

This is the first book of the McGonegal Chronicles. It is the adventure of two brothers, Cillian and Patrick McGonegal and their companions as they work to unravel a mystery of an artifact that holds the key to time itself.

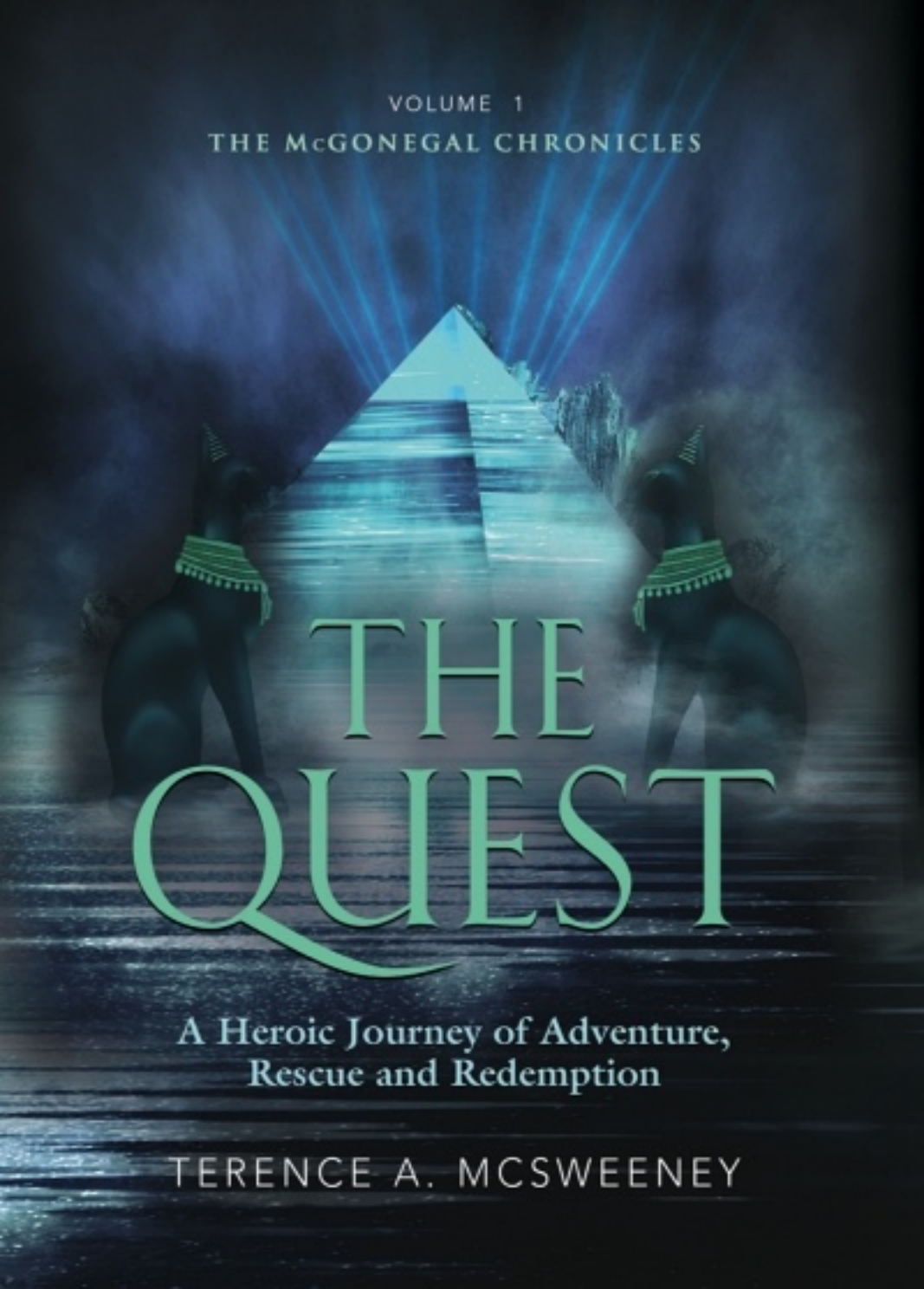
The Quest:
A Heroic Journey of Adventure, Rescue and Redemption
By Terence A. McSweeney

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/11588.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

VOLUME 1
THE MCGONEGAL CHRONICLES

The cover art features a central, glowing blue pyramid with a path leading up to its base. Two sphinxes, also glowing with blue light, stand on either side of the path. The background is dark and atmospheric, with blue light rays emanating from the top of the pyramid. The title 'THE QUEST' is written in a large, stylized, blue serif font across the middle of the image.

THE QUEST

A Heroic Journey of Adventure,
Rescue and Redemption

TERENCE A. MCSWEENEY



Copyright © 2021 Terence A. McSweeney

Print ISBN: 978-1-64719-321-8

Epub ISBN: 978-1-64719-322-5

Mobi ISBN: 978-1-64719-323-2

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

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

McSweeney, Terence A.

The Quest: A Heroic Journey of Adventure, Rescue and Redemption by
Terence A. McSweeney

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021902765

Main Characters

(In order of appearance)

Patrick McGonegal-	Cillian's brother/CEO Sinead Inc.
Aloise McGonegal-	Patrick's wife
Cillian McGonegal-	Archaeologist/Patrick's bother
Thadnelius J. Gromfort-	Mysterious man in black
Liam Highland-	Dir. of Operations/ Sinead Inc.
Phineas Stokes-	CHIMERA Inc. Representative
Nathan McPhee-	Bodyguard, friend of Cillian
Thomas McGonegal-	Father of Cillian and Patrick
Marie McGonegal-	Mother of Cillian and Patrick
Mary Moriarty-	Cillian's Assistant/Archaeologist
Buck Harton-	CHIMERA Inc. Representative
Jeffrey Tombs (Scarface)-	Mercenary CHIMERA Inc.
Everette Waterholm-	CEO CHIMERA Inc.
Sean-	Head Butler
James-	Butler
Gerald Edwards (GE))-	CEO/Director VIRGO Ent.
Dr. Viselli-	Scientist-Artifact investigation

Terence A. McSweeney

Brian McKinnon-

Susanne's husband

Susanne McKinnon-

Owner VIRGO Pres./scientist

CHAPTER ONE

*“Where there is mystery, it is generally suspected
there must also be evil”*

-Lord Byron

He stared at the letter. Its content was remarkable. “Stunning” did not begin to describe it. *How could this be possible?* he thought. It had never occurred to him that the author of the letter was even still alive. Two years had passed without any word, yet here it was dated two days ago. “This must be a ruse” he concluded. Although the handwriting seemed genuine, it could be forged by someone of skill. The handwriting could be forged, but not some of the content. Some of the details only the author and he could possibly know. He turned the paper repeatedly as if the handling would help discern its validity. It did not. Three lines in the letter called to him over and over:

You will know when and where the serpent swallows the sun. I will be there. I have solved it as I told you I would.

Then, as he stared at these words, he noticed that the paper had a very distinct watermark. Holding it up to the light, the author’s identity was revealed. The watermark was a crest; a crest that he was intimately familiar with. It was the crest of his family, three boars with a helmet, a mace, and a serpent. Could it be? Cillian was alive? Certainly, the evidence of the letter pointed to that very fact, but it was impossible. What was this some cruel joke? There was nothing else with the letter. He studied every corner, but nothing else was discovered. After a time, he placed the letter back in the envelope and laid it on the nightstand table. The morning was creeping by and mystery or no mystery he needed to attend to the day’s affairs. He particularly could not be late for the meeting, but he could not shake the feeling that his life was about to take a turn. Cillian! Cillian was alive and he found the key! It was then that he saw it. At the right bottom corner of the envelope was a mark. It was so small that he overlooked it as just the trace of postal

handling. He opened the desk drawer and retrieved the magnifying glass that Aloise gave him on his forty-fifth birthday as a joke mocking his advancing age. He held the glass up to the mark and there it was, a message: *Tuagha Tulaig Abu*. He recognized the words immediately. He had often read them on the family coat of arms. They were Gaelic. They meant Territory Forever. It was a message. He thought back to those days when Cillian and he would sit and stare at the coat of arms, usually when they were being punished for some transgression and usually something Cillian had talked him into doing like sledding off the roof of the garage or dyeing Seamus their cat green for St. Patrick's Day. That one particularly did not amuse Seamus or their mother who had to chase that crazy cat all over the house and clean him. Although father thought it quite amusing, they were still sent before the crest to think about the honor and responsibilities of the family.

Cillian was always dragging him into schemes like that, but as they grew older, they grew apart. Cillian longed for adventure and to see the world. He became obsessed with ancient history and this led to a degree at Cambridge in archaeology. Their father was not impressed. "Why do you want to study dead, dusty bones?" he would ask. Cillian would always smile saying "They are a riddle, and you know how I like riddles father." Their father would just shake his head and grumble about important men did important things, not digging in the dirt. Patrick was not as adventurous. He was the plodder, the analyst. He took great comfort in detail, studying for hours, things like market analysis and price-earnings ratios. It was stuff that completely bored his brother but pleased him to no end. It was natural that their father chose him to inherit the management of the family fortune. Cillian was genuinely happy and relieved that this honor had fallen to Patrick.

Cillian made full professor at Cambridge within five years and department head in seven. Two books and a lecture series cemented his reputation in the field of ancient civilizations. His students found him witty and his stories fascinating. He was ecstatic that he now had the time and resources to explore the mysteries of the world. He was a star in his field and then with no warning, he vanished. Two years ago, one of the great minds of archaeology and authorities on ancient civilizations

was just gone. He did not appear for his morning lecture. His penthouse flat was empty of any sign of him except for the furniture. He was reported missing, but there were no clues to search. It was as if he was plucked off the earth. Gone! A year of investigating had turned up nothing. There were of course rumors of sightings here and there, but nothing that ever was conclusive. Finally, the family accepted the fact that Cillian was dead. A funeral and a headstone were his legacy. Gone! Why did it always seem to rain at funerals and rain it did. The sky was a slate blue. His parents were ashen as they lay the empty coffin into the earth. He remembered his mother's face. It was true that a mother never stops bearing the pains and joys of her children. It was despair in her eyes. Once there was hope. Hope that he would walk through the door whistling as he often did with a grin on his face saying, "Why this is a grand send off, but a bit premature I'd say!" How she must have longed to hear those words and his laughter. Patrick pictured in his mind how Cillian would then tell them stories of the adventure he had been on. Everyone would forgive him for the drama and life would resume. A fantasy of hope. Alas, there were no more words to say. No more stories to tell. Gone and that was it for the last two years. That was it, until now!

Patrick paused at the wall of family photos for a moment before grabbing his coat and a thought occurred to him. What if Cillian had to disappear? What if he was in danger? That would mean that perhaps his family was also in danger. Should he tell his parents about the letter? Both were in the late years of their lives. They had made their peace, finally. What good would come of opening that wound up again? He decided he would keep the letter to himself for the time-being. He kissed Aloise goodbye as he always did, but must have lingered a bit because she frowned saying in that deep brogue, he always found enchanting,

"And what do you have on your mind today? You look as if you owe the world and the debt has been called."

"I just have some matters to attend to," he responded averting his eyes.

“Patrick Sean McGonegal do you take me for an empty-headed country girl? I know when there is something afoot. I can see it in your eyes.”

He turned his head and said “Ah Ali you are just seeing things that are not there. I have a lot to handle today that’s all. I’m confident mind you, but I don’t want to iron the four-leaf clover and press my luck!”

Smiling at his attempt of humor, he winked and kissed her again before strolling out the door. Daniel, his driver, was waiting by the curb, door open. He got in and they proceeded down the avenue.

The drive as usual was uneventful. As he sat in his office, he read the paper and reviewed his notes about the merger. He examined every detail to ensure that nothing was forgotten. Details were his game. He wanted to know every nut and bolt of an enterprise. His father had taught him that. Precision was a science, a tool that needed to be fine honed constantly. He was good at that. Perhaps he was even better than his mentor. Time would tell. He checked each page carefully. All seemed to be standard legal speak. That was until he reviewed the properties that were being sold as compared to the prices offered. These properties had truly little value except sentimental as they were undeveloped and far from any commercial trafficked roads, yet what the buyer agreed to pay was many times the value of the land. He looked at his phone and pressed the intercom. He spoke into the receiver,

“Kate. Would you please ask Mr. Highland to come see me?”

“Yes Mr. McGonegal,” was the response from the speaker. “Should I say what it is in regard to?”

“No. Just tell him I need to speak with him right away,” was his response.

“Certainly, Mr. McGonegal.”

As Patrick waited for Highland his mind drifted back to the letter. Cillian was alive. It was too much to hope for, but all the evidence suggested it was so. He thought back to the last time he had seen his brother. Cillian was in an exceptional mood. He arrived at their parents' house with what he termed "sensational news." What that news was, well that was never revealed because he received a call and as quickly as he arrived, he had to leave. He seemed agitated and all Patrick could hear in the conversation was the phrase "I will take care" followed by a few affirmative grunts and a goodbye. After the call Cillian said he was sorry, but something came up and he would be back shortly. He had a strange look to him, a look that Patrick had never seen on the face of his brother...fear.

CHAPTER TWO

*“The voyage of discovery is not in seeking
new landscapes but in having new eyes.”*

-Thomas Alva Edison

At first light there is a silence that feels like the world has inhaled. The light is muted with the promise of greater things to come. At first light all is still innocent. The future is exciting, the past is forgotten. At first light expectation is a seduction that pulls one in, but only for a moment. As the orb reveals herself it begins again.

Cillian took it all in. It was his favorite time. The promise of the day and the ten ounces of coffee in his hand gave him hope. Would today be the breakthrough he knew was coming? Perhaps. He stood atop the Serpent’s Head. On the ground it appeared as just a stone mound, but at the time of its creation it was quite defined. It intentionally resembled a winding snake that ended with a prominent head, making a menacing statement.



Years of weather and neglect had transformed the ancient site into less than what its builders intended. Weather and neglect tamped down its magnificence and the rain did the most damage. Fortunately, rain was not forecasted. It would be a long day of taking measurements and sampling, meticulous to the point of stark boredom to the average person, but he loved it. He had been here many times, but rarely found anything except stones. They could be old arrowheads. They could also

just be stones. He never tired of being in the field measuring and recording. There was something about the precision required that made things comforting in the world. Perhaps it was the order. The world seemed more chaotic these days, so any order was gladly welcomed. He put down his coffee spilling some as he fumbled for his instruments. Carefully aligning the first site point he set some stakes, remeasured, and moved on across the head.

It was on his third measurement further down the mound that he noticed something odd. The stone was suddenly smooth. He had not noticed this on previous trips to the site. Brushing back some of the saw grass that had filled in the area he saw that this smooth patch was circular, deliberate. He looked for markings but found none except for a hole almost directly in the center. Cillian looked out across the mound and standing with one foot on each side of the hole placed his index finger in front of his nose vertically and looked beyond. *It was perfectly aligned with the head of the serpent*, he thought. He looked down at the hole seeing that the indentation was about two inches deep and circular. He stepped over to an area of brush and using his knife hacked a small branch that protruded. Quickly he cleaned off the excess stems and had a straight stick about the size of an average man's height. He placed the stick into the hole after some trimming at the base and it stood straight. Standing behind the stick he looked out across the horizon. The sun began to brighten the horizon and in short order it was free of the earth. He looked from the perspective of the stick and noticed the sun's path while not perfectly aligned did rise parallel to the right of the stick. *It had to be*, he thought. This was a marker and he bet that there was a day when the sun perfectly lined up. The Serpent Head was a key. He had found what he was searching for. He took a small notebook from his backpack and recorded the date and time of his discovery. He had much more to do over the upcoming days, but he now knew he was on the right track. He would need to bring more calibrated instruments to the site as well as photographic equipment and such. He thought of the theory. The first piece of the puzzle lay before him. He would...there was motion at the corner of his right eye. Voices faintly carried from further down the mound. He could not make out what they were saying,

but they were getting louder. Rapidly he fumbled with his backpack until he found the binoculars. He aimed them in the direction of the sound. Men. Many, at least ten or fifteen and they were heading his way. He also noticed one other thing. They were armed. Heavily.

Instinct and a phone call he received at his parents' house told him, hell it screamed at him. "Get away!" He followed the command. Picking up his backpack and throwing the stick back into the brush he scrambled to the opposite side of the Serpent's Head. He raced down the bank and after what seemed like an age found a tree he could safely climb. He hoisted himself up and continued to climb until he reached the heavy cover of branches and leaves. He stood very still against a crook of two limbs and stared out over the area that he had just left. The voices were louder now, and he could make out some of what they were saying. He did not like what he heard.

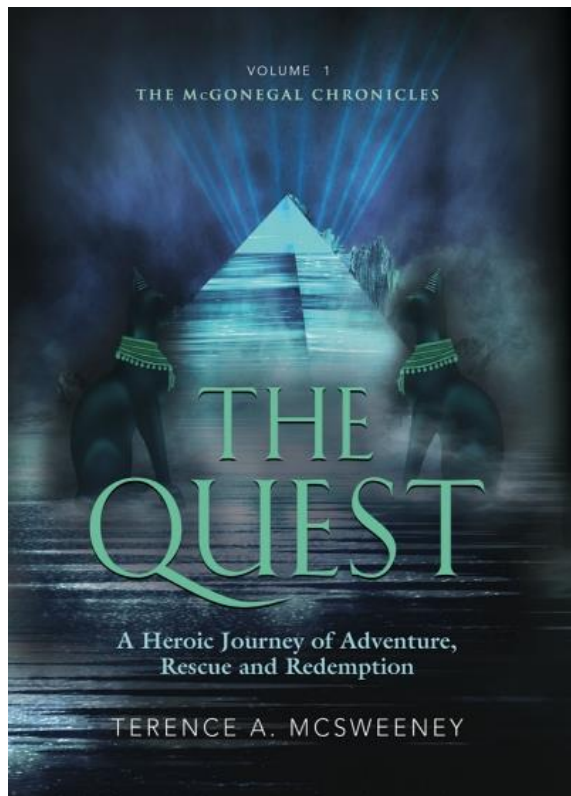
"Spread out. He's here I tell ya," said one voice.

Must be the leader, he thought. With his binoculars he could see the features of the men now. The one giving the orders was older than the others as his silver-gray hair made clear, but there was not any other sign of advanced age. He was tall and straight as an arrow. No middle age bulge around his middle. His sleeveless arms were muscled like a weightlifter and heavily tanned and weathered. But this was not what made the figure barking orders intimidating. Under his left eye travelling down his face to his chin was an enormous scar. Cillian could only wonder how he got that scar and about the adversary who gave it to him. The scar made him look sinister. It could not be mistaken for a birthmark. No, this was the product of violence. It screamed raw naked survival. It screamed this is someone not to be messed with. Cillian drew closer to the trunk of the tree trying to make himself smaller and one with the bark. He tried desperately to control his breathing as the gray haired killer, for that is what he believed he was, came close to that very tree. Below him Scarface continued yelling orders to his men and to Cillian's horror looked up into the very tree he was hiding in. This lasted for what seemed hours but was only seconds. *What if he sees me?* thought Cillian. Slowly the archaeologist reached into his vest

pocket for the only weapon he had. A pen. *What will you do Cill, defend yourself with a note?* he chastised himself. He knew he must face the fact that he was doomed if this was his best defense. Then, as he frantically assessed what he would do to survive, his would-be assassin moved on.

The voices grew fainter until there was barely a whisper. Cillian heard car doors slamming and engines coming to life. His pursuers were leaving. He took a long breath, but still he clung to his savior the tree. This went on for quite a while until he saw that the sun was beginning to reach its apex. With all the willpower he could muster Cillian began his descent from the tree. When he finally touched ground he froze, afraid to make a sound. He listened for any human noise, but all he heard was the slow rustle of a morning breeze. *What was that all about?* He struggled to find an answer. *Why would anybody be interested, let alone want to harm an archaeologist? We are not exactly the James Bond types.* Before he could put that together a voice from behind him answered,

“They are gone Professor.”



This is the first book of the McGonegal Chronicles. It is the adventure of two brothers, Cillian and Patrick McGonegal and their companions as they work to unravel a mystery of an artifact that holds the key to time itself.

The Quest:
A Heroic Journey of Adventure, Rescue and Redemption
By Terence A. McSweeney

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/11588.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**