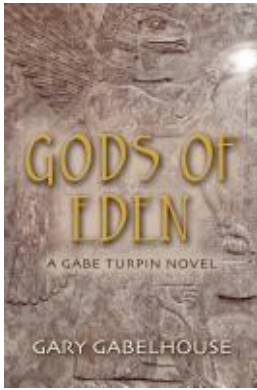
The background of the book cover is a detailed, weathered relief carving from an ancient Egyptian tomb. It depicts a winged deity, likely Anubis, with a falcon head, a long snout, and a headdress. The deity is shown in a seated or kneeling position, with its right arm raised and holding a small, glowing orb of light. The carving is set within a rectangular frame, and there are other smaller carvings visible in the background, including a small figure on the right and a larger figure at the bottom. The overall tone is sepia and aged.

GODS OF EDEN

A GABE TURPIN NOVEL

GARY GABELHOUSE



Within the Great Ruins of Zimbabwe, anthropologist Gabe Turpin makes an impossible discovery. A secret cabal deploys a black-ops team to the site to recover Turpin's relics and leave no survivors. Gabe is relentlessly pursued across Africa, and to the mountains of Ecuador. Only Turpin holds the TRUTH, as the lives of millions hang in the balance. And the only hope is Turpin's surviving those who want to keep humankind's greatest secret from... DISCLOSURE.

Gods of Eden

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6029.html?s=pdf)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6029.html?s=pdf>

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

Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

GODS OF EDEN

Copyright © 2012 Gary Gabelhouse

ISBN 978-1-61434-489-6

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 in the United States by BookLocker.com, Inc., Port Charlotte, Florida.

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.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2012

First Edition

Prologue

South Central Africa: 975 BCE

Like an old yellow skull, the moon rose in the west and shone over the dark, flowing water. Soft, rippling sounds swept along the hull of the ship as the oarsmen dipped their oar blades into the brownish surface of the river. The ship and its riggings were crafted from the straight pines of the foothills around Tyre, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. Its mast was furled in the night. Now, the oarsmen plied their trade. The air was warm, still, and humid. The flotsam of decayed, tropical growth lazily circled in eddies and offered a pungent scent of old rot that blanketed the river.

The grunting of the large water horses echoed against the hills. Coughs and the spitting of phlegm quietly gave witness to the humanity of the ship, cruising resolutely up-river. It had been more than two years since the Phoenician galley had cleared the Pillars of Baal. They had cruised down the west coast of the Dark Continent and had survived the terrible storms of the continent's southern passage.

Then they turned north. The necromancer of the ship had gone into a fit as they drew near to the mouth of the great river. Froth and sputum ran down the shaman's face as the man was claimed by great ticks and spasms the closer they drew to the channel. Hiram, the Admiral, had taken the signs seriously and ordered their entry into the strong, flowing water, full of silt and life.

Now, three moons later, the leather jerkins chafed and the armor weighed heavy on Hiram's spirit...as well as that of his crew, he reflected. They had been under attack for two days now—the arrows flew from the banks of vegetation and buzzed like clouds of flies, pestering the ship and its warrior contingent. Just then a new volley of arrows filled the night air. Hiram saw with some pride, how his troops

GARY GABELHOUSE

calmly and with a resigned air donned their metal helmets and slipped their arms through the leather thongs of their shields—maneuvering their shields to protect their exposed backs. The iron armor acted like a turtle's shell. The small, black arrows now danced off of the sailors' armor and skittered off on the deck of the ship.

Hiram grimly looked down as he drew his shield over his own back. The black projectiles pinged and sounded their tinny presence as they slid off his armor. Resigned, he continued beating the cadence for the oarsmen, speaking encouragement to them as he sounded the drum—the heart beat of the ship.

"Steady men. 'Tis the same as before. A child's war they wage. Also a coward's war."

Some hours later, dawn was a whisper in the eastern sky as the ship continued upriver. Gone now were the dark wildings—the attackers of the night and their plague of arrows. Hiram drank deeply of the water and inspected some dried figs and dates, which he threw down his gullet more from need than from hunger or interest. Every other oarsman was now sleeping a shift as the other half of the crew soaked their paddles. The strokes sounded soft and half-hearted in the lonely hours before dawn.

Hiram leaned on the ship's tiller, almost dozing, when he came fully alert. The beacon of light came down the river—seemingly searching the waters for the ship like an unblinking eye. Green and azure spider webs of light glowed at the core of the beam. Hiram was now fully roused as his crew noisily came awake. A writhing mass of dark bodies packed the mud banks in the pre-dawn. The light shone the way to the ship. Then, a high-pitched wail filled the air as the streams of tribesmen paddled from the banks in dugout canoes and surrounded the ship from Tyre.

Instead of the confrontational posture of the warrior, the inhabitants of the canoes hung their heads in obeisance. The light and singing continued as a loud keening sound from above the gathering tribe, surrounding the ship in the river.

GODS OF EDEN

Hiram listened and amidst the haunting noise, he heard only the sounds of his crew's fear and dismay. Hiram saw that to the man, the crew had turned their helmeted heads toward him. Each seemed to find reassurance from his presence—and his fearless and grim gaze.

Just as suddenly as it had started, the keening went silent, seemingly swallowed by the dark river. The great beacon of light, however, continued to illuminate the scene, turning the river's pre-dawn into midday.

Hiram heard the mumblings and saw the signs made by his crew against Mot, the God of death.

"Tis Baal, captain, or his son Mot. Whichever, he comes for us—sent by the meddling priests of Tyre I reckon," said Hiram's first lieutenant, Baskos.

"Nay, Baskos, even Baal knows not of this place. We are beyond our Gods' wrath in this infernal land." Then, hastily considering his choices, Hiram issued his orders in a strong voice. "Quickly, every man, back to back with your mate—shields forward—swords at the ready! Baskos, throw the stones."

Baskos heaved the heavy stone anchors over the gunwale of the ship. With clanking armor and the quick shuffling of feet on the wooden deck, the crew formed a rod of steel along the center of the ship. Hiram remained at the tiller and slowly drew his sword and casually stuck it into the wooden deck by his feet.

The dozens of surrounding canoes held position around the ship. All in the dugouts continued to hold their heads down in the shadow of the great light. Yet, then, in an incredibly loud voice they all cried in unison, "Elo Yam!"

The keening sound again floated on the early morning air as the beam of spider-web light focused on the deck of the ship, enveloping Hiram within its star-fire.

Hiram hurriedly pulled his sword from the deck. He shifted his feet into a wide stance and stood there, with his blade poised and ready. But then, his vision closed to a pinpoint of light. His sight went totally black. Blind, Hiram

GARY GABELHOUSE

fell into a great darkness. The keening sound seemed to support him as he floated free of the heat and humidity of the river—the burdens of his jerkin and armor no longer an issue. The noise stopped. Hiram drifted into a peaceful sleep within the silent spider web of light.

The strong smell of animal sweat woke Hiram from his dreamless sleep. His eyes slowly came open to behold the strangest of sights. Before him were creatures that were human, yet not at all human. Their beetled brows and protruding muzzles looked distinctly similar to the apes Hiram procured for the royal court of King Solomon. Yet their motions and facial features were as human as the zookeepers of Tyre.

The throng of hairy, near-humans squatted amidst the boulders and shrubs, and groomed themselves with orderliness and protocol. Then the singing voices Hiram heard knitted together in a siren sound that came from within his own head.

“Behold your fathers and mothers, son of man. Perhaps your memories include them—perhaps not. Regardless, we maintain our brood stock, hedging against the frailties of your race. After these years of observation, we may yet need to start anew. For that reason we maintain our breeding line.”

Hiram, without fear or nervousness questioned the source of the voice that was within his head. “What is it you wish of me and my crew? We have journeyed far from our Gods yet, it seems as if a new God has found us. Is it that you hold us accountable and punish us for things we do not understand?”

Hiram heard what could have been soft laughter. “That is not our intent. We wish for you to make us structures to house our work as well as our subjects, Admiral. Make us a wonderful enclosure within which your grandmothers and grandfathers may prosper, and make us a large structure to house our priests. These dark people from the north have few building skills to suit our needs. They are artists of wood

GODS OF EDEN

and stone sculpture, but little else. Have you the knowledge of construction, my warrior friend?"

Hiram smiled as he looked up toward the sky, addressing his unseen host. "The men of Tyre are born with the strong grip of the mason. If it is structures you want and hold as bait for our freedom, well, then wonderful stone structures you could have. But how am I to be sure that your word will be as good as our labor?"

There was more soft laughter. "You really have no way to be certain of anything we say, my brave friend. But you will have our word. And you will quickly find that our word is as true as your own."

Hiram knew he was in no position to deny any offers that could give him and his men more time to plan and execute an escape from this river and its gods and their voices.

"Keep from us the dark wildings and leave me to my crew, and within thirty fortnights you will have your enclosure and temples unique in this world."

"Your claim and proposal will be considered, man of far shores," said the almost whispering voice in his head.

"Who will consider my proposal?" asked Hiram. "Who are you and what are your numbers? Beyond a voice in my head, is there any substance? Are you frightened to show yourself? Perhaps I am only dreaming a strange dream—the result of old food taken on an empty stomach. I will find it difficult to seriously consider only that which is....a voice in my head."

"Fair enough...Hiram of Tyre. See for yourself. Believe or remain the skeptic, it matters not as long as your words are true. Build for us that which we require. Do this, and in consideration of your efforts, you will be compensated much beyond the saving of your own lives."

Then Hiram beheld a small form walking among the ape men—luminescent and hairless with huge, oval eyes. It appeared naked, without armor or wrap. It had genitals as a man, but totally lacked body hair, and the face was without

line or crease. The head was largish and seemed to wear a perpetual smile. The creature walked slowly, gently stroking the ape men—scratching one behind its ears and gently cuffing another—wearing that perpetual smile of contentment.

The small, hairless man looked up directly into Hiram's eyes.

"Satisfied, my warrior friend? Or are you still skeptical, and feel you are only dreaming that which you see?"

Hiram suddenly drew his sword from its scabbard and pointed it at the small man.

"Does this lone naked child thing pretend to dictate terms and direct the lives of Hiram of Tyre and his crew of a hundred warriors? Where and what is your authority, little grub?"

The small hairless creature chuckled, a glint of mirth entering his large, oval eyes. "Many of your kind would call us by the name...Elohim, my backward son. We are the creators—the makers of man. Why, my sea-faring warrior, we made you and all of your line! What say you now, Hiram of Tyre?"

Hiram's mind was racing, trying to discern substance and reality from strange dreams or the scourge of old food. Now, somewhat more certain of his own reality and physical prowess, he walked toward the hairless man thing and readied his sword arm, tucking his shield's edge under his chin and nestling the lower rim into his left, upper thigh.

Hiram said, "Baal made me and mine. Now, you will pay for the affront to my God with your life, little man thing."

Hiram swung a mighty blow at the neck of the child thing. The ape men quickly scattered but turned about and bared their teeth as they struck aggressive poses.

The blade struck empty air. The light creature was gone.

The keening wail returned and grew in intensity. The ape men cowered and lowered themselves to the ground. The sound entered Hiram like a living thing. His sword

GODS OF EDEN

shattered and the shield cracked and crumbled, the fragments falling to his feet.

Then, the naked man thing reappeared. Still smiling, he again walked among the ape men. He soothed them with low whispers and gentle strokes and scratching. The naked creature looked at Hiram with its dark, almond eyes and seemed to smile even wider.

"My warrior son, is it not true among your kind that you cannot raise your hand to your father? Well, as such, you cannot raise your hand to me—he who created your father's father. These challenges and this heroic posturing will now be at an end. You will sleep, now, and when you wake, you will begin to build as is our bidding."

Three Years Later

The sail billowed on the vessel as the sea wind blew across Hiram's face. The wind bore more than the salt of the sea. Now, the scent of soil and vegetation was also carried on the wind as the ship approached the docks of Solomon. The vessel rode low in the water—its store of treasures a wonderful burden below in the hold of the ship.

They had returned to the kingdom of Solomon some six years after leaving Tyre, with two-score, less warriors on board. Most of the dead had given up their lives to the strange sickness of fevers and a few to building accidents when large boulders teetered and toppled over on to the workers of the stone.

Hiram could see that King Solomon himself was waiting on the pier. The sail dropped and the oarsmen guided the galley to the wharf. Hiram was the first to step on the familiar soil of land and was received by Solomon's entourage. After a brief conversation with the King, Hiram directed the off-loading of treasures.

Long lines of slaves snaked out of the hold. Some bore over their shoulders huge ivory tusks. Others struggled

GARY GABELHOUSE

under the weight of gold ingots stacked on ebony planks. Trusted members of the ship's crew carried casks of diamonds and precious stones toward the bier of Solomon.

The off-loading continued well into the afternoon.

The thrill and pageantry of unloading the strange and wonderful treasures eventually waned, and few remained on the docks. Solomon, however, remained seated on his bier as at last, Hiram came to formally offer him the manifest of his fealty.

"Oh Great King. I leave the oddest for the last. My last gift to you is strange beyond all ken. Behold that from which we have been born...."

Six members of the crew lifted out of the hold a wooden cage within which sat the strangest of creatures Solomon had ever seen. The ape man studied the great king and bared its teeth and growled threateningly with its eyes wide and wild.

"Is this another of the great apes as you have acquired for me in the past, Hiram?"

"No, my Lord. This creature is much beyond the apes. This creature seems to actually....think. As well, it makes and uses tools. It is not nearly as hairy as the apes from the dark forests, and the head is shaped much different than the dumb beasts I have delivered before. Despite all those differences, I find the eyes to be most telling. My great King, when you look into the eyes of this creature, it is as though you are looking into the eyes of your brother."

The sun hung low over the land of Solomon. The great king walked casually toward the creature as he extended his hand near the cage of the ape man. The ape man smelled and nuzzled his fingers. The king formed a cup of his hand as he looked at the caged creature and sought to scratch its ears.

"Who are you, father of man?" Solomon said as if addressing the darkening sky.

GODS OF EDEN

Feeling the hand on the back of its head, the ape-like thing again bared its teeth—fear and determination in its eyes as it gauged the measure of the great king. Solomon slowly extended his hand further into the cage and the knuckles of the ape man gently touched his as the sun bled crimson into the sea.

CHAPTER ONE

Zimbabwe, Africa

The flies hung like clouds in the afternoon heat. Gabe Turpin studied the photocopies of the old parchment as beads of sweat ran down his face, and drops of perspiration adorned his bare arms in dusty patterns like liquid henna. Flies buzzed about him—seemingly hundreds of flies in the African sun as rock doves cooed in the shade of the rock ruins. Relatively immune to such discomfort by this time, Turpin acknowledged the flies with only an absent wave of his left hand.

Gabe was the project director for cultural anthropology for a UNESCO program to upgrade and preserve the ancient Zimbabwe Ruins. He'd vowed he would evaluate the entire ruins with an objective and non-jaundiced eye. Through diligence and newfound technology, the expedition had uncovered more new findings in the past week than were discovered in the last thirty years. Laser-based technology had located a bevy of artifacts imbedded within the stone walls of the ruins' enclosure.

The wall itself was more than thirty feet high and eight feet deep. The laser and the image-mapping computers showed a huge, anomalous stone structure imbedded within the wall of the enclosure. The imbedded stone plate was nearly ten feet across by five feet deep. A meter-square metallic seal was attached over the stone like a memorial plaque.

Thirty years before, an explorer named Hall had excavated the Great Ruins. Ignoring even the least bit of scientific care or caution, Hall dug and hacked the grounds of the ruins, looking for treasure. The expedition was known in archeological circles as Hall's Rape. For the decades after Hall's expedition, there was little or nothing left to excavate

GARY GABELHOUSE

on the ground. But the interior of the rock walls – well, Gabe had quickly found that to be a different story.

Gabe put down the photocopies of the parchments and moved to the huge soft stone tablets that were arranged on a work bench. Yesterday, workers had pried and freed the tablets from the enclosure's walls. He studied the cuneiform inscriptions chiseled into the huge, soft stone tablet which had been placed within the walls of the ruins untold centuries before. The smell of charcoal fires scented the air. Sweat dripped into Gabe's eyes, blurring his vision.

At six feet, four inches tall, Gabe was ill fit for the work he now performed. At two hundred fifty pounds, and fifty-two years of age, Gabe's body twisted begrudgingly in the close confines of the dig.

As Gabe matched the cuneiform strokes of the tablet to his photocopied reference sheets, he longed for a Zambezi beer. A gin and tonic served colonial style at his tent with Stilton cheese and Marie crackers would be even better.

Turpin was a cultural anthropology professor at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. His decades of study of the world's arcane and sometimes dark, tribal ceremonies had earned him the title of Doctor X-Files among the academic crowd. Despite the current measurement of his age at over half a century, Turpin was quite active and fit. He trained and exercised nearly every day. Three times each week he was at home, he was in the dojo—training and teaching Karate and Daitoryu Aikijujitsu. Other days he walked and jogged through his suburban neighborhood. His once-sharp jaw line had filled in and his dark, curly hair had thinned out and grayed with age. His dark eyes were intelligent and intense.

Gabe had been married to Cindy for thirty years. She was the love of his life and their only daughter, Malindi, was named after a town in Africa Gabe had visited in 1974. Gabe viewed Malindi as almost a magical being—a most perfect mix of gritty strength and compassion.

GODS OF EDEN

For so many years, Gabe had been drawn to the far corners of the earth, searching for clues that more thoroughly explained the collective evolution of the cultures of humankind. Selflessly, his wife and daughter had shared him with the wild places of the earth in his search.

The flies continued pestering as Gabe photographed the cuneiform inscriptions on the tablet within the walled ruins of Zimbabwe. As he studied the inscriptions, he felt more and more certain he was seeing the ancient alphabet of Phoenicia. He was convinced these forms were not, in any way, ancient, African runes or the pictographs of the Bushmen so prevalent in the area.

The cuneiform alphabet of Phoenicia was the first true alphabet. The Phoenician forms simplified the complex hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt so that the merchants of Phoenicia could easily catalog their trade.

If verified, the tablet would go a long way in supporting the controversial theory that Phoenician sailors had settled the valley of the Zambezi River three thousand years ago. Some archeologists and anthropologists felt the sailors of Phoenicia had established a steady trade in gold, diamonds, ivory and slaves between the African interior and the old civilizations of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Other scholars believed that the Phoenicians were the builders of the legendary city of Ophir, the source of the riches of King Solomon.

For more than a decade, Gabe had studied the great ruins of Zimbabwe. In his view, their architecture hinted at the structures of Tyre, one of the great port cities of ancient Phoenicia. The architecture of the ruins of Zimbabwe was totally dissimilar to any of the endemic, tribal architecture of the country, and very similar to those of the ancient Mediterranean colonial posts of Phoenicia such as Cyprus. With its huge, dry-stacked stone walls and its tall conical edifices built not too far from the old riverbed of the Zambezi, the great ruins of Zimbabwe were a cultural enigma.

GARY GABELHOUSE

Gabe finished photographing the huge tablet and its golden seal. Stuffing the translations sheets in the back of his Royal Robbins expedition shorts, he extricated himself from the confines of the new excavation.

Outside of the trench, the air smelled like fresh-cut hay. The grasslands of Zimbabwe surrounded the groves of acacia trees and ruins of the hilly deposit of silt laid down millenniums ago by the great river, which now flowed many miles to the North. A large African fish eagle hung over the horizon of the hills—suspended by its long wings which found purchase on the warm air in the darkening afternoon.

Absentmindedly, Gabe stared at the Pleistocene landscape while he ran his fingers over his legs and arms. His fingers found and extracted a small, reddish brown tick from behind his knee.

Gabe slowly walked back to his Suzuki mini-SUV he had rented in Masvingo, and collapsed into the small driver's-side seat. He retrieved the cuneiform translation sheets from his shorts pocket and tossed them into the back seat along with the digital camera. Then he fished in the glove compartment for his flask of Bombay gin. It wasn't a proper martini or anything close to a dry gin and tonic, but Gabe relished the sophisticated bite of distilled cedar berries.

The sun grew fatigued and seemed to sag into the horizon as Gabe drove to the tented camp of Pa Nyonda, twelve clicks away from the ruins. He parked his SUV beside the cook tent of the camp and walked up the path toward his dark, green tent. The flaps were already turned down to protect against the cool of the high-veldt evening and Gabe smiled as he saw a strong fire already ablaze under the 55 gallon drum of water connected to his tented bathroom by a long snaking piece of black hose.

A gas lantern hissed like a nest of cobras. It hung from a pole tamped into the packed-dirt in front of his tent.

He collected a leather-bound journal that lay beside his cot and took it to the back of the tent and into the bathroom. After he set his journal beside the sink, Gabe

GODS OF EDEN

walked over and placed the stopper in the bathtub and turned the hot water on into the huge, cast-iron tub.

Gabe's tent was more library than domicile and his journal was the key to the volumes, which appeared to be stacked at random. He walked over to the sink and opened the journal. As the water filled the tub, Gabe walked back out into the tent. He found the reference he was looking for in the journal, and perused the stacks of books crowding the tent. Gabe plucked the ancient binding from a stack of other antique volumes—some of which were bound in leather, some codices bound in papyrus—even some volumes bound in un-tanned animal hides.

Gabe took the old text back into the tented bathroom. It was a Greek translation of the Apocrypha of the Hebrew Old Testament—stories which, for some reason, had not made the Old Testament cut. Almost as an afterthought, he grabbed his old, dog-eared copy of the Greek concordance of the Old Testament. With his fingers twiddling over a dusty stack of Internet-based documents, Gabe finally selected the Phoenician Creation Legend recently translated by Doctor Dan Ward.

Sitting in the deep tub of steaming water, he opened each of the three books to the same point of chronology—that being the story of creation and the early times of humankind. He was searching for references to or even hints of the great city of Ophir.

For an hour, Gabe leafed through the three volumes, turning the pages in tandem. Finally, lulled by the heat and the ancient words, he drifted off to sleep.

At first, when Gabe heard someone speaking in Bantu, he thought he was dreaming. He shifted in his tub of cooling water. Then Gabe heard the messenger shift to Swahili, evidently hoping it would be recognized in the early evening of the veldt.

"Tafhidali, Bwana—chakula," said the unseen voice. Food was being served in the dinner tent.

GARY GABELHOUSE

Finally, the words sunk in. Gabe shook the cobwebs from his mind and extricated himself from the cast-iron tub into the cooling air. Methodically, he placed his texts on a nightstand beside the tub. He pulled on khaki shorts and a cotton shirt, pulled back the tent flap and stepped into the night air.

His head still somewhat muddled by the gin, Gabe ordered a light dinner of trout fresh-caught from Lake Muturikiwi, just ten miles away. Despite his earlier craving, he declined the proffered alcohol and ordered passion fruit juice to go with his fish.

Throughout the meal, his thoughts distracted him from the meal's courses. After the entrée was gone, he nibbled at the last course of cheese and sipped an aperitif of cognac. Dark, rich Kenyan coffee served in a silver service finished the meal and brought his musings to an end.

He was treading on dangerous ground. Zimbabwe had gone nationalistic—that is, everything about Zimbabwe was now black and tribal, most certainly, not white. The white, ex-governors of the country seemed to have sublimated themselves with a quiet defiance of reality. Cultural tapestries were now reworked. Histories had been rewritten. Such was the accepted evolution of humankind in this new nation of Africa.

Zimbabwe politics bent the findings of archeological study. It was no longer politically correct to attribute the beginnings of greatness of the land to anything other than that of the endemic Bantu tribes. The backwards, child-like skills of ancient tribes were grafted onto whatever had built the great wonder of the ruins of Zimbabwe.

Gabe knew he was playing with fire. His government minders inspected every transmission—every fax, phone call and email from the UNESCO site outwards.

But the proof was undeniable. He knew Phoenician cuneiforms when he saw them and the marks on the huge tablet cast within the ruin's enclosure walls were undoubtedly just that.

GODS OF EDEN

As he finished the last of the coffee, he thought about how he could get out the true word of his discoveries. A slightly-tilted smile lit his rugged face as a strategy to outflank his minders came to mind.

Gabe threw down the last finger of his cognac as Ricki Mrima, his UNESCO assistant, hurried into the dining tent. With his eyes downcast, Ricki made his way to Gabe's table.

The Shona tribesman's voice was barely above a whisper.

"Daktari Gabe, your presence is requested on the ruins site. We wait for your direction. The Lasermetric and computer program have come upon something quite unusual. Your supervision is required, straight away."

Without thinking, Gabe daubed his mouth with his napkin and hustled out of the tent with Ricki. The ancient Land Rover was idling just outside the cook tent and Gabe slid into the passenger seat. He was barely in his seat as Ricki popped the clutch and drove wildly to the enclosure of the ruins amidst deep shadows of stone and trees.

The air was cool—almost cold. As they drove to the enclosure, Gabe smelled the wood fires and the pungent grass and vegetation of the high-veldt through his open window. Still under the influence of the gin and cognac, Gabe was trying to sober himself to deal with another cultural and political situation.

The confines of the technical tent—the digital laboratory of the dig—were alive with activity. Gabe wobbled as he headed for the processing center of the tent. He fished a jeweler's loupe out of a pocket to study the details of the images on the glossy photo paper from the Lasermetric.

The image showed what appeared to be three sets of skeletal remains. All but one was naked and unclad. The skeleton that was an exception appeared to be enclosed in decaying leather and metal armor. The images were fuzzy despite the digital enhancement.

"Where are these from?" Turpin asked.

GARY GABELHOUSE

"From the wall opposite the seal and tablet of the enclosure, Bwana," Mrima said.

"Directly opposite?"

"Yes Daktari Gabe. Directly opposite the tablet and seal."

Gabe considered the hour and the task in front of them and reached a decision.

"Uncover the remains. Now."

Three hours later and they were still not into the keep of the enclosure as the long day and effects of the alcohol were taking their tolls. Gabe left orders that they find him when they breached the keep. Then he lay down outside of the dig on the grass and pulled a wool blanket over himself. He heard the grunting of lions as his eyes shuttered closed. The last thing he saw was the Southern Cross hanging low in the sky.

Amidst the shadows of pre-dawn Gabe came awake. He heard the continued digging into the wall of the enclosure. Slowly and with some pain in his joints, Gabe rose to greet the new day. Ricki, apparently waiting for Gabe to awake, pushed a cup of kahawa, hot, Kenyan coffee, into his hands.

"Jambo Daktari, habari?"

"M'zuri." Gabe replied. All was good. "Are the remains uncovered? Have we encountered any difficulties?"

"N'dio, Daktari, that is why I have come for you. We are ready to open the final structure."

Gabe drained the cup of kahawa and placed the empty cup on a stone beside his makeshift bivouac. He donned his headlamp and headed for the dig, moving far more easily than he had before. The few hours of sleep had worked its magic.

As he came to the terminus of the excavation into the wall, Gabe saw a volunteer wrestle the last stone out of the chamber in the vast wall. Gabe pushed past half a dozen others watching the black hole expectantly, and shimmied

GODS OF EDEN

through the hole and into the dark of the chamber. The chamber was little more than a crawlspace. Gabe could see it was a couple of feet high, but its depth into and under the great wall was lost in darkness.

His headlamp cast strange shadows on the wall of the excavation. Gabe wriggled on through the masonry and found within the dry-stacked stones an antechamber much larger than the initial crawlspace, more an area of dedication than a place for secreting away things of import.

He was now on his hands and knees. With his headlamp beam directed at an angle to the floor of the antechamber, Gabe suddenly stopped at what he saw. His head swam and he had difficulty in focusing on the impossible sight that lay on the floor in front of him. A pit formed in his stomach as the beam of light exposed an impossible anthropological discovery.

There were three sets of burial remains, all full skeletons, arranged neatly side-by-side. On Gabe's left was a full skeleton of what was most certainly *Australopithecus* Africans, one of the earliest limbs of humankind's family tree. Beside that lay a small, humanoid skeleton with a skull that was wide and had an incredibly large skull cavity and a huge frontal cortex. The eye sockets of the skull were large and almond shaped with a nasal septum that had likely manifested a small, upturned nose. The bones of the creature were small and birdlike, light and almost delicate. The child-like skeleton lay in the middle of the burial group. To its left and Gabe's right lay a skeleton encased in decaying leather and rusted metal armor. The bony phalanges of the figure clasped an old, rusted piece of metal. Upon closer examination, Gabe determined it was an ancient bronze sword.

In the early morning of the high-veldt, Gabe stared at this anthropologist's dream...or nightmare. Within five feet of each other lay a fossil man who walked the earth more than three million years ago and a Phoenician warrior who plied the open seas a mere three thousand years ago.

GARY GABELHOUSE

Between the two lay the remains of something that was clearly not human, yet humanoid. None of it made any sense. All of it was impossible.

Gabe sat for some time, trying to get his head around his discovery. Most certainly, it would stand physical anthropology on its head. He knew he must somehow protect this find until he formulated a plan. It would not be easy. One didn't just walk off with the most valuable artifacts in the world, and trust that a struggling African nation would have no interest in keeping such scientific treasures for their own purposes. He must have time to think and plan. Given human nature, he knew that it was in his best interests to downplay what was contained in the chamber. That would be a start.

Gabe reversed his crawl and exited into the strong, early-morning light.

"Secure this opening, Ricki," said Gabe. "No one goes in without me or my permission. Is that understood?"

Mrima cast his gaze down automatically, avoiding eye contact with Gabe.

"N'dio, Daktari. Are you feeling well, bwana Gabe? You look very pale. Do you wish for me to go for the medical Daktari in Masvingo?"

Gabe wiped the dust and sweat from his face and mustered a grin. "Happana, no, it was just a bit close down there and the air was not so good. I will be fine. Now, have the workers dedicate themselves to the final excavation of the plate and tablet."

"Do you wish then to leave this dig site alone, Daktari Gabe? Were the bones of no consequence?" Ricki steadily probed for answers.

Gabe feigned disinterest in this new discovery.

"The writing on the tablets is more important than burial sites of a few inhabitants, Ricki. Let us stay in focus. I have just begun to decipher the cuneiforms of the seal and tablet."

"Are the inscriptions not ancient Bantu, Daktari Gabe?"

GODS OF EDEN

During the awkward silence, the rising sun cast shadows on the rock kopjes of the fields among which were the great ruins of Zimbabwe. Gabe looked at Mrima, knowing the truth would not be whole-heartedly accepted.

"They're not African at all. Most likely, the runes are Phoenician. I would almost bet my life on it."

"Perhaps you are, Daktari Gabe," said Mrima in a somber tone. "The war veterans and the SANU faction would not smile on a theory that lent credence to non-Africans constructing this wonderful testament to what is most certainly African ability. Best to double check your theories and proofs, Daktari Gabe."

Gabe turned and silently walked to the vehicle. He glanced over his shoulder and said, "Let's go get some breakfast. I'm famished."

"N'dio, Daktari. I, too, am very hungry. Let me off at the cook tent. I will take my breakfast with my staff, as usual."

Silently, Gabe drove back to camp. Despite his silence, Gabe was plotting and planning. He wondered at how to best manage the enigmatic burial site of fossil humanoids.

Without looking at Gabe, Ricki spoke in his soft voice.

"I should probably go to Masvingo and check in with my superiors. It has been some time since my last report."

Gabe felt a wave of distrust sweep over him. Gabe wondered how long he had before the brute squads of the War Veterans came to take over his dig. He knew all too well how quickly even small issues could become deadly...in Africa.

The rising sun turned the high-veldt horizon a creamy yellow—mottled with the light green of acacia, as they drove toward the edge of the world.

CHAPTER TWO

The Great Ruins: Zimbabwe, Africa

Gabe let Mrima off at the camp's cook tent. Ricki thanked Gabe and said, "After my breakfast, I will find my own way back to the enclosure, Daktari Gabe. We will begin further work on the seal and tablet straight away."

"Sow-sow, okay. I will see you at the enclosure in a bit."

Ricki watched as Turpin drove off to park the vehicle and take his own breakfast in solitude. As soon as the Land Rover was out of sight, Ricki quickly walked around the back of the tent to the servants' living area and searched for his friend, Joseph Okimbe. Joseph was sleeping in the early sun, a woolen blanket pulled up around his chin.

"Joseph, straight away, give me a lift back to the enclosure," said Ricki loudly—trying to rouse the man.

Ricki watched as Joseph, bleary-eyed from sleeping off a bit too much of the Zambezi beer from the night before, sat up in his cot and absently slipped into sandals, stretched and yawned greatly. Ricki stood silently as Joseph gently rubbed the sleep from his eyes, and spied an unfinished bottle of Zimbabwean ale sitting beside the cot.

"Come on my friend. I must go now," said Ricki as he watched Okimbe retrieve the bottle of beer, drink it down and belch in satisfaction.

"N'dio—yes boss," responded Joseph.

In a supplies vehicle, the two raced back up the high veldt to the enclosure. Ricki nearly leapt from the vehicle as it ground to a halt. He pounded twice on the hood as Joseph then motored away, back down the veldt. Ricki jogged to the technical tent and sat down in front of the monitor of the Lasermetric. He pulled up the cached images still residing on the drive and found the last images rendered. Working quickly, he pulled the bitmaps into the image-enhancement software of the workstation. He cropped the image and

GARY GABELHOUSE

focused on three largish shapes. With the three blobs of light centered in the screen, Ricki set up special image-enhancement protocols and gazed at the monitor. His jaw slowly dropped at what he saw.

Mrima worked more with the image—adjusting the contrast and brightness until he could make out the details of three skeletons found within the walls of the Great Enclosure. He zoomed in and cropped the image to include only the three skulls. Ricki printed a hi-resolution photo of the skulls off of the Lasermetric, placed it into a manila file folder and greedily clasped the incredible image to his chest as he ran the two kilometers to Masvingo.

New York City

Matt Henderson walked hunched under his umbrella and unfolded himself as he opened the solid, wood door of Giambelli's between 5th Avenue and Park on 50th. Henderson was a good old boy from a small town on the Georgia side of the Chattahoochee River. He had graduated from the military academies of the old south, but had gone to law school at Harvard. Everything about his features and physicality was normal and unremarkable. He was easily forgotten. His intelligence was anything but unremarkable. Disguised by the persona of a good old southern boy who always spoke in that soft, polite Dixie drawl, Henderson was a strategic and tactical predator with a killer instinct. With the mind of an analyst, Henderson could get things done in the field better than the most ruthless of field agents. Henderson was a force.

The rain seemed determined to spoil all the fun to be had in mid-town in that early evening. The cold front and its rain moved across the Hudson and over the East River, relieving the island of an oppressive and nearly tropical heat and humidity.

GODS OF EDEN

Mr. Giambelli, true to form, greeted Henderson warmly. "How have you been, my friend? Still in Georgia, are you? How nice you pay us another visit." Plucking one of the many roses in a large vase at the front of the house, Mr. Giambelli pruned the flower and pinned the single bud to Henderson's lapel. "Will you be joined by others?"

For years now, Henderson had been occasionally dining at this bastion of Italian cuisine. After his first visit, Mr. Giambelli knew him by name. The old, balding Italian restaurateur knew each and every one of his patrons by name, no matter how irregular their visits. Also after his first visit, Henderson even began to receive regular Christmas cards from Mr. Giambelli—each of which showed the general of New York's Italian cuisine kissing the ring of the Pope, as Mrs. Giambelli took her proper station behind the two men.

"A table for two, Mr. Giambelli, grazie," said Henderson.

Mr. Giambelli personally whisked Henderson to a table against the mirrors of the room. Typically New York, Giambelli's was not a place for private conversation.

With a wide and open smile, Henderson addressed the old Italian in his most syrupy southern-gentleman lingua franca. "Mr. Giambelli, may we have a small booth upstairs? I have serious talk of a most private nature with my guest. Here in the splendor of your establishment, we would not wish to dilute the enjoyment of others with the requirements of our small matters. So, if you would humor me—a more private place would be much appreciated."

"But of course, Mr. Matt. Forgive me for not understanding of your needs. Right this way. May I have the name of your guest so I may personally direct him to your booth?"

"Labatte—Marvin Labatte. He is a regrettably short little man with a pinched face. He'll be wearing a black suit—it's his uniform. White shirt, black tie—short cropped hair. You will know him when you see him, Mr. Giambelli."

Henderson ordered a bottle of Cabernet—a 1995 that went for more than two hundred dollars. The sommelier

GARY GABELHOUSE

offered him the cork and a small sample of the dark, red wine. Henderson ceremoniously sniffed at the cork and gargled the bit of wine, bouncing it off his palate. The wine's mellow yet fruity bouquet seemed to actually clean his palate. He nodded to the waiter his approval of the selection.

Labatte, ushered into the room by the old Italian, and shook the wet off him almost like a retriever, before he entered the booth.

"Good evening, Marvin." Henderson made his tone intentionally friendly.

"Hello yourself, Matt," Labatte answered sullenly.

Henderson sighed and finished the bit of cabernet before he poured another glass for himself and one for his guest. He tilted his glass to Labatte. "Cheers. Here's to good news and no problems."

Without a gesture either way, and without a clinking of glasses, Labatte said, "There is news and none of it good. This news means trouble."

Henderson sighed and drained his glass of cabernet. He signaled the waiter, who, like an obedient and watchful dog, dutifully scampered to the table. "Another bottle of this wonderful cabernet and an order of your special calamari to start."

There was no conversation at the table between the two as the waiter worked on Henderson's order. When it came, Henderson, ever the host, poured Labatte another glass of wine and actually served him the squid in spicy tomato sauce. Once they'd both taken a few bites, Henderson said, "If you have bad news, let it rest 'till we're done with dinner."

"As you wish."

After the calamari in spicy tomato sauce, linguini and clams were served along with a Caesar salad, salty anchovies served atop the romaine.

Coffee was served automatically and both Labatte and Henderson waved off the offer of berries or cheesecake for

GODS OF EDEN

desert. Henderson sipped his coffee, silently assessing Labatte and his news.

Henderson broke the silence with his gentlemanly, southern drawl. "Our stomachs have had time to ruminate this wonderful repast. Now you can ruin our evening with your news."

As Henderson clasped his hands together and calmly regarded the small man, Labatte reluctantly looked up, and then quickly shifted his gaze to the table.

Labatte stared into his nearly-empty coffee cup, his eyes bleak as he spoke. "One of our deep feeds in Africa has confirmed a finding that requires our attention. At the ruins of Zimbabwe, a UNESCO team of archeologists and anthropologists found Phoenician cuneiforms that could jeopardize our interests. But that's not the worst of it. They have apparently also stumbled onto a proof of the Fallen Angels."

Henderson seemed unshaken by the report. "What is the nature of this....this proof?"

"It appears to be the skull of a Fallen Angel—the skull of a Star Child—an Elohim," Labatte said.

Henderson's whole body seemed to slump as he reached for his coffee and sighed. His elocution changed from southern gentleman to the hard streets of Atlanta. "So now we have ancient Star Children we have to manage on top of all the other shit on our plate?"

"It would appear so." Labatte sipped the last bit of his coffee.

Henderson's said nothing for nearly thirty seconds. Then he said, "Destroy the proofs. Our plate is too full right now to add to it with this. Remove all proofs, regardless of the cost or consequence. Also, remove as many of those associated with the proofs as you can."

"Everyone who knows about it? On what authority?"

"Diamond-level clearance on all employed assets. I trust you are up to the task?"

GARY GABELHOUSE

Labatte daubed clean the corners of his mouth as he met the stare of Henderson.

"Yes, Matt. I am up to the task. I will act within the protocol of a diamond-level op, so no double talk or second guessing later. We will bring to bear the full assets of the Foundation to, as you say, erase this problem."

"Good." Henderson slid out of the booth. He slipped into his raincoat and then took Labatte's hand in his strong, dry grasp. "Please don't fuck this up Marvin."

"I will endeavor not to," replied Labatte, evenly.

Labatte, without further words, walked down the stairs of the restaurant, ducked out of the door and into the night of midtown. Henderson casually stepped down the stair case and was intercepted by Mr. Giambelli.

"I hope your dinner was up to expectation," said Giambelli

"Tonight's dinner somehow, far exceeded any of my expectations, no matter that those expectations were at a very high level. I have no idea how your kitchen can turn calamari into a veritable sacrament."

Mister Giambelli chuckled and said, "We know of the squid here at Giambelli's. He is an old friend of ours, as is the tomato and garlic. We are all...among friends here at Giambelli's."

"Si, Maestro, grazie, Mr. Giambelli." Henderson ducked out of the door and onto 50th. The rain stung his face, driven by strong north winds gusting up through New York's concrete canyons.

30,000 Feet Over Zimbabwe, Africa

The Foundation's Special Operations Group Commander sat in the pale green light of the C-131. He watched his team as they adjusted their gear. Each team member was equipped with a Heckler & Koch MP5-N 9mm sub-machine gun—the same used by the elite US Navy SEAL

GODS OF EDEN

Teams. Each of the twelve men had facemasks and oxygen tanks and a GPS unit mounted on their left wrist.

The metallic announcement sounded loudly in the plane's hull. Then, the red jump light pulsed like the heartbeats of the black-suited warriors as the bay door opened into the frozen night. The Commander looked down the two lines of his troops as they began to move forward toward the maw of darkness. As silent as bats issuing from a cave, the men leaped out of the aircraft and took wing into the African skies.

At thirty thousand feet and wiping frost from his goggles, the SOG Commander saw the splendor of the Southern Cross laying low in the inky horizon. The high altitude, low opening or HALO jump seemed to be going smoothly as the team adjusted their descents, working off of their GPS units.

Below them, he saw few lights or evidence of human activity. The city lights of Masvingo were sparse and weak and the star shine reflected off of Lake Muturikiwi like elfin glitter. At one thousand feet off the deck the chutes deployed and the team descended upon the great ruins of Zimbabwe like birds of prey steeping to the kill.

Gently touching down in the rock-strewn veldt of the great ruins, the team furled their Para-sails and gathered one hundred meters from the great enclosure. With the stars hanging heavy in the sky like a diamond broach, one member of the team painted the targets with a laser and clicked his mike three times, signaling the task was complete. Forty thousand feet above, the F-16 let loose two, one-thousand-pound, laser-guided smart bombs.

"Surprise packages delivered," said a static-filled transmission into the earpieces of the Commander as they lay in the high grass of the veldt. All was quiet and the air was full of the scent of harvest hay as his team readied themselves—checking their communications systems, weapons and ordinance. A hyena moaned and whooped on

GARY GABELHOUSE

the night air as the yipping of jackals trailed off into the darkness.

Gabe tossed and turned on his cot, wringing the bedding into a wrinkled mass of twisted cotton. Finally, he jumped out of bed and donned his heavy, woolen robe and sandals as he freed himself from the confines of his canvas prison.

With no particular objective in mind, Gabe walked past the cook tent and toward the ruins. It was three o'clock in the morning and the stars, undiluted by any moon, shown brilliantly in the African sky—like burning points of white, yellow and red—a milky, dusty haze connecting them all in a gossamer spider web of starlight.

Suddenly, an explosion rocked the world. Gabe felt the concussion bounce off his chest. Intense yellow light enveloped the walls of the enclosure. The explosion sent the dry-stacked stones of the ruins flying like clay pigeons.

Gabe ran toward the enclosure. His lungs labored in the early morning air of the high-veldt. Gabe saw another bomb blast as the walls of the enclosure were, again, decimated.

Gabe slipped automatically into a state of zanshin—a place of calm observation and action—a place where one is aware of everything at once. This state was a product of decades of training in the martial arts dojo.

As he ran up to the ruins, he sensed without seeing the team of soldiers off to his left. Prickles of danger raised Gabe's neck hairs as he dropped low into the high grass.

The team moved silently by him, like creeping mist, through the grasslands—ghosts and wraiths in the night. Once they were past him, Gabe moved onward to the enclosure ruins.

The destruction was devastating. The walled enclosure of the tablet and seal were simply gone—smoking stone and a three-foot crater took the place of the relics and their confines.

GODS OF EDEN

Gabe ran to the technical tent. It was standing, undamaged. From the tent, Gabe ran to the site of the three skeletons discovered the day before. Wondrously, the wall of the enclosure some twenty meters away from the excavation site was completely blown away, just as the wall which had held the tablet and seal. However, the site of the skeletal relics was completely intact.

Without thought, Gabe snaked himself down through the narrow shaft and into the anteroom of the dig. Before him lay the three remains, just as he'd left them. Gabe spent just a few seconds to check them and then summarily removed the skulls from the three skeletons. He juggled them as he exited the dig. The helmeted skull seemed to catch on every stone nubbin. Gabe found a canvas carry bag used for debris removal and excavation sitting at the entrance of the dig. He placed the three skulls into the stiff-sided bag and ran out into the cool African night.

A few hundred feet away from the site, Gabe cached the bag of skulls under a rock outcropping, moving brush and duff over the relics. He then ran back to the technical tent.

Nearby, a 9mm round popped and the sound echoed off the stone kopjes of the high-veldt. Gabe entered the tent and logged onto the network program. He pulled up a menu of images then printed off the high-resolution renderings of both the seal and tablet.

More gunfire. The high-resolution printer regurgitated its images onto tabloid-sized, photo paper. Gabe secured the photos of the seal and tablet in a plastic document tube and put it down the back of his boxers under his robe. Then he cut the lights.

Seconds later, a spider web of red, laser beams crisscrossed each other in the dark confines of the technical tent.

Sensing the invaders more than seeing them, Gabe dropped to his belly and listened, attempting to control his breathing. He heard a whisper from the open entrance to the tent.

GARY GABELHOUSE

"Storyman, this is Eraser. We have a straggler. We are now engaging."

Some time went by and Gabe could smell fear-response ketones on his own breath. A red laser beam danced over his prone body and passed on without hesitating. Then Gabe heard footsteps not more than two feet from where he lay. The laser sights continued to paint their crisscross of red light on the canvas walls and ceiling. It was time to act. Gabe slowly untied the woolen belt of his robe and silently rose to a squatting position. Again, entering into zanshin, Gabe used his belt like a garrote and looped the cloth around the soldier's neck. Using his hips to propel the throw, Gabe launched the body into the air. It landed ten feet away. The soldier, his neck broken, collapsed in a heap on the floor of the tech tent.

Gabe quickly tied one of his leather sandals to the belt and swung the manufactured shuriken in a wide arc. The heavy leather payload knocked the H & K from the grasp of a second soldier. Without hesitating, Gabe moved in to finish his assault.

Pain! The knife sliced through Gabe's robe and lay a neat, quarter-inch slice across his chest. Reflexively, Gabe slammed his make-do shuriken at his assailant's knife hand. The KABAR knife clattered onto the canvas floor of the tent.

Gabe engaged the figure in the dark and instantly knew he was dealing with a very formidable foe. The man countered all of Gabe's initial attacks and mounted his own, keeping Gabe on defense as much as offense. Slapping sounds mixed with deep breathing, retorts, grunts and growls filled the close confines of the tent as the two men fought.

Gabe threw a hisa geri, or knee kick. He felt it connect and heard the snap and crunching of bone and cartilage as his opponent's knee collapsed. The soldier screamed and collapsed to the ground.

Without thinking, Gabe delivered a strong roundhouse kick to his assailant's throat. A familiar and unnatural

GODS OF EDEN

swallowing sound told him that his opponent had just lost his grip on life. Gabe raced out of the tent and into the moonless, high-veldt night, the plastic tube of photos still secure in his boxer's waistband.

As he approached the main camp, Gabe smelled the carnage before he saw it—the feces, urine and blood. The scent of death was overpowering as he entered the UNESCO camp. Gabe was sickened by what he saw. Bodies lay everywhere. Many had been decapitated and many more had lost appendages, or had large, obscene, gaping wounds inflicted by pangas—machetes. He wondered at this low-tech butchery compared to the laser sights and advanced weaponry of those he had encountered. Clearly, this was not a simple puzzle to unravel.

Gabe saw Mrima laying in a black pool of blood, the night insects already feasting on the human offering. Like a forensic examiner, Gabe inspected the body thoroughly, holding a Mini-Maglight in his teeth to give him light.

A large gash cleaved the top and back of Ricki's head. But there was what appeared to be the small entry wound of a bullet just below Ricki's left eye. There might have been an exit wound but it was missing along with the back one-third of Ricki's skull.

Quickly, Gabe went to the next body and examined it. Both arms had been severed at the elbow. Many gashes to the body still leaked body fluids. Again, there was what could be a bullet-entry wound that was somewhat altered by the deep cuts of a panga.

Now the puzzle pieces began to fall into place for Gabe. As he squatted amidst the corpses he tried to analyze what had really happened. He studied more corpses as he thought. The police would chalk this attack up to the SANU faction and its war veterans. The panga was the signature of their reign of terror on opposition politicians and those who supported them. Sometime next week, the Harare Nation

GARY GABELHOUSE

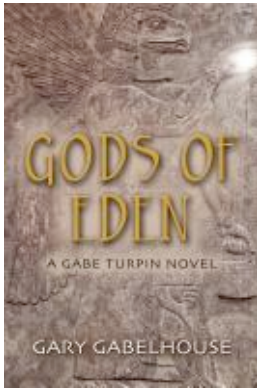
would likely publish a short, one-column article about a SANU action outside of Masvingo.

Certain that not all was as it seemed, Gabe ran down the high-veldt to Masvingo. In the dark behind him he heard the whooping and groans of hyenas as they found their providence of easy flesh.

Then, just above a whisper, a sleek, black helicopter skirted the acacias and landed among the kopjes and high grass of the veldt. The aerial wonder obviously had stealth retrofits as it silently hovered over the grass, which bowed down to the rotors.

Gabe saw ten dark-clad bodies run, bent over, toward the open door of the chopper. Two were carrying bodies slung over their shoulders—most likely the two Gabe had dispatched in the tech tent. Almost gently, the two soldiers lay their fallen comrades in the bay of the craft and then, climbed in behind them. The helicopter rose from the veldt like a giant June beetle. It arced off into the black without a sound.

Once it was out of sight, Gabe jogged to Masvingo, still dressed in a bath robe. His sandals crunched in syncopation on the dirt road out from the ruins. A sliver of a moon rose in the West over the high-veldt and scavengers reclaimed the night.



Within the Great Ruins of Zimbabwe, anthropologist Gabe Turpin makes an impossible discovery. A secret cabal deploys a black-ops team to the site to recover Turpin's relics and leave no survivors. Gabe is relentlessly pursued across Africa, and to the mountains of Ecuador. Only Turpin holds the TRUTH, as the lives of millions hang in the balance. And the only hope is Turpin's surviving those who want to keep humankind's greatest secret from... DISCLOSURE.

Gods of Eden

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6029.html?s=pdf)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6029.html?s=pdf>

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