



# The Journal of **THE FIRE ENGINEER**

Issue 2



## **THE DARK SECRET PART 1**

# **WE ARE WARRIORS IN AN ETERNAL WAR**

The Fire Engineer and associated characters -  
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First published 2008

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# **THE FIRE ENGINEER**

This book is dedicated to the men and women who, in the fire services across the globe, risk their lives on a daily basis to save the lives of others.

All persons in this book are fictitious; any resemblance (that may seem to exist) to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following for their help in the production of various aspects of this book.

David Gammon

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# **THE DARK SECRET PART 1**

**WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL HANSON**

## Prologue

*This race could live with equal ease in water, air, or fire, for it had an unlimited control over the elements. These were the 'Sons of God'; not those who saw the daughters of men, but the real Elohim, though in the oriental Kabala they have another name. It was they who imparted Nature's most weird secrets to men, and revealed to them the ineffable, and now lost 'word.'*

*The Secret Doctrine by H. P. Blavatsky -- Vol. 2*

Aradia stood perfectly still and waited. She looked at Jason who was staring intently into one particular corner of the room. The musty air in the old building was smothered by the acrid odour of un-burnt gas. In the corner of the room a column of smoke, the source of the odour swirled and grew. The vapours at the top of the column rose upwards and vented out of an opening in the roof.

The corner of the room would best be described as an alcove, not unlike a very large fireplace, framed and constructed of brickwork but the alcove in which the smoke was forming was as tall as a human. The smoke continued to form in the alcove, Aradia had witnessed this event a number of times but it still fascinated her. As she continued to stare at the alcove the smoke began to take shape, slowly and carefully forming itself into a human shape. When the transformation was complete Aradia and Jason were standing in front of a female humanoid form composed of smoke, flowing and emitting vapours vented through the ceiling vent of the room. Aradia's understanding of physics had been suspended when she first encountered the beings, which they called the Elohim. However by clearly understanding the true nature of these beings she was able to comprehend some of the mysteries mankind had yet to discover.

The Elohim had been the first inhabitants of the Earth, a race completely in tune with nature. They had shepherded mankind to take care of this world before they had to depart an eon ago. Upon their recent return they had been disappointed by mankind's failure to take care of the world in the way they had been taught. In addition they found themselves locked out of our world, only able to appear in the physical form of one of the four natural elements, earth, air, water and fire.

The smoke turned its head towards Aradia and Jason, two bright vapours ignited in the shape of eyes.

'Welcome Elohim.' Announced Jason using the ancient name he favoured for the being, which had appeared before him.

Aradia and Jason felt a voice form in their mind, 'what do you have to report?'

'We have identified a suitable person to serve as a host,' said Jason.

'Does this host agree to be inhabited by one of us?' The voice responded.

'The host agrees with the ideals of the true faith. He is unhappy about the way his kind are treating the Earth - we believe he can be persuaded to make a significant contribution to right the wrongs of this world, by agreeing to serve as a host to one of your kind,' said Jason.

'So you still have to persuade him?' Said the Elohim.

'We do. It is important that we gently bring him into our confidence. Our plan will begin in earnest this afternoon.'

'And what have you discovered about the one known as the Fire Engineer?' Questioned the Elohim.

Aradia spoke in answer to this question. 'The Fire Engineer is a self appointed trouble-shooter who apparently takes it upon himself to deal with fire situations which are difficult for the fire brigade to deal with. He appears to possess an ability to adapt his body to extreme conditions. He can, for example 'see' in black smoky conditions, his body becomes resistant to heat. There are however some limitations to his abilities. He cannot breathe in smoke for example. Our sources have not been able to discover how he came by these abilities, which are not



natural for a human.’

‘Is he a threat to our plans?’ Asked the Elohim.

‘I would say he probably is the only one who has the potential to thwart our plans for London,’ said Aradia.

‘This must not happen, Aradia. We need this first strike to be significant. No one must be able to destabilise our plans. By the end of the month we want to see the entire city of London in flames, a message to the Earth for mankind’s plundering of the environment.’

‘We will deal with the Fire Engineer. I promise,’ said Jason.

‘See that you do.’ The representative of the beings known to Aradia and Jason as the Elohim, dissipated and appeared to be sucked into a rip in the fabric of the air itself.

## Chapter 1 Backdraft

*What says the esoteric teaching with regard to fire? “Fire,” it says, “is the most perfect and unadulterated reflection, in Heaven as on Earth, of the ONE FLAME. It is divine ‘SUBSTANCE’.*

*The Secret Doctrine by H. P. Blavatsky*

Arthur looked out of the steel framed window; it provided him with a view over the factory floor from his office perched ten metres above. But today his view was different; he could just barely see the metal gantry and stairway leading downwards. Beyond this all he could see was blackness; a void of total darkness consumed everything else outside the window. He could also feel the intensity of the heat transmitted through the wired glass from the smoke. Despite his technical background Arthur knew little about fire. However he did know that it is the smoke that kills, but that was not a problem from where he was standing. The door to his office was a fire door and the brush strips around the edge of the door, which looked like draft excluder, were actually smoke seals, although he questioned their effectiveness when smoke started coming through the seals at the top of the door. He and Ron, the only other occupant of the room had pushed into the gaps around the door almost anything thin and flexible they could find to stop the smoke coming in.

What Arthur had not realised was how hot smoke was. The layer, which had formed in the ceiling of the factory had built down to half the height of the factory building and now covered the office. Although not as hot as the smoke at the top of the ceiling level, it was still very hot at the level of the office and was radiating all of its intensity through the glass. The glass was a type, which was resistant to fire, the wire in the moulded glass acted as a restraint to stop the melting molten glass from collapsing, but what it did not do was hold back the

heat. It had never occurred to Arthur that smoke would be hot like this, he knew it must have some degree of heat from the flame which generated it, but the heat he was experiencing on the other side of the glass from the deepening smoke layer outside was beyond his wildest imaginings.

The window was located one and a half meters from the floor of the room, so he was able to crouch down and be partially shielded from the direct heat through the glass. He crawled back to where Ron sat on the floor, sweat running in beads across his heavily furrowed brow, Ron was agitated and lifted his right arm with clenched fist, he swung it in the air and smashed it against the leg of a wooded table, a gesture of raging futility. ‘It can’t end like this!’

‘Ron, there’s no point in taking it out on the furniture,’ said Arthur.

Ron turned and looked at him as if about to level an accusation, his body had an athletic frame, his jet-black hair held its shape from self-supporting hair gel, in fact he had used so much of the gel his hair almost looked as though it was coated with a plastic film. ‘It’s all right for you; you’ve had your life; twenty one, that’s all I am - twenty one!’

Arthur took his un-fashionable but practical handkerchief out of his trouser pocket and wiped his face. His most distinguishing feature was a full head of grey hair. Crows feet imprinted the skin either side of his eyes. ‘So you think I’m all washed up do you?’

‘What? No I didn’t mean - look, all I’m saying is that you’re what - fifty-five? You’ve had your life. Me I’ve not even started.’

Arthur shifted from his crouched position to sit down on the floor a short distance away from Ron. ‘You feel that your potential is being taken away from you. But you don’t even conceive of my take on this situation.’

‘Whatever your age, when you know you’re about to die you take stock, and you know what I’ve realised Ron?’ It was a question he did not expect an answer to but Ron shook his head all the same. ‘I’ve realised that a lot of my adult life has been wasted.’

‘How can you say that - just look at this business? No one else has achieved the commercial advances in robotics like you have. Your client base is world wide; I expect you could probably retire in comfort now if you wanted to!’

Arthur looked at Ron as a wise elder may look at a youthful member of an ancient tribe and sighed. ‘What you see is the surface. And you are seeing things as I did twenty years ago. If I were to retire now, what would I have to retire to? I have no wife and no family. Lets face it Ron I have only work, and it’s consumed me with a passion above all else until there comes a time when you realise. What was it Mark Twain said? “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do.”

If there is one thing I can tell you Ron, if we do get out of this situation, don't be like me. And hey, fifty five's not that old is it?

Outside the room the smoke was thick and black, denser than the darkest night and its oppressiveness consumed everything. The gantry swayed as a solitary figure slowly walked along its length with both hands gripping tightly on the rail. He was not however a usual tenant of the building and he was not affected by the toxicity of the smoke around him. A shimmering blue hood formed of plasma energy covered his head giving him protection from the toxicity of the un-burnt particles of smoke; it also allowed him to breath oxygen from a tiny container engineered with nano-technology to reduce the volume of oxygen he needed to carry. But he did not need any enhanced technology to see through the smoke, his genetically enhanced senses allowed him to 'see'. A desire to use this and other abilities had led to him becoming known as the Fire Engineer.

Moving his head upward he could 'see' the massive vents in the roof of the warehouse, but the smoke was behaving in an uncharacteristic way. It was not moving out of the vents.

'Lisa can you see this?' He spoke into his headset microphone.

'Yes, I'm suffering interference of some kind but I can just make it out.' Lisa replied watching on the monitor back at base. The video link to the camera mounted on the Fire Engineers headset was a new experimental feature. A simple video link was always possible, but Lisa had not implemented the idea before as she was working on a two-way visual link allowing her to display information directly on the heads up display on the Fire Engineers plasma helmet. It needed some work. This first test at a real incident at least proved it worked in the field.

'Stephen there can be only one reason why the smoke has stopped venting,' said Lisa.

'Damn I didn't check the inlet!' The Fire Engineer cursed his own stupidity.

It was basic physics. For smoke to move out of a building it must be replaced by air under the smoke layer. As the buoyancy of the smoke caused it to rise to the ceiling and form a layer, the roof vents allowed the smoke to move outward into the atmosphere. But without inlet air below, the smoke layer would not move.

The heat was intense but the flames had died down. This may seem like a good thing, but it was not. A crack sounded above the Fire Engineer, he looked up to see a sheet of flame cascading across the ceiling from the location of the roof vents.

'Its puffing, Steven,' observed Lisa, from the image over the video link, 'air is being drawn in from the only possible location - from the outlet - to sustain the fire'.

The lack of inlet air was causing the vent to work

in reverse, oxygen is being pulled through the outlet causing the venting smoke to puff and the incoming oxygen is igniting the un-burnt particles in the smoke. This also proved what he already knew - it would not be wise to create an inlet for air under the smoke layer at this stage, a sudden rush of oxygen would cause the fire to suddenly grow larger or at worst cause all the combustible gases to ignite at once, commonly known as backdraft.

Steven paused in his progress along the gantry and crouched low. The only way to stop the fire is to reduce the heat.

There was a sudden metallic clanking sound, which vibrated along the gantry he was crouching upon. The sound was coming closer but he could not identify its direction, in fact it seemed to be coming from all directions at the same time. He searched for its source through the smoke using his senses, a wave of shapes formed in his mind - nothing he could identify. This enhanced perception he had acquired was still relatively new. It was possible to see a shape but unless it was recognisable it was just a shape - just like someone learning to see for the first time, they would have to know what an object looks like to know what it is, even though it can be seen. What his visual sensory perception was indicating was a spherical shape in front of him and also behind. Angular rods or tendrils appeared to be moving from the spherical objects, almost octopus like. It was also possible for him to perceive light intensity through the black virtually impenetrable smoke; he could therefore detect a single light source, emanating from the centre of the sphere, like a Cyclops eye. It was however unclear how this being could see. But it appeared to know where he was.

'Steven, what's that?' Lisa asked frantically through the headset.

'I can't identify it... Oh!' A dull thud hit his plasma helmet and he fell back along the gantry. His senses had felt the blow coming but he hesitated not knowing what was moving toward him. It was clear now that this being could 'see' him through the smoke. The next time he sensed the movement he did not hesitate, shifting rapidly on to his side; and a metallic clank hit the gantry platform beside him. Raising his right arm he pointed his wrist mounted extinguishing nozzle at the bulk of the shape and discharged a burst of water. It stopped its spider like advance. He shot a discharge again, causing the shape to stagger back slightly. He could now perceive that the tendrils from this spherical shape were some form of legs. He shot a further discharge of water but the shape held its ground.

'Steven I think I know what this is...' said Lisa.

In the office Arthur and Ron sat silently now accepting of their fate, then a mobile phone rang, both looked up surprised.

'What ... now?' said Arthur under his breath. He

stood up and reached for the phone on a nearby desk.

‘Yes?’

‘Arthur Raston?’

‘Speaking... but I have to tell you that it’s not quite convenient at the moment...’ said Arthur.

‘Is OK Arthur, I know what’s going on, we are trying to get you out of there. My name’s Lisa. I need your help. I have a colleague on the gantry outside in the factory, he is being attacked by something - do you have some form of sentry’s out there?’

‘Yeah, they’re mechanoids.’ he replied.

‘Can you deactivate them?’ asked Lisa.

‘No, who are you the Fire Brigade?’ asked Arthur.

‘No, they were having difficulties with this one; we help out with difficult situations. So you’re saying there’s no way of turning the sentries off?’

‘No central switch that would be a weakness, if someone knew about it, the sentry’s would be too easily disabled.’ said Arthur.

‘Then we will have to tackle this, another way.’ said Lisa. ‘What are conditions like where you are?’ Asked Lisa.

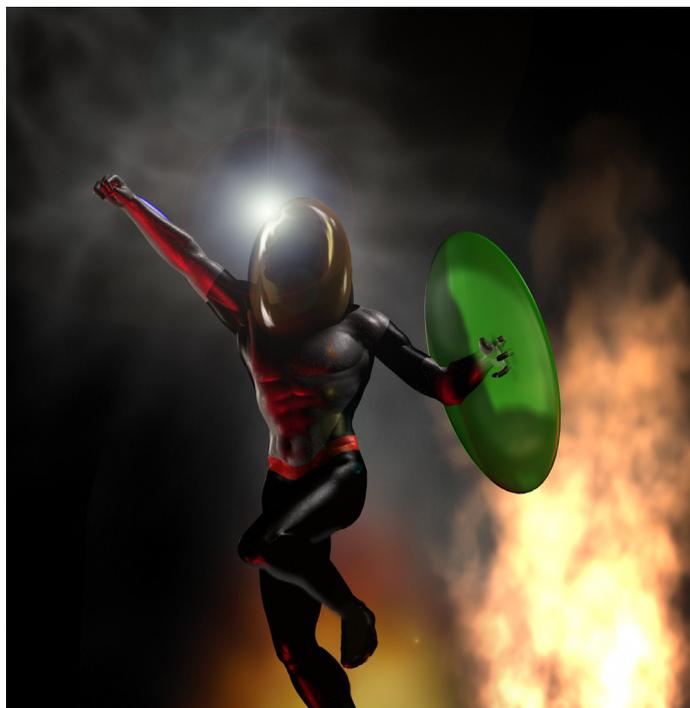
‘We’ve sealed the edges of the door, so the smokes stopped for now, but the heat in here is becoming unbearable through the window.’ said Arthur.

‘I’ll contact you later.’ said Lisa.

Arthur put the phone in his pocket and crawled back to Ron. ‘Looks like we designed those robot sentries a bit to well Ron. They can’t get to us until they deal with them.’

Outside the Fire Engineer had resigned himself to the fact that for the moment his only course of action was a defensive one. He sensed a second sentry moving towards him from the other end of the gantry. He held up his left arm, plasma energy emerged from a small disk on the outer side of his arm forming a force field in the shape of a rounded shield. The force shield shimmered as a metallic arm was driven in his direction, the force of the blow against his shield caused him to fall backwards against the railing of the gantry. The platform of the structure then shook as the first sentry moved speedily towards him in order to strike its own blow. He steadied his left arm with his right hand, effectively holding the plasma shield aloft to take the impact. Then he quickly dropped his right hand under the shield to fire a discharge at the first sentry from the extinguishing device mounted on his right wrist, A grey stream of liquid hit the metal chest of the sentry with a hammering sound, when the stream stopped a tearing could be seen in the casing of this metallic guardian, causing it to stop.

‘So you didn’t like that!’ muttered the Fire Engineer. He had used the granular mix setting on his extinguishing device, this mixed small particles



with the water stream which gave the stream a cutting action with enough force to cut a hole in solid concrete. But in truth the wound it inflicted upon this metallic behemoth was merely a scratch.

‘Steven,’ the Fire Engineers headset crackled again with Lisa’s voice. ‘You’re dealing with some kind of robot sentries designed to protect the building from intruders; I can’t find a way to shut them down. Can you hold them while I send Firefly in?’

‘I’ll try, but how are you sending her in?’

‘Same way as you, she’s practised the routine back at base a number of times. She’s going to have to try it for real sometime, so now seems as good as any.’

‘I would have preferred it without the robots to contend with so I’m able to be there if she gets into trouble...’ he raised his shield allowing a blow from one of the sentries to glance off, its momentum caused it to crash against the railing, twisting the metal tubes of the handrail beside him. ‘...but in the circumstances...’

‘Concentrate on what you’re doing Steven, I’ll get Firefly.’

Sally could see the smoke plume on the horizon, rising high into the sky mixing slowly with the surrounding air, it was in the middle of summer and yet the sky was covered with a grey wash as though an artist’s water-colour had been infected by an un-cleaned brush. The cockpit in which she sat was dimly lit; illuminated only by the red and blue lights of the controls, constant and unchanging in their demeanour. She had not heard anything from Lisa or Steven since he had left the Dancing Angel and went into the burning building. Her racing heart had slowed to a meagre pulse from the expectation of her first real mission, to the dullness of waiting. Was everything going to plan? This one was supposed to

be her first official job, she was to have gone in after the Fire Engineer and assist with the operation, once the job had been assessed.

The Dancing Angel had an audio and video link to the Fire Engineer so she was able to monitor the situation. More than once she had been tempted to contact Lisa, but did not want to be a nuisance. So she waited. The tension and expectation she had for the mission moved and faded in waves. She waited.

‘Firefly ... Firefly!’ Lisa’s voice increased in tone and volume, ‘Sally!’

‘Oh L ... Lisa ... sorry, I’m just not used to the name yet,’ said Sally realising that Firefly was her mission code word. It was something she found strange at first. Why have alternative names? But it made sense; it allowed their private persona to remain just that.

‘You’ve been monitoring the situation?’ asked Lisa.

‘Yeah, it was the name, I’m not used to; sorry - I was not asleep.’

‘We’ll I wouldn’t blame you if you were; unfortunately we had to hold you back as this is quite a difficult one. As you’ve seen we have a situation in that factory where the flames have diminished due to lack of oxygen, but the heat is way up. The Fire Brigade are stationed outside but are prevented from going near the building due to twelve mechanoid sentries ‘protecting’ the building. Steven dares not create any new opening as it would will cause an in-rush of oxygen igniting the smoke...’

‘Backdraft... so I get to do the BD manoeuvre?’ predicted Sally.

‘Yes, BD1. Do you remember what to do?’

‘Look Lis... I’ve practised it... what, it must be twenty times already!’

‘Fifteen actually Sally. Look you must understand my need for caution; this is a difficult manoeuvre, mainly because backdraft conditions are so unpredictable. But we need you to do it, just don’t be too overconfident.’

‘Lisa its not the first real fire I’ve been in now is it?’

‘It’s your first potential backdraft. Anyway we need to get moving.’

In the office Arthur and Ron stared at the scene out of the office window on the gantry as the Fire Engineer continued to battle the two sentries.

‘He’s not doing too well, is he?’ Ron ran his hands across his face nervously.

‘We shouldn’t have built them so good,’ said Arthur.

‘Yeah, ironic isn’t it - you do your best work and it ends up killing you,’ said Ron, ‘that guy ain’t got a hope in hell of saving us.’

Just then a glow erupted above the Fire Engineer and the two metallic guardians, flame tore through the smoke from the direction of one of the roof vents, the force of the shockwave caused the gantry on which they were standing to shake, support hangers were suddenly ripped from the roof structure and the gantry dropped two metres from the floor. The Fire Engineer’s plasma shield crashed against the metal railings like a solid object, causing him to fall backwards, smashing his shoulder against the gantry platform. His vision became blurry and a searing pain stabbed in his shoulder. The sentries undeterred by the partial collapse of the gantry, were upon him.

Outside, some distance from the building the air shimmered in a wave of displaced gravitational energy. At the centre of the wave Sally had become the persona of her code name. The initial experience of the flight pack mounted on her back on that fateful day at the World Trade Centre was difficult and unpredictable. However during the last three months her control of the gravitational displacement field had become second nature. The pack itself had been further developed from the prototype she had first worn. It was still surprisingly light, consisting of a thin shell shaped to the contours of her upper back. Two small fins protruded from this shell pointing upwards curving to blunted ends. Visually they appeared like small-stylised wings. When activated the gravity displacement field was emitted from a point between the fins.

Her suit was in one piece, light grey in colour. It mimicked the Fire Engineer’s own costume with a red belt, on which was mounted a slim rectangular container located at the back of the belt just below the flight pack. This container held cylinders of various fire-extinguishing agents in a highly compressed form as the cylinders themselves were only 50 mm in diameter and 200 mm long. From the container housing the cylinders extended a tube, which ran along the line of her spine turning at her shoulders to run down the top of her right arm. A similar tube took the same path but ran down her left shoulder. Both of the tubes were formed in the fabric of the costume and except for the shape of the tube, ran unobtrusively throughout their length. At the end of the right hand tube was a set of two nozzles, mounted on the top of her wrist, they formed the outlet of the extinguishing agent. Palm mounted controls formed as part of the costume allowed her to choose the type of extinguishing agent and its discharge velocity.

The piping along her left arm finished at a small metallic disk. This was the emitter for the force shield, which is also adjustable by palm buttons on the left hand. The shield was a plasma field, which extended to a circular pattern resembling a circular shield. The pattern of the force shield could also be adjusted to extend around her body. It also assisted her in carrying a large piece of equipment or other objects. In a similar manner to the Fire Engineer,

Sally's head was covered by a plasma helmet, which also covered her hair.

The large plume of smoke was coming ever closer from her point of view, rising from the vents in the warehouse roof like a great tower which marked this place on the landscape for miles around. The smoke was black, a thick substance of darkness, and a fitting colour for the cocktail of toxic vapours, which threatened the environment with degradation. A distant observer would have seen a glow approaching the dark tower at great speed, and a gradual ascent rising steeply until the glow circled the tower. The glow was the emission from the anti-gravity field focused at a point between Sally's shoulders, and to that distant observer she looked like her namesake - a firefly.

She made one final orbit of the smoke plume, then flew away from the plume, rotated her body so that she was now flying feet first and plummeted straight down into the plume. At the last moment she reduced the anti-gravity field to a narrow band between her and the smoke, even so the effect was to cause turbulence as she tunnelled down through the smoke plume. This was the dangerous part, and the reason why she had practised this manoeuvre again and again in simulated form. If air was drawn in at this stage it would cause the smoke coming in contact with the air drawn inside the building to spontaneously ignite. It was impossible to prevent air coming in with her; the object was to limit the amount of air by careful balance of the anti-gravity field and momentum.

Inside the building the smoke now had no defined layer; the hotter darker particles were at high level with a very gradual gradient towards grey at the bottom of the building. About three metres below the roof the Fire Engineer was struggling against the onslaught of the two sentries. Only the comparative stab of a metal fist slamming against his leg relieved the pain in his shoulder. The Sentries were now acquainted with the plasma shield emitted from his left wrist, with which he had effectively guarded himself from upper body attack. This sudden strike at his legs was unexpected. He now wished he had taken up Lisa's offer to teach him her chosen martial art. What use was a martial art to a fire fighter? He now regretted his lack of foresight.

He placed the middle finger of his left hand on the rotary palm mounted control of the plasma shield and gave it a sharp nudge; the plasma shield expanded from its circular shield like pattern to balloon into a sphere with a sharp pointed section, he rapidly nudged the power field control with his index finger. This process caused the shield to rapidly expand, disappear for a second then reappear, giving a powerful stabbing object formed of plasma energy with little effort. This allowed him a few moments to take in the pain. But the sentries were not distracted for long, seeing his efforts were only a minor distraction they closed in once again. Just then the already dislodged gantry shook, the Fire

Engineer looked up at the Sentries, but they were not the source of this new disturbance, he looked past them and saw its source.

A soft glow pulsed from a point at ceiling level amid the denser mass of smoke; the glow was expanding and as it expanded shards of flame appeared in place of the smoke like tendrils rippling through the gas. It was as if a giant fireball was floating in the air, growing as it consumed the un-burnt gas particles, which filled the building. The fireball was now six metres across when it touched the gantry. The shockwave caused the gantry to shift and twist, The Fire Engineer gripped onto the railing with both hands, the perimeter of the fireball touched the sentry's and they were both pushed from the gantry as the shockwave from the auto ignition of the smoke engulfed them. The shockwave hit the Fire Engineer; then as suddenly as it appeared, the fireball was gone.

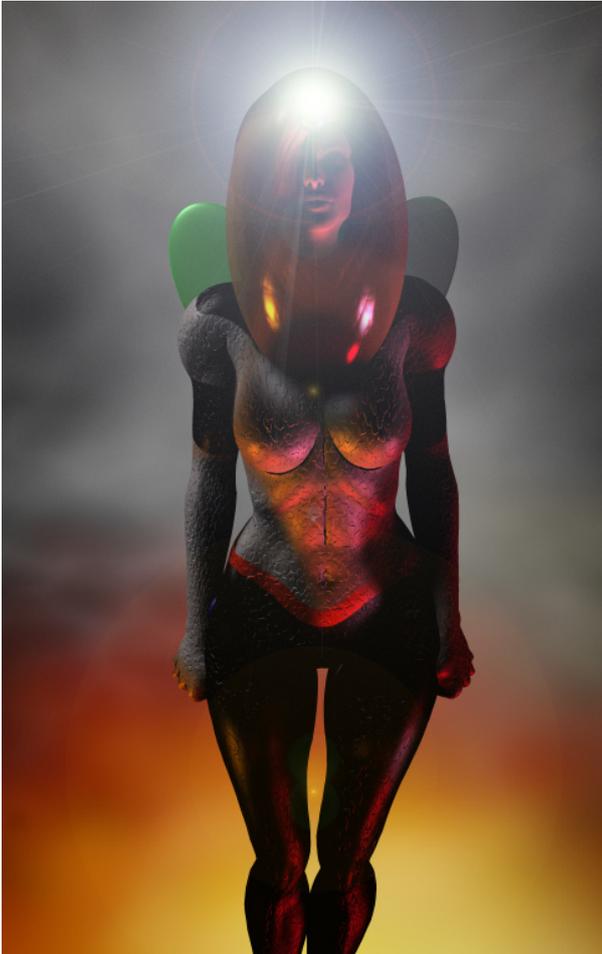
At the centre of the space where the fireball had resided a few moments ago was a human figure, floating just under one of the smoke ventilators. A fine white gaseous substance was being omitted from two hand held nozzles, fitted with pistol grips. The source of the gas was housed in a belt of spherical containers around her waist.

'You cut that one very fine Firefly,' said the Fire Engineer still gripping the deteriorated gantry.

'We'll it is the first time I've done this outside a simulator,' she replied.

The theory of how to deal with backdraft was simple. To extinguish any fire you merely had to remove one of three components; oxygen, fuel or heat - this was known as the fire triangle. A backdraft situation was somewhat different; oxygen had already been depleted from the space leaving the un-burnt particles of smoke. But reintroducing oxygen would cause the fire to re-ignite very rapidly causing the growth of a very fast growing fire - an explosion. Although it was possible with modern chemical agents added to water to cool the smoke, the problem was how to enter the building without drawing in any air and thus re-ignite the smoke particle. This is why the Fire Engineers team devised strategy BD1.

The entry point had to be via an existing opening - a smoke vent in the roof. Hence Firefly's decent through the smoke plume rising from one of the vents. This was not without danger, as any air brought in with the person descending into the plume would ignite the smoke particles. The affect of this problem was the fireball, which appeared to grow from the location of the vent. Firefly's application of the heavy duty cooling agent as she descended into the vent stopped the oxygen igniting too much of the smoke particles by rapidly cooling the smoke around the path of her descent, however because of the rapid auto ignition of the smoke particles with the air being drawn in the building with her, the fireball still grew to ten metres in diameter. Once through



the vent, no more air was drawn into the building, and the unstable backdraft conditions remained. It was then merely the task of cooling all the smoke to a temperature below its auto ignition.

‘We need to rapidly cool the remainder of the smoke in here,’ said the Fire Engineer, ‘I suggest you do the area around those cylinders over there and then circle around the ceiling.’

‘Will do,’ she said flying off to the opposite end of the factory. The Fire Engineer had identified the stockpile of cylinders when he arrived in the building and had erected a temporary fire resisting spray protection over them to avoid the cylinders exploding from the heat, however he still wanted to be sure they were attended to first as the temporary fire protection spray had only limited heat resistance. The enhanced coolant gas Firefly was equipped with would solve the problem by cooling the smoke, and thus prevent any further heat build-up.

In a few minutes the temperature displayed in The Fire Engineers heads up display was reading 400 degrees centigrade; now well below the auto ignition temperature of smoke when exposed to air. Whilst the cooling process was on going he had made his way down to the Ground floor and was now standing adjacent to a blank wall. He adjusted the wrist mounted extinguishing device on his right hand to a setting known a granular mix. He pointed his arm at the wall. A flow of grey liquid shot out from the two small nozzles mounted in the upper part of his wrist.

The liquid hit the wall, which disintegrated in a shower of concrete dust, leaving a hole, three metres wide. A strong flow of air hit him, and now at last the natural ventilation system would be able to perform efficiently. It took five minutes for the smoke to form a layer two metres from the ground and gradually the layer could be seen to rise. The hole formed in the wall allowed inlet air to replace the smoke venting out of the smoke vents at the top of the building,

Presently he ascended the stair to the office, meeting Firefly at the top of the gantry. The smoke had cleared sufficiently to allow the occupants of the office to leave. He opened the door.

‘Gentlemen, I am pleased to say your ordeal is over,’ said the Fire Engineer. Arthur and Ron stood up, relieved. ‘There are five of your sentry’s surrounding the building, If you can persuade them to stand down the Fire brigade will be able to move in and finish up in here. I am afraid two of your sentry’s are a little worse for wear and are presently laying on the factory floor.’

‘That is of little consequence; I feel utterly irresponsible young man,’ Arthur wiped his face with his handkerchief. ‘It seems our creations nearly became our undoing, and also put others at risk to save our lives.’

‘You should not entirely blame yourself,’ said The Fire Engineer, ‘the building had flaws in itself which did not help the fire-fighting.’

‘Let me shake your hand, and if there is anything within my power which I can do for you; just name it.’

‘No that’s OK, its all part of the servi...’

‘Steven, what are you saying...’ it was Lisa’s voice in his headset, ‘don’t go all super-heroic on me. This guy, he has technology that could be useful - this is a good opportunity...’

‘Oh, excuse me,’ said the Fire Engineer addressing the two men in the room, he partly turned his head looking down to address the voice in his headset. ‘OK Lisa I get the message, leave this to me.’

He turned back to Arthur. ‘Well it seems I was a bit hasty. I have this lovely Japanese woman at the other end of the line who says she would love you to take her out to dinner.’

‘Steven what are you doing?’ Lisa’s voice rang in the Fire Engineers headset.

‘Oh, this must be Lisa, she spoke to me earlier. Sounds an interesting woman; yes I would be honoured to take her out to dinner.’ Arthur responded, oblivious to Lisa’s comment. Lisa’s video and audio monitor attached to the Fire Engineers headset allowed her to see and hear all that transpired. Arthur continued, ‘I know a nice little place, Rodrigo’s in Kings Street, Friday evening, about 7.30?’

‘Is that OK for you Lisa?’ asked the Fire Engineer

into his headset.

‘Steven!’ said Lisa.

‘That’s fine Arthur, she looks forward to meeting you,’ said the Fire Engineer.

‘Well at least there is some light in this disaster, I really do look forward to meeting your colleague,’ Arthur smiled brightly, as he took a comb out of his inside jacket pocket and combed his hair in a sweeping gesture. ‘Well Ron we need to see to our mechanoids so the Fire Brigade can finish their job. Thank you once again Mr. Fire Engineer,’ He shook Steven’s hand and departed with Ron.

‘Right Steven, you and me; need to talk,’ it was Lisa again.

‘We’re talking,’ he replied, ‘I thought you could do with a night out, you wanted to meet the man, so...’

‘Yeah, to talk technology, dinners not really...’

‘Why not; look I’ve fixed it now. You know I could always send him the instructions for that origami rose!’

‘Steven, you dare!’

The Fire Engineer followed Arthur and Ron out of the office and stopped on the metal landing outside the door. Firefly was looking over the balcony at the factory below. She had taken off the heavy-duty coolant device.

‘You know I was going to say why don’t we carry this gear all the time, but I see now why not - it’s so heavy after a while.’ said Firefly.

‘Lisa’s constantly looking at ways the gear can be made more portable. Ideally the backdraft coolant would be incorporated in our standard wrist mounted extinguishing device, but it’s not possible at the moment. The fact is we don’t have that many backdraft problems to deal with anyway, so as long as we carry the gear in the Dancing Angel, we can always pick it up as needed. In a building of this size backdraft is not normally a problem, its really a combination of the Fire Brigade not being able to get near the building because of the sentries, and an inefficiently designed smoke vent system without inlet air. And of course by the time we were able to get inside, the fire had used up all the air.’

‘Yeah I sure wouldn’t like to carry this gear around all the time as it is. Now changing the subject I obviously heard all that over my headset, are you always winding Lisa up?’ Said Firefly.

‘No not always, just every other day,’ he said.

‘What’s with the origami rose then?’

‘Ah ... now you know Lisa’s into origami?’

‘Yeah, I’ve seen her models for that exhibition she’s entering.’

‘For the Cultural centre of Japan; she is good you know - anyway the origami rose; well that was

another of my little jokes when I first met her - no you ask her about it. I’ve wound her up enough today, if I tell you about that as well I’m going to be pushing it.

Now lets see the Officer in charge before we leave.’

‘I’m sure he’ll be happy with what we’ve done here, don’t you?’

They eventually located him on the far side of the factory floor, he noticed them from some distance off and was looking in their direction as they walked towards him. He was a slight man for a Fire Brigade officer. Brown hair with tinges of grey was visible under his white protective helmet; the colour also identified him as a Station officer. His beard unsuccessfully attempted to hide a protruding chin.

‘So you’re The Fire Engineer,’ he said.

‘Pleased to meet you sir,’ said the Fire Engineer, ‘this is my assistant Firefly.’ he motioned in Sally’s direction.

‘Love the fancy names then don’t you? My names Stuart, Station officer Stuart, but you can call me Sir.’

Firefly frowned. She rarely took an instant dislike to somebody, but this was one such occasion.

‘Now I’m not going to pretend I approve of you or your outfit. We have a Fire Brigade in this country young man and that should be good enough for anyone. But it was the ADO, who called you in on this one, and I have respect for the man, and I’m not supposed to question his judgement. I’ve seen what you’ve done and you’ve made a fair job of it; bit too messy for my liking, but you lack the discipline of the Brigade of course, so its only to be expected.’

‘We’ll take note of your comments - Sir,’ said the Fire Engineer.

‘So your assistants a female?’ His question was of course a statement.

The Fire Engineer turned to Firefly looking at her, and turned back to the Station officer, ‘apparently so.’

Firefly failed to conceal a snigger.

‘We also have to comply with equal opportunities ourselves. Not really their place you know,’ continued the Station officer.

Firefly was agitated by these comments, the Fire Engineer stood there calmly. She wondered how he could be so calm.

‘Well it’s nice to have met you - Sir, and perhaps we will meet again,’ said the Fire Engineer. Firefly smiled, and they walked off.

Once outside Firefly could not hold her anger any longer. ‘I just can’t believe that! It’s not what I expected at all! What’s that guy’s problem?’

‘I don’t know but I can guess. I think he’s a

topper,' said the Fire Engineer.

'A topper?' she questioned.

'Yeah. If you told him you'd been to the moon, he would have a season ticket.'

'You're joking?'

'We'll I said its a guess, but lets look at it. We've gone in there and dealt with a situation he was not able to handle.'

'Thank you would be nice!'

'No, think about it. If he's a topper he won't accept it willingly, but of course he has to. So what does he do upon meeting us?'

'Criticise'

'Yeah, he needs to impose some form of betterment upon himself, so he says we made a mess.'

'And he don't like women!'



'He don't like capable women. So there we have it.'

'But we were invited in to help this situation.'

'Again I'm surmising but I guess that because the ADO - Assistant Divisional Officer - his boss - called us in, it actually makes it worse for him with his character trait. Unfortunately no matter how hard you try, there will always be somebody who does not like what you do. The important thing is that we were asked to assist with this situation because of the difficulty the Fire Brigade had passing the sentry's. And we did the job. We got those people out. That's what we need to focus on. Our friend knows what we did. His personality is his problem.'

'I hear what you're saying, but he's still annoying though.'

'Yeah I know, but as I say, focus on the important things. Now how did you feel doing the Backdraft procedure for real?'

'Well after the training I knew exactly what to do, it became intuitive really. I was just so worried I would do something wrong.'

'You did fine. We'll go through it in detail when we get back to base. Now we need to get to the Dancing Angel.'

'My fuels pretty low on the flight pack,' she said looking at her wrist-mounted monitor.

'That's the one thing about the flight pack. It's OK if the job don't go on too long. That's why I don't use one; and of course you're lighter than me so my duration would be shorter.'

They made their way back to their aircraft, the Dancing Angel. The area was too densely populated with trees to land any closer. Now they had a walk. Firefly's first experience with a major incident of this type had given her mixed feelings. There was the adrenaline rush as she approached the incident. The sense of purpose and need to get the job done as well as possible. But ultimately the feeling of doing some good by rescuing the occupants of the building. The unexpected taste of the Fire Brigade Officers unwelcome comments had tainted but not dispelled the good feelings of today, and the feeling of being part of the Fire Engineers team.

## Chapter 2 The Portal

*All powers that reside in nature, in every one of its departments, can be his; but, ONLY, when he sees that he is a part of the great Whole; when he feels that never could he use a power of any kind for any personal selfish purpose, but would lay all his possessions at the feet of his fellow men, for their benefit; ONLY then, can the best and highest in him operate.*

*The Dweller on the Threshold by Madame Blavatsky.*

Rain tumbled from the sky as if in a vain effort to wash the London Streets. Anthony Valentine paused as he emerged from Leicester Square underground station; standing in the shelter of the station entrance he pulled the hood of his ski jacket out from its Velcro pocket behind his head. In truth he didn't mind the rain, it was part of the natural order - that which is right for the world. What he despised was human intervention. To a degree it was acceptable to change the landscape of the world; building houses to protect us from the elements, but we had gone too far. We had gone beyond the needs of survival and in our want to pursue our own selfish desires we had condemned the world to an unnatural course of events which nature no longer had the power to control. That was bad, that was bad enough, but when we knew what was happening, when we knew what we had done and where we were taking the world - we continued, making mere token gestures to the problem.

At twenty-five this was a summation of his worldview. And as an individual, just like everyone else, there was nothing he could do to stop it. He could only watch as political leader after political leader made gesture after gesture impressing that they understood and that action would be taken. But it never happened, at least not to his satisfaction. Talk was cheap until the time came for action and all he saw were watered down policies that merely nodded in the right direction whilst business, money and affluence pervaded society.

So he had sought solace in the past. A chance discovery of an ancient book had convinced him that there was a point in mans history when we moved in completely the wrong direction. Instead of following the natural order of things we had chosen the path of mutated power. Abusing the very resources which could, in the right hands be used in a symbiosis to the betterment of all. He was convinced the knowledge was there, he had studied the works of Viktor Schauberg a relatively recent theorist who appeared to have partly found the true path. But as with many he was a victim of poetical abuse. His discoveries came to the attention of Adolf Hitler and in a similar manner to the doctrines of Nietzsche his work was distorted and almost erased from history. But Anthony believed Viktor Schauberg had only scratched the surface, he believed the true path lay

in the ancient doctrines of a much earlier time, when certain peoples worshiped and manipulated the elemental forces of nature. In the occult literature of the past lay the foundations of what he sought.

As he rushed across the road a wave of water washed over the pavement from the passing traffic, narrowly missing his shoes. All of the shops on this side of the street sold only one commodity, books. But only one shop was of interest to him. The outside of the building had not altered in many years, the window contained a display of second-hand books, some extremely rare and protected with some kind of transparent yellow film to prevent the sunlight fading the volumes. A bell rang as he opened the door, looking up he saw the swinging bell suspended on a brass spring, technology of another time but fitting in this quaint bookshop. The proprietor looked up from his book, a man of middling years, bearded with streaks of grey amid the light brown colouring of his hair. He peered above half rimmed spectacles, and went back to his book. The shop itself was small, but every part of its wall surface was covered with books. Racking lined the room providing more display space.

Anthony walked past the shopkeeper and turned into a corridor formed by shelves of books either side. A door less opening was identified by a label above the opening "Rare books downstairs". The narrow winding staircase delivered him into a narrow space with labelled paths through further corridors formed by bookracks. The characteristic smell of old books was present, which he had not noticed on the Ground floor. He made his way to the section labelled "mystic, new age and occult", although he really didn't need the label as he had been here before. As he turned a corner formed by the book cases he saw a woman standing halfway along the shelves gazing intently at the titles of the volumes which lined the shelves.

The section of the shelving he needed to see was further along, behind her. 'Excuse me,' he said gesturing his need to pass her.

She turned as if woken from a spell. Her long blond hair framed her face in an oval peaked at the top by a central parting. The features of her face were striking, with a smooth ivory like quality and a sombre expression seemed to hang at the edge of infinity - for a moment. Then she smiled at him.

'I'm so sorry,' she said moving closer to the shelf she was facing, allowing him space to pass.

The shelves continued the usual peppering of "wisdom". However he was wise to the poppy induced fantasies of Crowley and the turbulent mutterings of the mad monk of the Necronomicon, in truth penned by Lovecraft. No he had carefully charted the path to the true knowledge. Today he was looking for something quite specific; he had seen it here before. However scanning the shelves his eyes suddenly focused upon something else. Something entirely different, something rare and unique, unique

to such an extent that he could barely believe it was here in this shop. He pulled it from the shelves. Sure enough it was exactly what he thought it was. He opened the cover and clumsily knocked the volume with the sleeve of his jacket, sending it tumbling onto the floor, narrowly missing the foot of the young woman still standing nearby.

She looked down, 'Oh it must be alive,' she said with a half laugh as she bent down to pick it up. 'The Secret Doctrine of Amulstain,' she held it in her hand looking at the cover, and then lifted her head to look at him. 'Well I must say I'm jealous - I've been here for at least ten minutes, and you spot this right away.' Her head moved down again, her hair swinging in front of her face, she pulled it back over one of her ears, revealing an interesting crescent shaped ear piercing decoration. Anthony assumed this woman was here looking at the new age books. But he knew the decoration as more than a mere fashion item. And she appeared to recognise the book.

'May I?' She gestured to look in the book.

Anthony nodded. 'Be my guest, after all it's not mine - yet.'

'I think my first comment was correct, it is alive; this is magnificent, although I would question whether it is one of the 17th century originals.'

'So I'm not the only one interested in this kind of thing,' he said somewhat surprised.

'Oh I've been interested for some time, but you saw it first,' she gave it back to him, 'and you?'

'Me?'

'Have you been interested long?'

'Well its only recently for me, the last year really. I'm still not quite sure how valid it all is,' in reality he was more certain than he was letting on, but he wanted to hear what she said.

'Oh, I've got past the uncertain stage,' her eyes fixed their gaze on him, emphasising the point.

'What makes you so certain?'

'What makes us certain about anything?' She parried the question.

'Experience I suppose.'

'Most of what we believe to be true is common acceptance, do you realise that? Most things we have never seen or experienced and yet we hold them to be true.'

'It's an interesting thought, I've never considered that before.'

'But when it's outside the common belief system you want proof.'

'We'll its only reasonable.'

'It may seem that way, but not all things are full of absolute substance that can be measured or shown.'

'Most things can be measured and quantified even if, as lay-persons we may not understand it.'

'What about love?'

Pardon?'

'Can you show it to me? Can you measure it?'

'No but I can show you its affects.'

'Purely in an abstract sense. All you can show me is the results of what you perceive as love, the result of caring and commitment, nothing else. And yet you would not deny its existence because you have felt it yourself.'

'I suppose you have a point,' he conceded.

'Now suppose that we considered the mystical arts in the same fashion. By experiencing its effects I am able to confirm that they exist. You see nothing that is natural need prove itself, it just is. All we need to do is see it. Our world has blinded us to the natural path, but if we take that path not only will it lead us in the right direction, also we will feel it is the right direction.'

'That's weird what you say, the reason I'm here is because I've come to think we - the world - is going in the wrong direction,' he felt as if this woman was confirming his own thoughts.

'Nuclear power, electricity, its all wrong, its a perversion of the planets resources,' the more she spoke the more they seemed to connect.

'You've got my train of thought - exactly!' He confirmed.

'Then already you can feel it, you're being drawn to the right path,' she said.

'Listen this is amazing; I don't even know your name.'

'Aradia ... Aradia Varna.'

'Anthony Valentine. You are Swedish?'

'I was raised in the land of the Norse Gods, but my mother was Spanish; hence the Spanish variation of Catherine.'

'Aradia, I would love to talk to you more about this, can I buy you a coffee?'

'Certainly, there are so few who are interested in the old ways, we must stick together.'

They ascended the winding staircase into the ground floor of the shop. Anthony approached the counter, disturbing the shop assistant who seemed too engrossed in this book to be interested in serving customers.

'My I buy this?' Anthony asked the man who had now paused sufficiently to look over the rim of his half glasses. He put down his book with a muffled sigh and took the book, turning it around he looked at the cover and startled when he saw the price.

'This must be a mistake!' He exclaimed, 'a volume such as this, well; twenty pounds, no we

could not let it go for this. Who labelled this, I don't even remem... no I'm sorry Sir.'

'But it says twenty pounds on the label,' Anthony protested.

'Are you saying you're not familiar with the law, is that what you're saying?' Said the shopkeeper in confrontation.

'Look I know of "an invitation to treat" and all that, but labelling it up at twenty pounds and then telling me to pay...how much?'

'Well; at least ninety Sir.'

'Ninety! what - ninety pounds?'

The shopkeeper nodded.

Anthony became agitated and raised his voice, 'This is most unfair, you label this up to get me interested and then try to persuade me to pay a price nearly six times more! This is outrageous.'

'But Sir that is the law. May I quote "Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain v Boots Cash Chemists 1953." "An invitation to treat" is I believe the legal term - Sir, that's all the label is, you made the offer of twenty pounds and I did not accept your offer, quoting you a counter offer of ninety pounds. Now where do you believe I have acted outside of the law?'

'What is this "invitation to treat" business? Aradia asked, looking back and forth at both the shopkeeper and Anthony.

'It's the quaint English law of contract, rather silly in my view.'

A curtain parted at the back of the shop. A middle-aged woman with short-cropped dark brown hair emerged. What's going on?'

'It seems we have labelled this book with an inappropriately small price. This gentleman feels I am being unreasonable by countering his offer with a more appropriate price.'

'Sell it to him at the marked price, please,' she said.

'But...' protested the man behind the counter.

'We want to encourage our customers to revisit, please sell it to him as marked,' she insisted.

'Well this would never have happened in Alfred's day,' he took the twenty pound note Anthony offered him.

'No,' continued the woman, 'I don't suppose it would, you will just have to get used to my approach, and we don't want to drive customers away.'

Disgruntled, he gave the book to Anthony wrapped in a paper bag, and turned to Aradia who gave him a book with a ten-pound note.

'No madam it's fifteen pounds,' he said pointing to the label.

'But I thought that was the "invitation to treat", I'm offering you ten pounds because that's what I think its worth.'

His disgruntled look turned to impatience. 'Look madam this is not how it works ...'

'But I'm sure I followed you correctly, you said the display price was not the actual price you would sell it for, you said the price for that other book should be more appropriate. Now in my case this book is not worth fifteen pounds, so I'm offering you what its worth, ten pounds. Please tell me where I have misinterpreted your English Law?'

'No, no, no!' He raised his voice.

'Graham,' the woman standing at the back of the shop came forward, 'We have used up enough of this couples time, let her have it for ten pounds.'

Defeated once again the man's face knotted with annoyance, he conceded. Once outside the shop they both burst out laughing.

'You've got a cheek!' said Anthony, 'I can't believe what you just did - and got away with it!'

'That man! I just had to do it - he was so conceited,' said Aradia regaining her composure, 'I will have to shop with you again if I can make those sorts of savings!'

Just then Aradia's mobile phone rang. She answered it with murmured responses and finally rang off.

'I'm sorry Anthony, something's come up. I've got to go now - but I tell you what; it just so happens that I can do better than a chat over a coffee with me now. You see I belong to a group, who have similar interests in the old doctrines, I'm sure you would be most welcome.

'That would be perfect.'

'In fact I'm seeing Jason the man who runs the group on Wednesday evening, we could meet in a coffee shop before hand.' She scribbled the address onto a card and handed it to him. 'Meet us here; my number is on the back. It was nice meeting you and I look forward to Wednesday night.'

'And so will I,' he finished, and turned in the direction of Leicester Square tube station. Aradia walked in the opposite direction, she was quite pleased with herself and continued to smile as she walked. Turning into Cambridge circus she stopped on the corner of a side street, and took out her mobile phone.

'The portal has been secured,' she said into the phone, 'you were one hundred percent right about the book, it was no problem to plant on the shelf in that basement - he recognised it and went for it straight away. And you wouldn't believe it, the shopkeeper recognised it as old but just thought he had mislabelled the price and tried to sell it for more than the label I switched. You should have been there!'

How about you? Have you snared Lisa Yashioko?... .. great, I told you she was well into that stuff didn't I? She just couldn't resist an origami exhibition ... what a surprise she will receive!

### Chapter 3 - The Dark Secret

*Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?  
Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?  
Isaiah 33:14*

'I didn't know you could make things like this,' Sally stood in the doorway looking at the four paper models standing on the table. Two were full figures whilst the other two were faces. Sally moved closer to the paper faces and studied them in more detail. The larger one was a representation of Medusa. The green side of the two coloured paper was formed in the shape of snakes writhing from the head of the model, the paper was textured in the form of scales. At the end of each of the snakes bodies was folded an abstract representation of the snakes heads with open and closed mouths, tongues and fangs. The face itself was an ivory colour and was folded to create the impression of soft smooth features. The eyes were deep sockets surmounted by twisting curved eyebrows creating a mysterious quality to the face. The nose was representational, although the lips were almost perfectly formed reflecting a degree of serenity.

'Are you ready for the exhibition?'

'Yeah, I've got to stop fiddling though, and leave it. In the past I've thought I could improve something and my little alterations made it worse, so now I strive for self control.'

'Oh and thanks for inviting me to the exhibition I'm looking forward to it,' said Sally, 'is Steven coming?'

'No its not his thing, anyway I think he needs to be alone. It's always a hard time for him this time of year, it's the anniversary of his sister's death,' said Lisa.

'If it was me I'd prefer to have people around me,' said Sally.

'So would I but he's a man; they deal with emotional things different to us. We want to share it, they feel better by keeping it inside.'

'I don't understand that.'

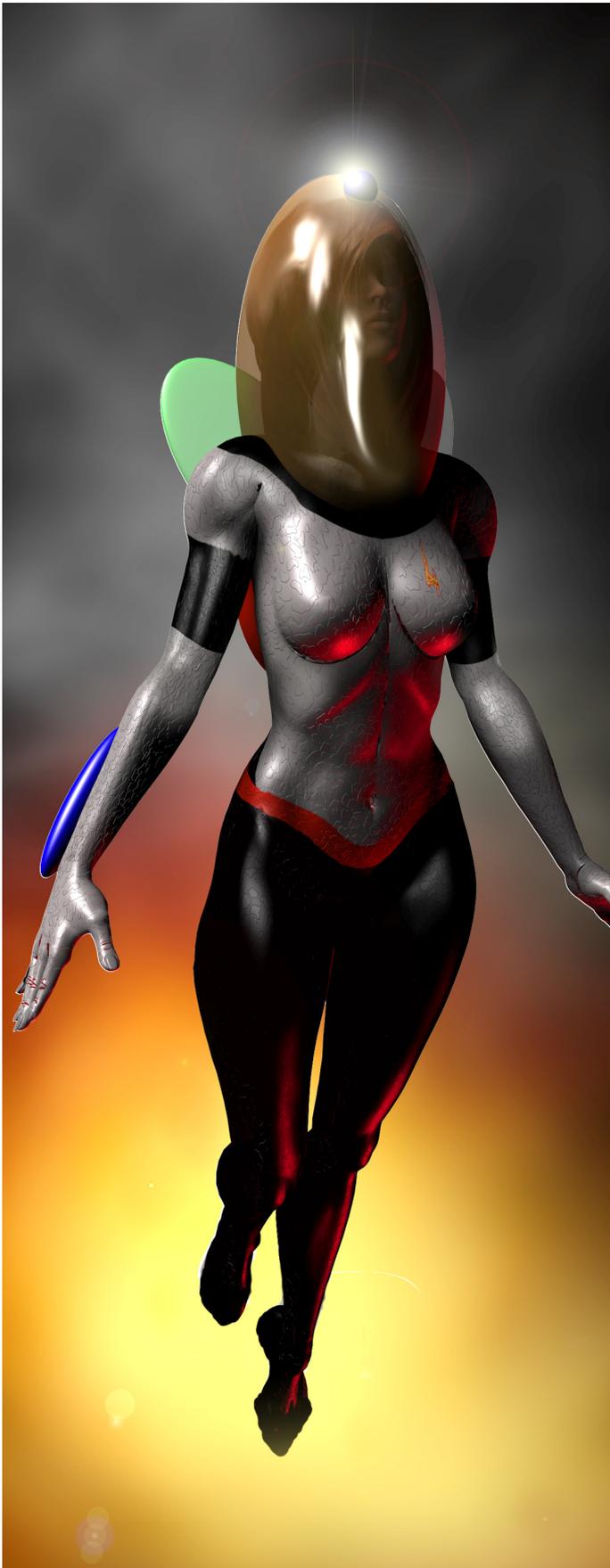
'Well neither do I, but that's because we are not men, I suppose. Now how do you feel after the debriefing?'

'It was a great experience. I was actually quite worried I would do something wrong, but now its over, I feel much more confident. I now know I can do it. Anyway I'll leave you to it.'

Actually I should stop the origami and get ready for my "date" tonight.

'Your date; this is Arthur, the guy we rescued!'

'Yeah, as you know Steven forced me into this. Its true I do want to meet the man because of the work he does and perhaps we could exchange some useful knowledge about the work we do; but it's Steven's



little joke to treat this as though I'm going out on a date. I mean, the man must be twenty years older than me!

In actual fact though this is probably the best way to get to know him and his work, I just hope he understands that! You know sometimes I could kill Steven, he's such a wind up.'

'Well have a good time, I'm going for a walk through the caves and then maybe an early night.'

'Remember there are some restricted areas in the base, so if you come across these please don't go in - it's for your own safety,' concluded Lisa.

Sally left Lisa and made her way along the corridors defining their base of operations. The base was an underground installation, which was located in a series of naturally occurring caves. Lisa and Steven had kept the existence of this installation unknown to the outside world due to potential problems with those who may desire the advanced technology they used.

She came to a door, which identified the end of the complex. Once through the door the surroundings changed dramatically. The two and a half metre high corridor suddenly opened up into a huge vaulted ceiling of natural rock. Stalagmites extended their tendrils from the "Ceiling". A naturally occurring underground stream flowed a short distance below her as the rock ramped in a gentle slope downwards. Artificial lighting was provided close to the door of the complex. This was motion sensitive and had illuminated the area in close proximity when she emerged from the doorway.

There was a glow some distance in front of her at high level, as she looked more closely the glow appeared to be made up of small points of light which seemed to move in a majestic swarm, and she realised they were the very creatures from which she had inherited her name - firefly.

She sat down on the rocks and stared at the swarm, and wondered. Her life up till now had been turbulent, there were a few corners of light, mainly in her younger childhood but whenever it seemed like everything was going to be all right - something happened. Her world was stable now, the first time for a long while. This work she shared with Lisa and Steven had many qualities. It was certainly not without danger, but it was this that made the whole experience exciting. It was not without hard work - the academic studying was quite deep to understand fire engineering, yet every time she was stuck on something there was Lisa with her hand drawn diagrams, making it all seem so much easier. Ultimately it was a feeling of self worth that made her feel much better about herself. But at the back of her mind, she wondered just how long it would all last. Self-doubt muddled her mind. She was quite upset about the words of the fire brigade officer and she considered what Steven had said about him, but that officer had added to her self-doubt. 'Take notice

of the words of those whom you respect,' Lisa had once told her and as she remembered her words she felt better.

She was feeling quite tired after today's adventure so she got up and walked back to the complex. Further along the side of the stream, another door provided access from the caves back into the complex and this was the route she took. The door led to a corridor. The lighting was dimmed, which marked the evening time. Photoelectric sensors adjusted the lighting to simulate day and evening lighting conditions. This allowed the conditions in the base to be more natural.

Although she had been in the complex for two months now she had not explored every room. Lisa and Steven had shown her all the essentials, but this had not covered everything, the corridors in this section were mainly plant areas containing the essential systems for ventilation, lighting and power. Workshops were also located here used by trusted employees from Lisa's company who maintained the complex and the Fire Engineers, fire-fighting equipment. Now however the corridors were deserted and if there had been anyone performing maintenance today, they would have been long gone by now. It was this fact, which made the events of the next few minutes tense and unnerving.

As Sally turned a corner she distinctly heard the sound of a human voice. When it came again she stopped and turned to identify the direction of the source. An alcove inset into the corridor lay to her right. The alcove contained a small plain panel with a locked door. It was only when she looked closer at the alcove that she saw a doorway to the right of the locked panel, concealed from view when standing in the corridor. She heard the sound again, from this proximity it was clear it was a human voice, the words were indistinct, but she could make out a low murmur, which gave her the impression that someone was in trouble.

She opened the door slowly, hesitant at what she might find on the other side. An unlit corridor formed by rough stone presented itself, however there seemed to be a light source further along the corridor, which bathed the stonewalls dimly in a deep yellow glow. The environment on this side of the door contrasted starkly from the angular corridor on the other side. The voice had now stopped. She walked a short distance along the corridor, which curved around, to the left, presently the glow became brighter and she felt a warm heat source. Sally stopped at the end of the corridor and stood there taking in the sight, which confronted her.

The corridor opened out into an immense chamber, itself formed in rough stone. It looked like a natural cavern. The ceiling vaulted up and a spot of light could be seen at the top marking an opening to the sky above. In front of her the floor of the corridor extended into the cavern for about three metres, forming an upside down T shaped ledge

from where she was standing, which fell away to a sheer drop to the cavern floor at least twenty metres below. An ornate railing protected the edge. From the centre of the ledge extended a platform, the lower part of the T shape. This platform extended one metre wide and five metres long into the void of the cavern not dissimilar to a plank extending from a ship's hull. A circular disk formed the end of this extended platform. This was located in the centre of the cavern; an abstract monument was located at the centre of the disk. From the top of the monument extended a flame, rising five metres up to the cavern roof.

The flame maintained a steady stream of cascading sinews, emitting its dancing illumination around the cavern, almost like a living being composed of energy and light. Sally stood there staring at this magnificent sight and let out a wordless audible exclamation.

'Amazing isn't it?'

She turned quickly, suppressed at this unexpected voice, and she saw a figure in the shadows behind her. He was sitting on a bench close to the wall of the right hand 'T' section of the pathway. Sally recognised the voice as Steven's.

'Oh, you gave me a start for a moment,' she looked back at the flame, 'It is beautiful; this whole setting is so peaceful.'

'It's interesting how something so powerful and dangerous can also be so beautiful,' he said.

'I didn't even know you had a place like this - were you keeping it a secret from me?' She said in a joking manner.

'Well, you may laugh but you're almost right.'

'What's it for really?'

He stood up and walked to the edge of the ledge and put his hands on the railings, stretching his body and looked upward at the flame. 'It's a monument.'

'Monument? For what, the goddess of fire?' she smiled.

'I wish it were as trivial as that. No this is a monument to my sister,' he turned to Sally and she looked up at his face and realised from the redness and watery film in his eyes, that he had been crying. She felt suddenly uncomfortable. This man in stature was not unlike the frame of an Olympian athlete. She had seen him perform extra-ordinary feats, in particular at the World Trade centre disaster, where he was cool calm and uncompromising in the circumstance which were piled up against him. Yet here he had been crying. Sally felt she had stumbled on a taboo; a man crying. She suddenly felt like an intruder, invading something private, she did not belong here. But she was here.

Did he want to talk about it? Dare she ask?

'How old was she?' Sally began with an exploratory question.

'Twelve when she died. You know she's been dead now longer than she lived. I expect you're wondering why it affects me so much after all this time?'

Sally looked at him, what he had said was precisely what was going through her mind, but she didn't want to admit it to him.

'I don't know if you've ever lost someone close to you?' He said, 'you only understand it when it happens. The loss never goes. It's true to say that it diminishes somewhat. But then something happens and you see it again, like a wave suddenly crashing on to the shore and the loss is intense again, almost as bad as it was the first time. Then the tide goes out.'

The tide comes back for me every year. But there's also something else. It's something I've wondered whether I should tell you. It's why you've never been shown this chamber.'

'Steven, this is very personal stuff, I've barged in here uninvited. I shouldn't have done that - I owe you so much; you pulled me out of the mess I was in when I met you. You shouldn't feel you have to tell me anything. I've only been here a few months.'

'No Sally, perhaps it was fate you stumbled upon this chamber. We work close together, we have to trust each other, and we have to know we can trust each other,' he turned around facing the flame once again, leaning on the railing, the flame seemed to roar as he paused making its presence felt once again, framing Steven - the man known as the Fire Engineer in its glow. He moved his arms down to his sides and gripped the railing.

'What I am about to tell you may change your perception of me. And if it does and you don't want to work with me again, I will understand.' He turned around to face her once again.

Sally became extremely serious; she wished inwardly that she had not opened the door to this chamber. For once in her life everything had been going well, she liked Steven and Lisa. In such a short time they had become like family - now she was worried.

'It was naive of me to keep this from you Sally,' he continued, 'you see the reason why my sister's death is so difficult for me to get over, the reason why I've been crying on the anniversary of her death every year, is because ... I killed her.'

Next: The Dark Secret of the Fire Engineer



# Lisa's Origami



**I**n issue 1 of the Fire Engineers Journal I introduced origami and explained some of the basics. If this is the first issue you have read and you are unfamiliar with origami, you may wish to read that issue first. The origami model we are featuring this issue is more complex than those featured in issue 1. It is not the most complex origami can be but may not be too easy for a beginner. There are a few models in the last issue that will give you some experience and help lead you into this model.

The model this issue is of a human figure - the Fire Engineer himself. Human figures are one of the most difficult subjects to create in origami. The key to this figure is in the finishing touches. The shaping and moulding of the body arms and legs. The diagram show bold arrows where shaping needs to be done. This is a new symbol which was not covered last issue. For a description of all other symbols see last issue.

What type of paper should we use for this model? The page following the model diagrams includes a square shape which you can print out, cut to shape and fold. Note the paper can be used one way round - the Fire Engineers logo should face front.

Now a challenge! Can you create the Fire Engineers plasma shield (remember it appears semi transparent. We would be interested to see your version of the model - send us a photo to:-  
info@thefireengineer.com.



Folded Origami model of the Fire Engineer from paper template which can be printed from the back page.

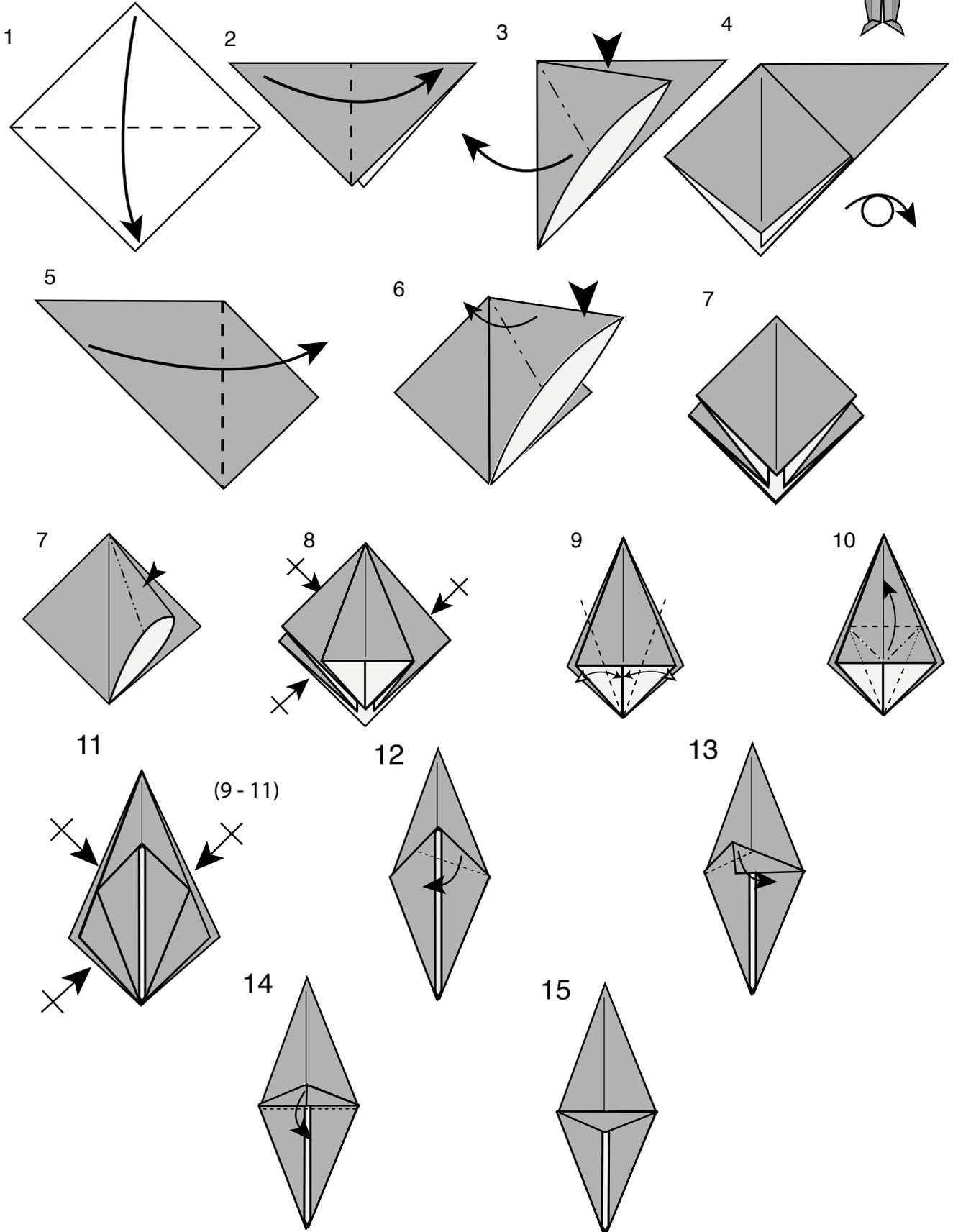
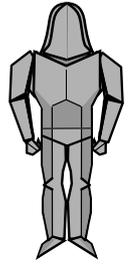
Below - Use this image of The Fire Engineer for reference. The trickiest part of this model is the helmet, which needs to be pulled and moulded into shape.

An understanding of basic anatomy will help you create a more realistic pose.

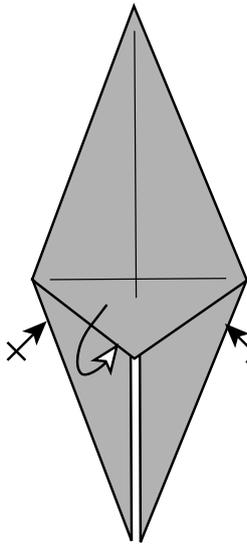


# The Fire Engineer figure

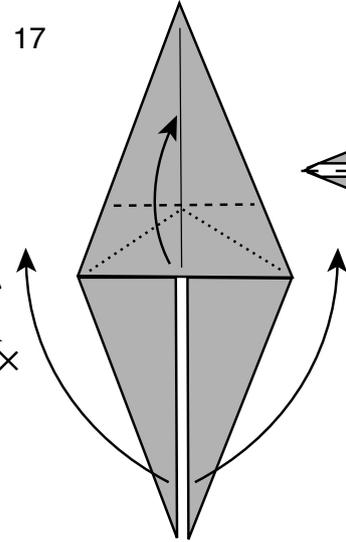
Origami model by Paul Hanson



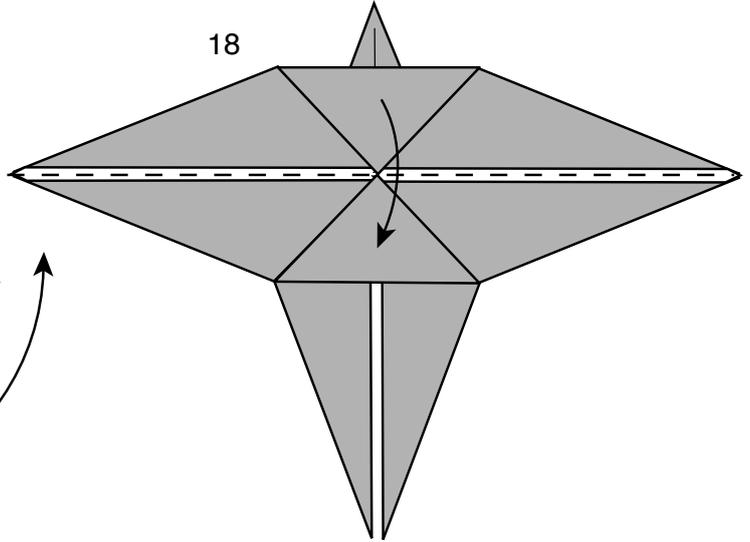
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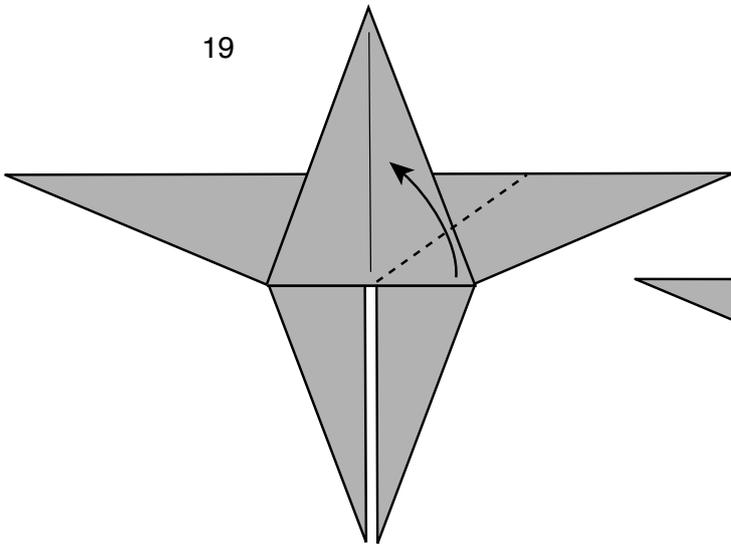
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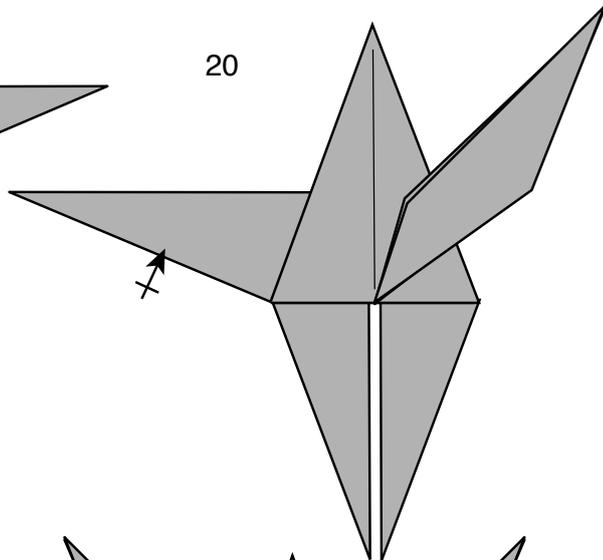
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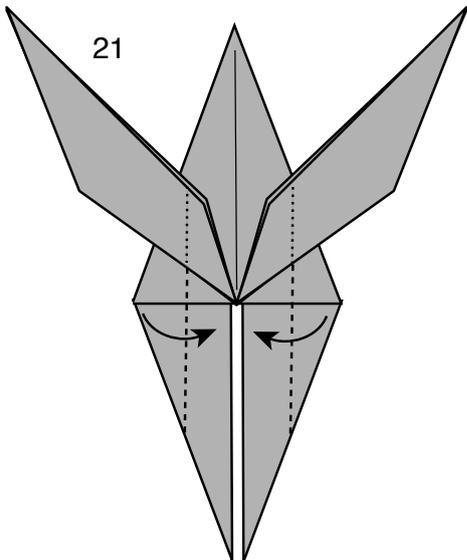
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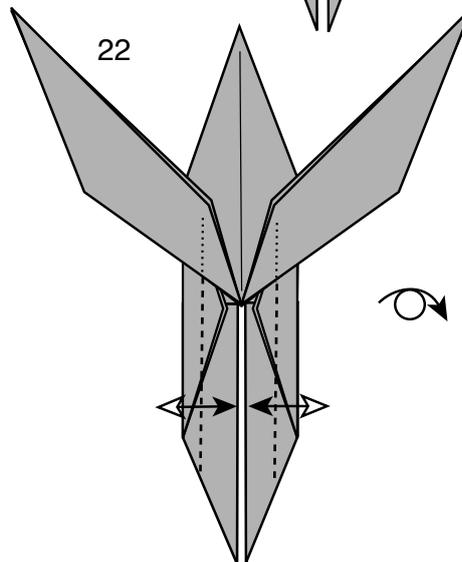
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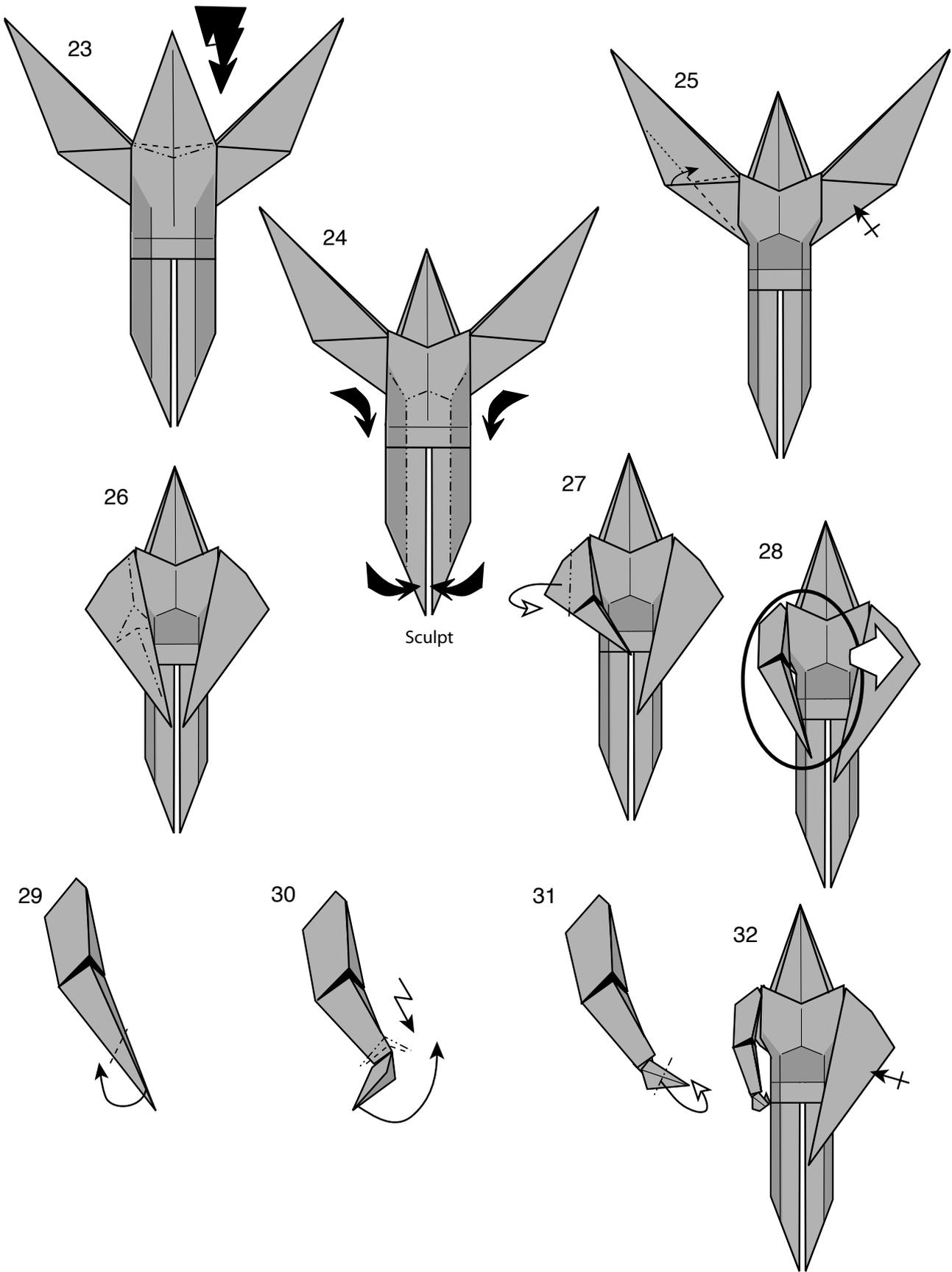


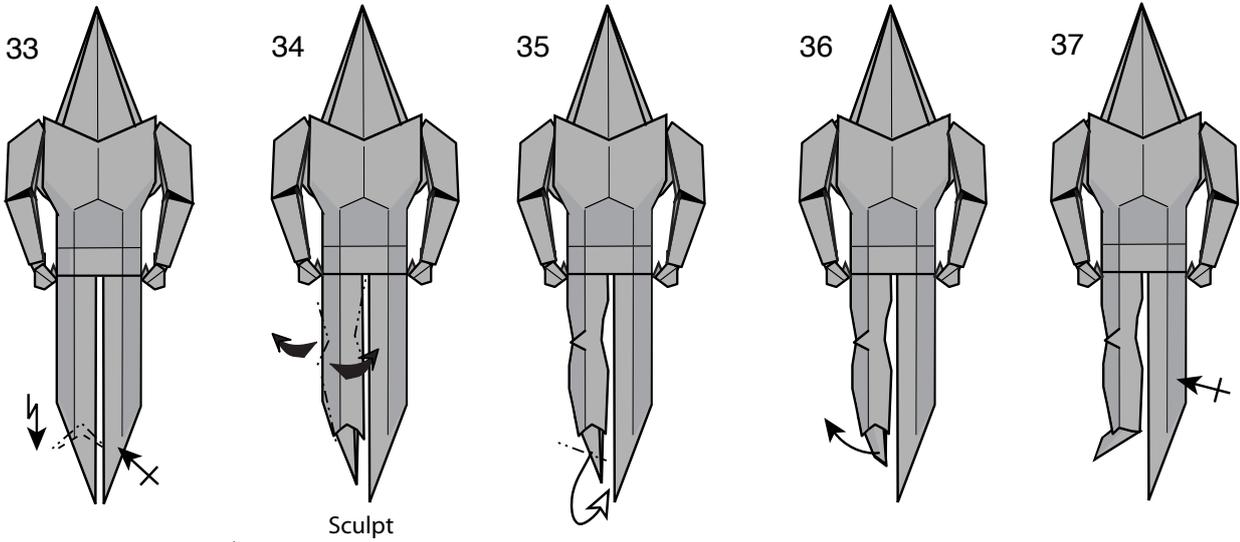
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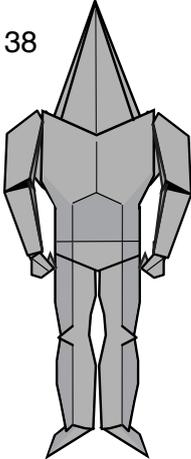
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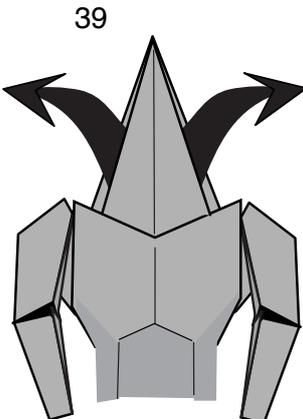




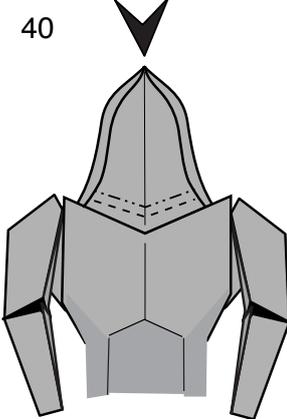
Sculpt



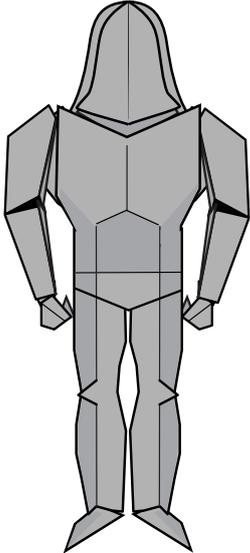
Showing complete up to step 37



Pull layers out - use thumbs where thick arrows shown



Shape bottom of helmet and reduce point at top of helmet



Complete



# ORIGAMI TEXTURE PAPER

The following texture can be printed, cut-out and used to fold the model diagrammed on the previous pages.

