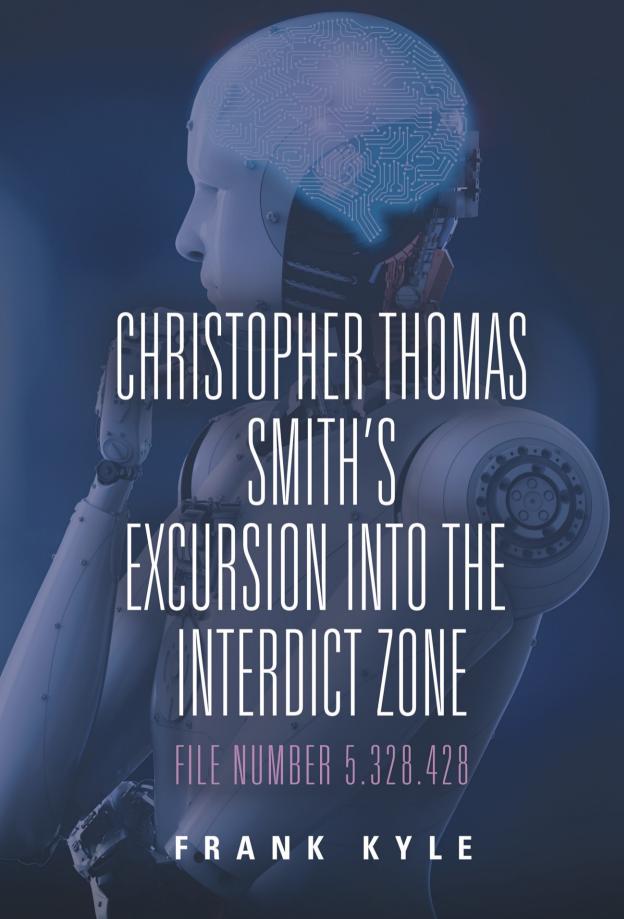


Why did his brilliant colleague E.R. Richman leave Aristos, a high-tech utopia, to live in the dystopia of the Interdict Zone? Looking for answers Smith decides to go there himself. Thus begins an adventure that will change his life.

# Christopher Thomas Smith's Excursion into the Interdict Zone: File Number 5.328.428 By Frank Kyle

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/11393.html?s=pdf
or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.



## Also by Frank Kyle

Christine's Philosophical Journey – San Diego

Christine's Philosophical Journey – Paris

Transcending the Abrahamic Religions

The Sun Also Rises And the Post-Narrative Condition

Freddy's Freaky American Life

Desperate Love: A Ghost Story

Su Casa Es Mi Casa

Her Quest

Gringo

**Tatiana** 

## Copyright © 2021 Frank Kyle

Print ISBN: 978-1-64719-060-6 Epub ISBN: 978-1-64719-061-3 Mobi ISBN: 978-1-64719-062-0

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc. 2021

Second Edition

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data Kyle, Frank Christopher Thomas Smith's Excursion into the Interdict Zone by Frank Kyle Library of Congress Control Number: 2020919986

# Contents

I. Strange Disappearance	9
II. Virtual Reality	34
III. The Real Thing	55
IV. Dark Ascent	87
V. Woman in the Ruins	97
VI. Awakening	108
VII. The Vision Quest	152
VIII. The Old God	169
IX. The Vision	185
X. The Reader	189
XI. Aristos Mortality Filing Clerk	197
Glossary	200

### IV. Dark Ascent

When I woke I found myself lying in total darkness. My head ached so awfully that my first thought was that perhaps I had gone blind. I felt about. I was covered with a coarse blanket and was sleeping on a bed made of cords. My first thoughts were where was I and how did I get here. I recalled the battle with OBSERVER with a shudder and gently touched the side of my head. My head was bandaged. I couldn't tell if it was night or day. I was quite confused. Was I dreaming? Was I in a game? I feared for my safety and wanted to flee, yet someone had bandaged my head and put me to bed. I must be in safe hands. My adventure had taken a toll on my nerves. I was not used to danger and had never witnessed death. Should I remain in bed until someone comes for me?

I didn't. I removed my blanket and was struck by the cold. I put my feet on the floor and recoiled. The floor was hard and cold and I was barefoot. Someone had taken my shoes. I felt about in the darkness. They were there. I put them on. I felt about some more and discovered a plastic bottle of water. I removed the lid and drank. It was my Energia. I searched about some more and found a snack packet. I opened the packet and carefully shook pellets into my hand. If I dropped any, I would never find them in the dark. I chewed them gratefully. I stood up, put the packet in my pocket and kept hold of the bottle. Taking three or four steps forward, I struck my head on something massive and hard. The pain moved through my head like a searing knife. For a moment I felt faint and sickened. Then I was angry. I had dropped the Energia. I returned to my knees and searched for it. Finding it, I stood up. Holding the Energia in one hand, I held my hands out before me. I felt as if I were in a game of dirty tricks. My journey in the Interdict Zone had so far consisted of a series of painful experiences. Pain is almost absent in Aristos. I felt about in the dark. I had walked into a slab of concrete. The angle in which it protruded into the place I was in. Its rough edges made me think it might be a big chunk of debris. I was feeling discouraged. Where in the world was I?

I continued on my way like a blind man with no idea of where I was or where I was going. I continued on finally coming in contact with a flat perpendicular surface that I assumed was a wall. Afraid of running into other objects or falling into a hole, I kept my hands against wall. I edged my way forward as if I were making my way along a narrow mountain path bordered by a thousand meter drop. My progress was painfully slow. I had lost all confidence in both myself and in the environment. I continued along the wall until I came to an opening. I feared that entering the opening I might tumble into a pit. A brief thought entered my mind: What a change from Aristos. I looked intently and saw only blackness. Perhaps I really had become blind. Surely, there would be some light somewhere. Then I recalled the tunnel through the Great Wall. I decided to enter the dark opening. My situation couldn't be any worse, and perhaps this was a way out. I slowly made my way into the darkness until I came to a flat surface that I assumed was a different wall. I stopped for a moment and took a deep breath. I was a nervous wreck.

The texture of the wall was different. I continued groping along one wall then another. I encountered four black walls and corners then a doorway. I had entered another windowless room. I was disappointed because the room offered no way out. The lack of windows explained the absolute darkness of the horrid place. I returned to my original room to continue my search for an exit. I entered a number of rooms, though I was not sure how many I had reentered. I had been at it for what seemed like a day, though I had no way of knowing exactly how much time had passed. Some rooms were large and some were small. I longed to be outdoors on a hilltop surrounded by open space and fresh air. Then I shuddered again thinking perhaps I was blind. Or was I some kind prisoner? I stopped and closed my eyes and gazed at the inner blackness. Then I open them and gazed at the blackness that surrounded me. The blackness was the same.

Oh help me. If only I had stayed in Aristos where I was safe, where I only needed to push button and MasterTele would care for me, would bring me help. Medical personnel would come to wherever I was. I would be placed in an ambulance and transported to a hospital where I would be made well, where skilled genetics would tend to me and great machines would doctor me. But here there was no button, no friendly robots to find me and to secure help. How did I ever come to bring myself to this place? Trapped in a black, concrete prison that was cold and filled with the smell of decay, perhaps

blind. What could I have been thinking? Oh, MasterTele, forgive me. I slumped to the cold hard floor and wept quietly.

Thirsty, hungry, and weary, I chewed some Munch Mix and washed it down with Energīa. I hoped that the little meal would reinvigorate. That didn't happen. I was overcome by despair. It pervaded my mind and body crippling both. It began in my stomach and spread outward through my limbs. I was fearful to remain where I was but lacked the will and courage to move. This I thought is how death comes. One does not want it, wishes to flee from it, yet realizes that there is no escape. There is only darkness which will consume all else. The feeling was tormenting. I would have given anything for a single mood elevator, anything for a single Elezac to cut through the blackness of my mood. I would willingly die if only I could do so painlessly and happily, anything to escape the fear and darkness that were worse than death.

I fell asleep. For how long I cannot say. Darkness still enveloped, an invisible yet visible monster I wanted to strike out against it but could not though it surrounded me. I could not remain were I was. If I was to die, then I would die trying to escape. Then I thought of those boys not yet men attacking OBSERVER. At least they fought against something tangible, but still risked their lives and some died. Had they saved me? If so, why was I left in a pit of darkness? I didn't know. I didn't know anything. I was as helpless and ignorant as a newborn baby. Yet, like a child I would not remain still and simply wait for death. I would not return to following walls. They would lead me only to exhaustion and death. I tried to stand but was too weak. And perhaps it was safer not to do so. If I were not standing, I could not fall. Considering my situation, I decided that I would take a final meal to boost energy and continue my escape on my hands and knees.

My small meal finished, I continued. I had to laugh inwardly at what I had become—a child crawling into the darkness. However, I did not crawl far before bumping into a hard, broken surface. It felt like another block of broken concrete. I continued into what seemed to be endless broken pillars and blocks stone. The floor was hard and rough and covered grit and sharp debris that cut into my hands and knees. I crawled blindly over and under what felt to be the broken ruins of a great structure. I had become a rodent crawling blindly into the stony earth. There were moments when I was

overcome by fear and self-pity and only wanted to stop and wait for death. Then I would continue to move forward for no reason other than for the motion itself. The pain that racked my body seemed to be saying do not give up on life. To stop was to die. I wanted to stop, but I was not ready to surrender to death. Moving, even if only like a rodent, was life. In the struggle I found a modicum of satisfaction that differed from the endless satisfactions I had experienced in Aristos. The satisfaction came from my struggling painfully against a darkness that was terrifyingly pure. As long as I believed that I was struggling toward life, it did not matter that I could be crawling farther into my coffin. [It did matter, terrifyingly so, but the struggle was life.]

Time and again I had to stop. Doing so, I would fall asleep, for an hour or a day I did not know. I did know that I had grown weak and would soon reach a point at which my body could no longer obey me. For the first time in my life I appreciated my body as it should be appreciated—not for the pleasure it gives but for the pain it endures. It has served me courageously though fatigue and pain. It would serve me until it was physically defeated. Often during this ordeal I thought I had reached that point, but my strength would return somewhat and I would continue doggedly forward.

Struggling upward over what I believed was another block of concrete, I realized it was a step on a stairway that led upward. I can't say I felt joy because when I looked upward I saw only darkness. I had to be blind for surely there must be some light, if only the faintest, from above. Still, at least I was leaving the pit. The going wasn't easier on the stairs because on them I encounter more debris, but then it happened. I realized the darkness was no longer so dark. Onward I crawled until I saw the faintest glow of light. My heart leaped. I was not blind and I would not die in a pit of darkness. As if light itself were food invigorating my body, I found new strength to continue my journey toward the light.

Bug-like I continued to crawl toward broken rays of light. What I followed seemed like a circular stairway. I made my way upward over and around fractured debris and clutter and though holes of black emptiness. After what felt like an interminable time I felt the passageway close in about me and stopped. I could not help but lay my head down on the cold stone and weep. I was constantly terrified that I would either be crushed by a dislodged slab

of concrete or become trapped to die in a cold, foreign, stony grave. I wept convulsively. Had I not, I believe I would have gone mad. If I had the means I might have ended my life myself if only to escape the inescapable, terrifying nightmare of my situation. After weeping I decided to retreat and seek another route. Unable to turn around within the narrow confines of stone, I had no choice but to crawl backwards until I reached an open space. I considered stopping and allowing death to take me. But I couldn't. I had to continue. Perhaps it was the fear of waiting for death in my very own grave. Perhaps it was knowing that there was light somewhere. My mind simply refused to give up until I either reached the light or my body would move no farther. I hated the idea of dying in the darkness. Whatever the reason, I continued to make my way through the rubble and darkness toward the light that was so faint that I could not even see the debris that tore at my legs and battered my head.

How long my wormlike journey continued I cannot say for I'm sure there were times when I fell asleep from exhaustion—and gratefully so. It was during those moments that I had the strange sensation of waking into a nightmare. If I dreamed while I slept, I don't remember. My sleep was complete. I do recall vividly waking into darkness. It was one of those moments that terrified me most. I had wakened to find that the faint glow of light had disappeared. My heart sank into such a pit of despair that I was sure I was about to slip into insanity from which I would not escape. My first impulse was to run and bash my head to pieces against the nearest wall in order to escape into the death that now beckoned like friend. But I could not run. I could barely crawl among the debris that confined me. I was a prisoner of stones. One fears death when one is alive, but I was no longer alive. The state of my being had become a horrific limbo situated between life and death. An ancient religion spoke of a place of torment called Hell. I couldn't imagine such a place until now.

After the first horror had swept through me, I was overcome by a peaceful and almost sweet resignation. I would die. I would die. Let death come. There were worst things than death. My body was too weak and battered to continue. It did not rebel but was defeated. It had endured hundred or so injuries from the sharp, hard stones that had become my world in order to protect my inner self, the conscious aspect of my being that I had most

identified with throughout my life. It was as if my self, my personality, I suppose, was somehow above the body that served it. I had always considered the body as entity similar to an automobile in which I was a passenger. But no longer. I would no longer consider the self as existing apart from the body. I'm an embodied self like the talking cars in children's cartoons. That was a revelation. My self and my body are inseparable because they are not two. Not a self dwelling within a body. Not a self inhabiting a body. I am simply a living, conscious, material entity. A humanoid robot then? Not quite. Unlike a robot, my body and personality are one—uniquely so. No software/hardware dichotomy. Only unity. I know this because when I look in the mirror I see me, my bodily form. My body is not something I wear. It is me. And through torment, I've learned to appreciate it.

I have to admit, though, that because of the ordeal endured among the ruins, I have come to view my body as a friend, a companion with whom I experience life—whether that experience be observing the moon or enduring a sharp blow to the head. That was a revelation to me. When it suffered I suffered. We were one yet two. I will not pursue that conundrum any further. I only wish to say that after so much suffering I came to realize that I had always taken my body for granted. I did not hate it for the pain it inflicted upon me, as I once would have, for it suffered as well. It struggled and served me as best as it could. Yet, now I sought to be free of its torment—to free us both from what seemed to be inescapable torment. To hide from torment in some form of oblivion.

The absence of light brought death upon my world. Everything had died in the darkness, and there was no reason to go on. So after what felt like unending horror came peace and with peace my mind began to regain control of itself. As I waited quietly for death, I stared into the darkness. As time passed I discovered that the darkness was becoming less dark. The light had not abandoned me. Night had come. Thus, all I needed to do was be patient and wait for the light that would return with the new day. The discovery did not fill me with joy. It did give me reason to hope. The world still existed and night and day continued—the very heartbeat of our little world.

There was no reason for me to move. I feared returning to the absolute darkness below. Without light I had no direction to follow, only the downward pull recognized by my body. I was tempted, thinking perhaps

there was a door down in the pit that I had missed during my exploration of the dark. As tempting as the downward path was, I mentally struggled to remain where I was. Yet, to do nothing but wait for light was as difficult, or more so, as the bruising, cutting journey inside the stony hell in which I was trapped. At least struggling against stony obstacles discharged some of the fear and frustration that constantly tormented me. Doing nothing but waiting invited the darkest thoughts and fears. At that moment my greatest fears were that the light might suddenly disappear or that it would increase and I would be too weak to pursue it. But it did return. I had awakened from one of the moments of unconsciousness to find that the darkness had changed. Upward was less dark.

I have no idea of what the pattern of my search had been. A series of hard black shapes. Still certain ones I could recall. Strangely, I was beginning to see with my hands and my mind. I recognized a place I was force to retreat to a number of times as well as certain dead-end paths that the darkness and my desperation tricked me into taking more than once. At times I must have been atop what was to me mountain of debris because I would reach upward and feel nothing but empty darkness. If I retreated downward to find another path upward, I would have to move away from the light. I laughed silently at the realization that with adequate food and water I just might adjust to my new environment like creatures that live underground. The thought was terrifying.

If I was to find the source of the light, I would have to reenter the entrails of the stony beast that had swallowed me. Slowly I made my way about the labyrinth within the mountain of rubble, inserting myself into any opening that I thought might be a pathway to the light's origin. I did fear falling into an invisible hole. My sense of space and time had become like a puzzle that had to be reassembled according to my new environment. It was during one of these explorations that I discovered high above pure light rather than defused light. I was able to make out the shapes of the broken debris. It took me a number of attempts, but finally I found a small shaft I could worm through. I was terrified but desperate. If I came to a dead-end, it would be almost impossible to back out because I was not a worm. I would then die a slow, claustrophobic death.

During my existence in the Interdict, I had become much thinner. Quick Power pellets provide mostly energy. Had I not, I doubt I would have been able to fit into the passage that led to the light which I sought. I crawled like a mad man escaping an enemy. I knew that if my escape was not to be found where the light originated, that I would not have enough energy or will to continue my struggle. Besides, if I must die, I didn't want to die in darkness. Like a man dying of thirst, which I was, and wanting feel a single drop of water on his lips before he dies, I sought only to place my hand into the light.

I struggled to make my way through the broken space between chunks and slabs of stone. As I moved forward, the passageway, if it could be called that, grew smaller. An overwhelming panic enveloped me. Feeling trapped and moving painfully toward what seemed an unreachable destination, I had to stop and calm myself, thinking I could advance no farther. Once again I felt defeated. I could see the small beams of fractured light, but the arrangement of the broken stones prevented me from seeing their source. It was clear, however, that the lighted opening before me was too small to allow me passage. For a moment I lay quietly in the stony burrow thinking about nothing, not wanting to think really. I looked up toward the lovely but frustrating glow. It beckoned. I pushed myself a little farther into a crevice and reached my hand through a small opening.

Light shone upon my torn, bony hand streaked with blood and dirt. Could this be my hand? My god! What must the rest of me look like? I withdrew my hand thinking I would rather not witness the truth of my condition. My bloody hand was a shock, but I was not surprised. I knew my body had endured endless cuts and blows. I had felt the wet substance that I knew could only be blood. I was battered and most likely bleeding from a dozen small wounds, but I had become indifferent to my condition. How I wished I had never left the bed where I found myself. How wrong I had been to think that little prison unbearable. No return was possible, though. I had neither the energy nor the desire to return. Most likely I would never find my way back. I was both lost and trapped. Then Aristos entered my mind. How far away that place seemed! How unreal! It was difficult for me to believe that I had ever lived in such a place.

Then I heard a strange choking sound. I was laughing—ugh, ugh, ha, ha, ha. The laughter grew louder and filled the darkness. I was laughing at

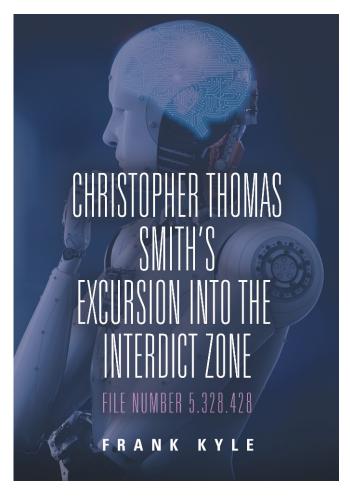
being trapped like a rodent in a rock and at what my colleagues would think if they could see me now. Could a greater fool have ever been born? In Aristos I had everything, and I gave it all up to become a creature that lives a short life underground. Ha, ha, ha, ha! What a joke I've played upon myself! What a trick! Now I would die, and I would need no burial because I had considerately crawled into my own grave. Ha, ha, ha, ha! This was funny. Then I let out a scream of anger and fell into a state of collapse, without really falling. It wasn't funny at all. Absurd, but not funny. It was sad. I didn't deserve to suffer like this. I never did an evil thing in my entire life. I never harmed a fly, though I couldn't have because I've never seen one. Flies exist but are rare in Aristos proper. I was only curious, but this was an awfully high price to pay for being curious. I believed such curiosity would be rewarded. It appeared extinction would be my reward.

As I lay quietly reflecting on the absurd situation I had brought upon myself, I heard the slightest sound. My god, I thought with fear, there are rats! I was not the only rodent in the ruins. And I'm not only going to die in a grave of my own creating, I'm going to be consumed by my fellow rodents. I knew what rats were. I knew they existed, but they were as rare as flies in Aristos. I used what little energy I had to make a retreat. I slithered rearward from what now seemed a ridiculous little light back into a slightly larger pocket of darkness. There I turned onto my back and listened attentively. I heard another sound, then another. I wasn't hearing just one sound but different sounds so faint that I couldn't make them out. Rats have discovered my presence and will soon be attacking by the hundreds! Then I thought that I must be losing my mind. Rats wouldn't make sounds in this rock enclosed environment... Or would they? I was feeling so desperate and discouraged that I couldn't see how I could continue.

I reached into the darkness above me expecting to feel the cold, rough, hard texture of stone which was the stuff of my world. There was nothing. I felt about discovering a space large enough for me to enter. I squirmed upward bumping and scraping my head on unseen debris. There was more space so I continued. I stopped to look for the light, but it was gone. I had returned to my world of darkness, a world that I was beginning to accept as my own. Because of the unusual openness I was able to progress rapidly on all fours. I had no idea where the passageway was leading me, but I didn't

really care. It was going somewhere I had not been before (so I hoped). Upward I continued. My knees felt as if the skin had been completely torn away so that the very bone was exposed to stone. I divorced myself from the pain, even from my poor body, which had suffered endlessly because of my stupidity. The sight of my hand had shocked me, but now I had returned to comforting darkness. In the darkness the pain became something abstract, like an unpleasant idea that had nothing to do with the state of my body.

The blackness suddenly lightened to a dark gray. This was different. I crawled up into the different shade of darkness. I felt above. The surface of the stone changed. The edge was rough but above horizontal, a broken floor perhaps. I pulled myself over the edge and found myself on a flat surface. Exhausted, I turned on the cold hard surface and lay on my back with my legs dangling over the edge. Apparently, I had climbed one or more levels of a great structure that had collapsed. I had found the source of the light, a hole in the ceiling that emitted the light I had seen before. I got up and squatted to avoid placing my knees on the floor. I was afraid to stand unsure I could keep my balance. Feeling incredibly tired I lay back down on my back and looked up gratefully to the rays of light beaming from above. I felt nothing mattered now. I could die here in peace. My strength was gone, and I had no desire to move from the spot where I lay. My eyes closed and I lost myself in welcome unconsciousness.



Why did his brilliant colleague E.R. Richman leave Aristos, a high-tech utopia, to live in the dystopia of the Interdict Zone? Looking for answers Smith decides to go there himself. Thus begins an adventure that will change his life.

# Christopher Thomas Smith's Excursion into the Interdict Zone: File Number 5.328.428 By Frank Kyle

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/11393.html?s=pdf
or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.