

The Beasts

by Paisley Dutcher (5/28/13)

The following account was discovered in 2007 by a group of surveyors inspecting several acres of land in a remote location in Kansas. The author and origin of this account are unknown. The original artifact is a small, rough-looking journal, bound with an unidentifiable material and written in a language made up of lines, circles, and connected arcs. A loose page found just beneath the cover is very different from the rest of the journal. It is also made of an unidentifiable material. It is thin and shimmery and includes a simple translation key. We believe the key and the journal hold different origins. The journal has now been fully translated and released to the public.*

**Though the text has been translated, there are several words and phrases in the entries that are not directly translatable. To the best of our ability, these phrases have been adapted to current English. There is also evidence to suggest that several pages are missing from the journal.*

March 27, 15 - 37

Something's wrong with the temple. I don't know what, but I can feel it near the entrance tunnel. I tried to convince Margie to stop going down there so often but she won't listen to me. I feel anxious. If that temple is somehow harming my wife, I need to know.

March 28, 15 - 37

Report: Passage tunnels 332 - 347 are all clear. No damage or decay detected. Upper support beam 0-294 in need of mending due to slight shift of loose sediment. Surface tunnels are clear, escape hatches are sealed, secured and double checked. I am awaiting the official report from Life Light Inspector Seth Dawkins (serial: 10002-99), but lights seem to be functioning at normal capacity.

End Report: Tunnel Inspector Abicus Gabbro (serial: 39942-00)

March 30, 15 - 37

Margie came home sick after Third Worship. She looked pale and exhausted. When I pulled her into the light, her skin felt hot and clammy. I told her to get some sleep and, for once, she didn't argue. That's probably a bad sign.

I'll sneak into the temple tomorrow between worships and run some tests. If something is wrong with the temple, someone needs to do something about it. I've got to be quick about it though, the Devout don't appreciate scientists snooping around their sacred site. The last time I went they almost kicked me out for trying to touch the ancient, vault-like door at the end of the worship cavern. Apparently, that's where God sleeps. I

don't understand it, but what do I know? I'm just a man. I don't feel the faith women do. That doesn't matter though. If this door or this cavern or this god is making my Margie sick, I'll tear down each and every one until she's better.

June 2, 15 - 37

Full evacuation. Everywhere, families packing up their homes and slinging everything they own across their backs. Makes me wonder if I made the right decision. Did I do the right thing by testing the cavern? Maybe if I had just let it be things would have gotten better on their own. Or maybe they would have gotten worse. I don't know anymore. I'm so anxious all the time. No one knows what lies beyond the exit hatches. No one's tried to leave before. Who knows how long it's been since anyone's ventured above ground. I've worked in the tunnels my entire life and I still can't find anyone who can tell me how old they are. Myths are all we have, old legends of a terrified people fleeing the surface world to escape famine and drought. Everyone's crowding around the exit tunnels . . . We have no idea what's out there. It has to be better than the poison down here.

June 3, 15 - 37

I'm so happy we're alive.

June 5, 15 - 37

I can't believe how much is up here. There's almost too much to look at. My eyes can't process information fast enough to keep up with every new thing I'm seeing. When everyone finally made it out of the tunnels, there was an overwhelming sense of awe. Then our eyes began to hurt. Compared to this place, we'd been living in pitch blackness.

Margie squeezed my hand and I squeezed back, and no one moved for a very long time. Then I realized how exposed we were, standing out in the open with our eyes shut. We set out to find shelter. After three hours of searching, the best we could find was a small group of the strangest trees any of us had ever seen . . . At least, we thought they were trees. They were tall with leafy branches but their bark was thick and waxy and if you peeled it back, moisture oozed out of pores behind the bark.

The trees make good shade for our sensitive skin, but I know that some of us will have to leave soon if we want to find a more suitable place to live.

June 8, 15 - 37

I'm heading a research expedition to explore the area around our little cluster of trees. If we're very lucky maybe we'll find some food. If not, hopefully we can make it back to camp in one piece.

June 12, 15 - 37

We are stumbling children compared to these great beasts. I don't know how they found us or why they're helping us, but I could not be more grateful.

After two days of heat and hunger our expedition was beginning to look like a complete failure. We were about to begin the trek back to the rest of the group when we were intercepted by eight monstrous creatures, the likes of which I never imagined. They are taller than any of the us with four strong legs, thick bodies and necks like steel beams. Bones sprout from their heads like tree limbs. Light reflects off their skin and into our eyes. At first, we could only see their finger-like claws digging deep into the hard, dirt ground.

We covered our eyes and stood very still while the creatures bucked and stamped and called out to each other in loud, rough bellows. A few seconds passed before our captors settled and grew silent. My heart pounded against my ribcage and up into my throat, but the creatures made no move. When I finally gathered the courage to uncover my eyes, I was standing nose to nose with one of our captors, his eyes not two inches from mine. I cried out and crashed into the man behind me. The creature reared up and barked. It hadn't sounded like anything at the time but looking back, I realize he was probably laughing at me.

The creature calmed down and stepped back. As he did, so did the others. They stood in a line in front of us, looking, scrutinizing, occasionally letting out a huff of air through their noses. Then they were gone, off and running in the opposite direction from the one they came. They didn't look back and we couldn't look away.

I don't remember walking back to the main camp. All I think about is that giant, thick skinned, four toed, beast with trees growing from its skull. I never thought I'd see them again.

*There is a large section missing from the journal here. Evidence as to why these pages are missing is inconclusive.

July 1, 15 - 37

People are finally starting to settle in. The tents we've set up look lived in and homely. Children play in the shrubs and trees that surround our camp. The Beasts have taught us so much; we wouldn't be here if it weren't for them. They check on us less now. I can only tell because I find their tracks in the morning.

July 7, 15 - 37

Who knows why our kind left this place so many years ago. Margie thinks they were driven out. Can't imagine by whom. I wonder, every now and then, why anyone

would leave this beautiful place.

All I know for sure is no matter what happens, no matter what dangers we face, we have a friend in those Beasts and they have a friend in us. They saved us and taught us the ways of this new world. If they ever need us, for anything, we'll be there.