with a roar. They were quickly followed by a Highway Patrol who motioned us to pull over.

“Nicki eased off just enough to let him by us and then mumbled through gritted teeth “You’re not cutting me out of this, pig,” and pulled in behind him. The cop caught them just as we reached a long sweeping turn on Pacific Coast Highway where the security car lost control and spun off the road, taking the patrol car with them. One of them rolled over, but in the dust cloud I couldn’t tell which.

“There was another rise in the noise level and Gilley’s motorcycle appeared. As he inched by us blood was streaming down his leg from a bullet wound and he was unwinding the chain he carried on his handlebars to lock his bike when he parked. As he gained on the white Chevy they began weaving to force him off the road. By now he had four feet of heavy chain waving from his left hand. As they passed an oncoming car, Gilley passed it on the wrong side of the road and darted abreast of the Chevy, flailing at the windshield with his chain. The car veered off the road and hooked the bumper in a little sand hummock, flipping endways onto the roof and skidded to a halt in the sand.

“Gilley was having trouble controlling the rear brake with that injured leg. He locked the rear wheel and the machine skidded onto its side. That’s where Gilley and the bike parted, he was sliding down the highway on his back and the bike was doing end-overs ahead of him. Nickie braked hard to avoid him and we jumped out and ran to him. His leathers had taken

quite a beating; they were burned completely through on the rump. His leg was bathed in blood and one arm was at an unnatural angle which looked broken.

“‘Gilley, you son of a bitch!’ Nickie was screaming at him and cradling his head at the same time. ‘Why did you do it? Why are you even still alive, what keeps you going?’”

I realized that it wasn’t Gilley’s condition that distressed her so; his betrayal was what cut to the depths of her soul. I also realized why I understood her so thoroughly; I had fallen in love with Nickie during that summer of ’76.

“Wait a minute Mr. Flores, you’re losing me.” The orderly interrupted. That is I guess he was an orderly, or a male nurse, or who cares. All these white-pants are alike to us. Any way he watched us during the night. I suspect it was the nurse’s job; but Marty ran herd on the ward during the night shift. He was fairly new, but seemed to be a good egg.

He let us old poops sneak into the day room and watch the A.M. movies when we couldn’t sleep, which for geriatrics is often. Tonight I was having more sleeping problems than usual. There was a violent rainstorm with howling wind; your stereotypical novelist’s dark and stormy night. Marty had commented during a chase scene how the cops must hate chases. I disagreed and was telling about a chase I’d been involved in and what a rush it was.

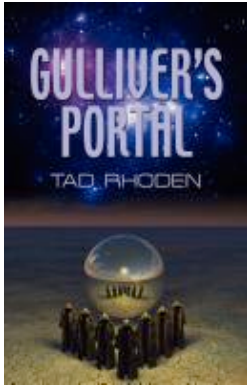
I had become quite well acquainted with Marty, who was a likable young man who seemed genuinely interested in everyone and everything. He projected a deceptively naive air, which I suspect was why he had been selected for the job. He betrayed his lack of innocence after a few weeks by asking me quietly “Mr. Flores, Just what kind of a place *is* this anyway? I’ve never seen a mental institution with razor wire and marine guards. Almost none of you are on medication and most of

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you seem to be on a pretty even keel. Something just aint right.”

“Bingo kid. We aren’t nuts. What you got here is a political prison; you know, like we don’t have in this country? Every one of us knows something sensitive that they can’t risk us talking about. Keep listening. There’s some really interesting stories here. Too bad you can’t tell them. I know, you’ve been given a security clearance. They’ll ruin your life, or kill and eat you or something awful if you talk. But what are they going to threaten us with. We already know we’re never leaving here, what else can they do to us? Relax and I’ll tell you a story, then decide for yourself”

I sat wondering where to start as my mind spooled back half a lifetime.



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