

Louis L'Amour's – The Haunted Mesa



Format for a Television Series

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Concept

While developing an advanced surveillance device, wealthy inventor Eric Hokart stumbles onto a way to detect areas of congruence, thin spots, that sometimes connect our world to another. This Alternate Earth is similar to ours geographically but, for the last several thousand years, it has experienced a vastly different history.

Hoping to explore the far side of this strange new border, Eric reaches out to Mike Raglan. Once a Captain in the Special Forces, Mike led the team in Afghanistan assigned to test Eric's equipment in combat. But when Mike cannot be found, Eric's curiosity gets the better of him ... and he steps through the portal into the unknown.

With The Haunted Mesa Louis L'Amour created the basis for a unique "alternate world" Science Fiction series. The main setting is the modern American southwest, a land of red rock canyons, mesas, parched Indian reservations, and sun blasted one-street towns. In our world it is a haunted land where the ruins of ancient peoples hide in huge wind hollowed caves, and mysteries lie coiled in every shadow. In the Other World the remnants of an ice age still hold sway. There are no glaciers so far south, but the land is cold, dry, and distinctly inhospitable. The level of human population is considerably less and ancient mega fauna, like cave bears, giant sloths, and saber-tooth cats can still be found. There is only one civilization north of the equator, the seven cities of Xibalba, (She-bal-ba). A modern nation in its own way, it has a level of science, art, and architecture equivalent to, but very different from, our own. It is also a stifling theocracy where suspicion and darkness rule every relationship and human sacrifice is common.

A relatively stable portal in Mexico has allowed communication between worlds to go on for a very long time. Conditions and culture in Xibalba have influenced the Olmec, Mayan and Aztec peoples on our side ... and visa versa. Today, Xibalban agents use the portal to traffic the most exotic drugs on the market as they maneuver for wealth and power south of the US border. Their ultimate goal, a political foot hold in our world.

Eric Hokart's reopening of a nearly forgotten portal within in the United States is an opportunity and a threat to those tasked with Xibalban security and operations in our world. Once they are aware of its existence they will go to any lengths to control it.

Arriving to find Eric missing and a community suspicious of outsiders, Mike Raglan has the nearly impossible job of discovering what has happened. But with mysterious prowlers scouting Eric's high tech home in the remote Utah canyon country; strange creatures reported on the nearby Navajo reservation; and a fantastically violent drug cartel called The Army of Cibola taking over local gangs, there is plenty of evidence that something quite unusual is going on.

Meanwhile, Eric is lost and in danger somewhere in the silent canyons of another world ... and Mike has to follow the few clues Eric has left before time runs out.



Pilot Outline

On blurry, un-color corrected video Eric Hokart sets up a camera and then moves in front of it to speak. “Okay ... day one. The ruins go on for almost a mile in each direction.” Eric is wearing a jacket, backpack, and has a heavy bolt action rifle slung over his shoulder. “This place is amazing. There are examples of art and written language and it’s all very, very, old. Here ...” He picks up the camera ... The exposure flares then reveals ruins that appear somewhat like an ancient Aztec or Mayan city. Not in a Central American jungle, however ... it is a desert landscape similar to Monument Valley. “Pretty impressive, huh?” Eric vanishes as the recording ends.

Mike Raglan, stops for gas in Lyman's Corners, Utah. It is a town that is cautious of outsiders, where privacy and suspicion go hand in hand. Mike has come searching for a friend he met during a special operation in the Afghan War, scientist and inventor Eric Hokart. Eric’s new home is situated deep in the Utah Canyonlands and Lyman’s Corners is the closest civilization.

Mike tops off the tank of his aging Land Cruiser and asks directions of an attendant. “Clay Hills Crossing Road? What the heck you want out there?” Mike mentions he’s headed for Eric Hokart’s place. “Fulla hisself,” the man grumbles, “drivin’ that fancy vehicle like he’s landin’ on the moon.” Mike is given the barest of directions, the sort that indicate the quality of the road when he’s told to bear right as he passes a wrecked army half-track. Mike tries placing one last call but can’t leave a message because Eric’s voicemail is full.

Moqui County is large and mostly uninhabited. To the south and west stretches a maze of river canyons and red rock desert, the canyon walls are haunted by the pictographs and cliff dwellings of the vanished Anasazi Indians. It is a landscape known for its natural beauty, but it is also an uncompromising wilderness where death can stalk the unwary or unprepared.

After leaving the blacktop it’s fifteen miles over a road that is not much more than a pair of tire tracks. Finally, Mike tops a sandstone ridge and comes to a stop at the edge of the mesa. Though it’s in a wild and desolate location Eric’s house is a marvel



of native stone and off-the-grid technology and it has tremendous views of Monument Valley and the San Juan branch of Lake Powell.

It has also been abandoned for some time. In a nearby Quonset hut Mike discovers a humvee ambulance modified to be a mobile electronics lab and a new Ford pick up ... dust has settled on the hood and fenders of both vehicles. Looking through the windows, Mike sees that Eric has yet to fully unpack. Before he leaves, Mike also examines a half excavated Anasazi pueblo near the edge of the mesa. Grid markers are still up and in a drooping tent are archeological tools and well organized trays of artifacts. In all, the place is impressive but strange, half finished and, with circling crows and whistling wind, definitely creepy. As Mike drives off, someone or some *thing* watches him go.

On the road back to town, Mike tries to get in touch with Eric at his corporate headquarters in Seattle. Eric's office gives him the same run around they've been giving him for days, Mike must talk to company attorney Amandine Dufayel ... but she's never available.

Mike goes to the Moqui County Sheriff's Dept. for help. Sheriff Marsha Black, is not keen on the idea of Mike having a look around himself. She is initially polite but ends by practically ordering him to stay in his motel room. Deputy Ben Gallagher, a military veteran who understands the friendships forged in combat, offers to take Mike with him as he checks a few obvious places. This doesn't endear him to his boss but it does defuse the situation ... he'll pick Mike up at dawn.

Back in his motel, Mike remembers the last couple of years, meeting Eric in Afghanistan and the first use of his amazing surveillance technology. The equipment allowed Eric to see any place within a two hundred square mile zone, day or night, indoors or outside, with no visible camera or recording device. The data is "rendered" into images that the human eye can understand through a CGI type process or the data can be read, much more quickly, from raw code.

When a particular operation went bad and Mike and his A-Team were trapped in the mountains at night, Eric lead them to safety, calmly radioing directions, using the equipment to scout ahead for enemies, even telling them where to shoot. It is a remarkable demonstration of a remarkable technology. It is also an interesting look into the character of Captain Mike Raglan. In action he is not the laid back one-time surfer we have seen so far but a fiercely competent professional soldier, wise or brutal when called for, brilliant at improvisation and more than willing to stray from his orders to do what he thinks is right. He and Eric make a great team.

Mike Raglan, however, is more and more disillusioned by the political realities of war and eventually, he leaves the military. A few months before his arrival in Utah the temper that has haunted Mike since his return from Afghanistan got him fired from yet another job. For awhile, Mike left the world behind, surfing the remote north shore of Samoa, trying to clear his mind, downloading emails off his sat phone and growling at

the computer screen, "Yeah, yeah. Don't bother me I'm surfing." Several of those messages had been from Eric. The man who saved his life in Afghanistan, had reached out ... and Mike Raglan had pressed 'delete.'

Thousands of miles south of Utah, Mexican Intelligence agents Natalia Albarran and Luis Mondragón are captured infiltrating the mysterious and deadly drug cartel El Ejército de Cibola (The Army of Cibola). The AOC has become well known for distributing exotic "designer" drugs as well as ruthlessly marketing the staples of the narcotics trade. The agents are taken before the gang's leader, a man known only as Cabrakan, and find him to be as mysterious and terrifying as the stories told on the street. Though he uses a name out of Mayan legend, his ethnicity is oddly indeterminate and he speaks only passable Spanish. The strangest part of his appearance is a tattoo on each cheek that looks like snarling teeth. Far from a personal affectation, this tattoo seems to be shared by a few others in the rough shanty town that is his headquarters.

Cabrakan's second in command is an exotically beautiful woman, Tak-shan 'aa. Questioning the gang member who vouched for Albarran and Mondragón, she almost seems to be flirting with him, yet the man behaves as if he is terrified of this incredibly seductive woman. Not long afterward, the man becomes suddenly and mysteriously ill. Cabrakan, orders Mondragón thrown into an arena for the entertainment of (and as an example to) his troops. Shot up with some exotic drug and dragged through the jostling crowd, Natalia sees little of what happens. But something barely glimpsed, horrifying, and unbelievably vicious tears Luis Mondragón apart ... something that looks shockingly like a saber-toothed cat from a paleontology textbook. The fate awaiting Natalia as another sort of entertainment is certainly no better.

In the morning, Deputy Gallagher and Mike head out, driving deep into the canyon lands below Eric's place. Gallagher explains that the old families in the area, the Lymans and the Blacks, are sensitive about outsiders ... in the pioneer days they may have done some things to the local Indians they wouldn't want known ... some of old residents feel this country is haunted. Mike and Ben take the other fork in the road past the old half-track and Mike asks if there was ever a military base in the area. Ben Gallagher tells Mike, "No. It's rough country, uranium prospectors used them back in the 1950s." It's an interesting comment, because Mike has noticed a hole in the steel flank of the military vehicle, the sort of hole caused by an armor piercing rocket.

They stop and talk to a Navajo man, Hokart's closest neighbor, asking if he's seen Eric. "Out on Tanner Mesa. Workin' some big radio." When Mike asks if he's seen anything strange, the Navajo says he's heard Skinwalkers at night and worries that they are killing sheep. Heading out, Ben is quick to explain that Skinwalker is a flexible label, it could indicate imaginary demons, witchcraft or just a neighbor who's a son of a bitch.

On Tanner Mesa they find the tracks of the Hummer and one of the stations that feeds Eric's surveillance system. It's hooked up and operating. Mike wonders what Eric is up

to. The equipment has been left, fully operational, in the middle of nowhere. Ben asks what the equipment does, "If I told you, I'd have to kill you," Mike jokes.

Back in town Sheriff Marsha Black is starting to get organized. A judge has been contacted about arraiging a warrant for Eric's house and the local search and rescue squad is on call. Mike overhears Ben and Marsha talking privately, Ben mentions "Skinwalkers" and "... both with the government." Then Mike is rushed out and dropped off at his motel. He is told to stay put and they will try to let him know what's going.

Mike tries to call Quantum Concepts from his room but hears the extra click of someone listening in. He gets in his Land Cruiser to head out of town but sees a police car covering the local gas station. Pulling onto a side street, he hauls the gas can off the back of his 4x4 and tops off his tank. He waits until the road is clear and heads back out to Eric's house by himself.

There is a set of fresh tire tracks on the road and, when he drives up, Mike finds a pair of graduate students poking around the tent near the ruin. They are Albert Tsoisie, a Navajo from Los Angeles and Ros Pickering, an Australian. According to Albert, Eric hired them to excavate the ruin. A month or so earlier he told them he was shutting down the dig and that he would send the money he owed them ... money that never arrived. Ros complains that the locals are really suspicious and Albert starts to explain a theory he has about the importance of the site. But Mike knows Eric wouldn't let people go unpaid, wouldn't leave classified equipment unprotected ... something is seriously wrong.

As Albert and Ros look on in surprise, Mike breaks into the house. A search reveals several important things. First, Eric did not intend to be gone long. His laptop computer is "sleeping," not turned off. Also, in a room used for storage there are several backpacks, camping supplies, and identical big game rifles in travel cases. It's almost as if Eric was planning a safari ... except one of the rifles is gone. Lastly, behind a steel door Mike finds a bank of computers, monitors and a couple of racks of more obscure equipment. Mike remembers this set up from the war ... it's a modified version of Eric's top secret surveillance device. Mike sends the students away, promising to help get their money if he can.

Mike starts by looking through Eric's computer. File after file is locked away behind encryption software but there is a photo management program that is accessible. Shots of building the house, excavating the ruin, some strange night time pictures of the ruin at dusk with the light creating an odd glow around the ruin's kiva (a round room dug into the ground that served as a clan ceremonial center), and photographs of Mike, Eric, and Eric's right



hand man Gene Wasserman, in Afghanistan. There is also a desktop folder that has not yet been stowed securely. It deals with solar weather and it's influence on the earth, diagrams of increasing activity in 2012 and 2013, plus photos of the northern lights. Turning to the surveillance device, Mike slowly figures out how to turn the system on ... and he is taken back to meeting Eric Hokart for the first time in Afghanistan how he and his Special Forces team were tasked with helping Eric set up the devices and to test the system's unique capabilities in combat. He works late into the night and eventually nods off to sleep.

That night Natalia Albarran makes a break from her make-shift jail. Her chance has come and she acts decisively, out the door, nearly naked through garbage strewn streets, leaving a dead man behind her. Elsewhere, Cabrakan moves on the territory of a rival gang. Tak-shan 'aa arranges to meet the leader at a nightclub, lets him take her back to his compound, seduces him ... a peculiar breed of assassin, besides martial arts and weapons expertise, she has been subjected to increasing amounts of poisons since childhood. She is immune but the toxins that have soaked into her body over many years kill the man within minutes. Then she drops a handful of Hanta Virus laced powder into the air conditioning system and leaves, blowing a disease dusted kiss to the guard at the gate. As she washes up in a ditch the soldiers of the Army of Cibola move on the rest of the gang, the leaders are shot in public as a lesson to any who might oppose the AOC. The gangsters are rounded up and brought to the compound. Once there, they are made an offer they can't refuse: join or become food for the same dangerous pet that devoured Agent Mondragón. It is a terror tactic that works very effectively once someone has been thrown into the shipping container in which Cabrakan transports the beast. Cabrakan tells Tak-shan 'aa that he must return home to receive orders and that she should continue with operations in our world.

Just before dawn Sheriff Marsha Black and a Navajo rancher have pulled their vehicles up alongside a dirt road and, leaving the headlights on, are searching a field with flashlights. Along the edge of a waterhole the mud is churned up and they find the body of a sheep that has been torn apart and partly eaten. Marsha takes a photograph of a deep footprint, human seeming but heavily callused and with animal-like claws! "It's starting again," warns the rancher. "No," she tells him. "We'll kill it and contain the situation.

Mike awakens in Eric's house. Though he has only seen it being used by others, Mike gets the surveillance equipment working. The transmission point seems to be parked in a stand of cottonwoods. The coordinates and a nearby map suggest the view is near Lake Powell ... only when he pulls back, there is no lake. No lake and no roads! Mike enters the coordinates of the house. All he sees is just the bare edge of a mesa. He begins backing up data to a jump drive. Mike rotates the view, sits up in shock ... at the base of the mesa are the ruins of a city. Four story buildings, a grand plaza, art ... a mosaic of a beautiful woman's face in the pattern of a maze ... and a three hundred foot, Mayan style, pyramid. Mike steps out of the house and walks to the edge of the mesa. In the early morning light there is nothing but the sheer drop into Monument Valley and the lake beyond. He is still looking off into the distance when Sheriff Marsha

Black arrives with two SUVs full of deputies. She arrests Mike for interfering with the official search for Eric and for breaking and entering.

In a strange but luxurious apartment a beautiful and exotic young woman, Kawasi, spies on a pair of Xibalban priests as they meet with her parents. Her father is not favored by the Lord of their section of the city yet Kawasi has been identified as a candidate for the greatest oracle in the Empire, The Voice. The Voice sees many possible futures and directs the policy of the Lords of Xibalba. She is taken from one of several families, trained and conditioned with mind expanding homeopathics. She is revered across the land and serves for life ... however, in the last five hundred years, no one has survived the initiation. Her parents must decide if she is to enter the training, it is a great honor, so great that their Lord has decided that the family only deserves it if they give up their younger daughter as a temple sacrifice. It is a demand to knuckle under, to demonstrate their obedience to the system.

While her mother presses their father to take their offer and raise the families status, Kawasi acts immediately, waking her sister. She presses a bag into the girl's hand and tells her that they must be very quiet and very brave. As they move down an external staircase the entire city is revealed ... it is like nothing that has ever existed in our world ... massive nouveau-Mayan buildings, terraced gardens, the grand architecture of a sophisticated people. But there is also a sense that it has seen better days, a carefully tended pretence of the past. It is also obvious that this is a very different culture. Racks of crucified bodies hang from the sides of the temples and everywhere the symbolism of the sun, death and life are intertwined. Kawasi and her sister move off down nearly deserted streets and disappear ...





Outline Episode Two

Cabrakan, the leader of The Army of Cibola, returns to his world through a hidden portal in southern Mexico. As he does, he takes on a somewhat different personality. In the Empire of Xibalba he is an officer of only modest rank. Handed the assignment of infiltrating and to discovering how to dominate our world, his superiors have never truly understood the scope of the job. With few resources, he created the idea of a drug cartel as an intelligence agency and guerilla army ... a self-financing organization. In our world, his position is one of great power and he finds it harder to remain subservient to people in his own who can't comprehend what he has accomplished. Cabrakan must report to The Hand, the chief administrator of the shadowy association of powerbrokers known as The Lords of Xibalba. The Hand is furious over an incursion through a portal on Xibalba's northern frontier (Utah in our world). The Utah portals have been closed for half a century but that is no excuse. Cabrakan, for all of his success in Mexico, has failed in his mission and will have to redeem himself in some way.

Mike Raglan lies in a jail cell. He remembers Eric asking him, "Ever wonder if there's something more to it all ... something else out there?" It seems like there *is* ... more than even Eric could have predicted. In the next room, reports are coming in from the four deputies and the two search and rescue teams in the field. Eric's disappearance is being taken seriously. What Mike doesn't see is that there are a lot of guns among the search and rescue men and many of them are older, hard bitten ranchers rather than younger paramedics and rangers. The retired deputy in charge of the jail looks on Mike with ill concealed contempt, "Government Types," like Eric and Mike should mind their own business and leave citizens alone. The Federal government is not welcomed in much of rural America but this seems to go deeper, neither Eric nor Mike really have any direct connection to Washington.

Recovering in a sleekly modern Mexico City hospital Agent Albarran attempts to describe what happened to herself and Mondragón. It sounds crazy and her superiors

think she's just traumatized. They are right. She stares out the window at night, she asks a fellow agent to bring her a gun while she is in the hospital ... and she will *not* take her meds. After what she has been through the whole world looks different ... there is no normal any more.

Mike is arraigned and the judge, given the circumstances, is willing to reduce the charges. Mike has to pay a stiff fine and is advised that any further interference will be dealt with harshly. He is also told he should leave town and let the professionals do their job. When he returns to his hotel room he discovers it has been searched and his cell phone has been hacked.

In the other world, Kawasi and her sister take the Xibalban equivalent of a railroad as far as they can. The sisters join a disreputable seeming caravan that is heading farther north. Their goal is to reach a mythical group called The Guardians, one of the few communities to resist the control of Xibalba. On the positive side, their new companions seem interested in avoiding the soldiers that are patrolling the roads. But, as the wagons pulled by domesticated bison move slowly toward the edge of Xibalban civilization, it becomes more obvious just how alone these young women are ... and the situation with their fellow travelers is becoming more and more tense.

Ignoring the judge's advice Mike tries to hire a private plane but the pilot tells him that he and others have been warned against helping Mike in any way. The rumor is out that Mike is a "Government" agent of some sort. The pilot, who notices the sticker for a surf board shop on Mike's Toyota, talks to Mike through a haze of pot smoke. He is obviously not considered a model citizen by the straight-laced locals and gives Mike a piece of his mind about Moqui County, alien abductions, cattle and sheep mutilations (a couple just recently!), and every other rural conspiracy theory. He can tell Mike isn't "in on it" but Mike should be careful, the old rednecks are secretive and not above violence.

Tak-shan 'aa gets off a plane in Albuquerque. She uses a computer to get a map to Lyman's corners and has articles on the screen about the "Missing Inventor." She buys a used car in an industrial area using cash. Some of the men from one of the nearby construction yards gather to give her a hard time, one of them coming on to her pretty forcefully. She offers, almost challenges, to have sex with him then and there. Far beyond the behavior of an aggressive woman there is something about her quietly menacing demeanor that causes the man to back down, even his friends seem subdued.

In Mexico, Agent Albarran is working a desk. On her own, she attempts to investigate the Army of Cibola, gangsters with tattooed cheeks and drugs that can make you hallucinate prehistoric animals. She eventually discovers Jorge Baquero, an ex-policeman, corrupt alcoholic and a man who has submerged himself in all the strange and supernatural lore of Mexico. He is a font of information on The Army of Cibola, a whole range of monsters from goat suckers to man-bats, ghosts and witches. He also has a great deal of information on a mythical struggle with the forces of evil, the legendary Lords of Xibalba, that has gone on since the time of the Mayas. Natalia looks

at aging illustrations of a maze in a huge cave, armies of men with snarling tattoos, and conquistadores killing a mammoth with a volley of musket fire.

Mike returns to his motel and goes to the front desk to extend his stay for a few days. But the manager tells him that he must check out, the entire motel is booked for the weekend. Mike objects and the manager calls the Sheriff, the situation escalates and Ben Gallagher apologetically ends up escorting Mike to clear out his room. He will have to move on and, with the fine he has had to pay that morning, he is rapidly running out of money. Unsure how to combat the situation, Mike packs up to leave. Then comes a knock on his door ... and standing there is Gene Wasserman, Eric's right hand from Quantum Concepts. As the Sheriff's deputies watch, Gene takes Mike down the line of rooms and introduces him to the, now infamous, Amandine Dufayel, Eric's lawyer and CFO. Following Eric's instructions on what to do if he disappeared and Mike tried to contact them, they have come to Utah to help find their missing friend and employer.

Taking on the bureaucracy of Moqui County, Amandine attempts to get access to Eric's property. She and Marsha Black face off, very different women with very different styles of doing business. Gene and Mike tear into the jump drive that Mike made from Eric's computer and surveillance equipment. Gene brings Mike up to speed on what Eric figured out since they were all together in the mountains of Afghanistan. "Ever find something in a place you can't remember putting it?" Gene asks. "It's possible we move through different realities all the time, they are just so similar we never notice it."

Eric's equipment is capable of tuning into a "harmonic" of our plane of existence. Four stations are placed up to two hundred miles apart to create a "node" or virtual lens that can be steered anywhere in that area. It can move through walls, brush, rock or mountains. It can see many hundreds of feet underground. It is like a real time, X-Ray version of Google Earth. But as effective as it was directing Mike's team in combat, the system had problems. Sometimes it returned imagery that seemed completely inaccurate, showing icy landscapes and even once a person that turned out to not be there at all. Eric was in the process of selling his company to DeNault Industries, a large, Halliburton-like, corporation but he left negotiations to Amandine and moved to Utah, a spot he deemed useful to his work on the equipment, to try to figure out why the errors were occurring.

Gene takes on the copy Mike made of Eric's hard drive. Breaking the encryption leaves the material fragmented but Eric was nearing a solution when he disappeared. Certain spots on earth, southeast Utah and northern Afghanistan being two of them, had an effect on the device. Solar weather, the earth's magnetic field, and gravity did too. In essence, at certain areas of convergence, Eric's surveillance system could see into another reality, not just the "sideband" he used for intelligence gathering but one of many completely alternate worlds.

In the desert, a Navajo family has hired a singer to perform the three day Enemy Way ceremony, intended to clear their son of the effects of bad spirits. The Sheriffs are there to investigate the 'demon' that attacked him. Nearby, a posse of ranchers use dogs and

planes to search. But they are not looking for Eric, they are tracking a strange creature that eludes them at every turn, something lean and hairy, something sort of like a man ... but with long teeth and claws, something that can scare a good hunting dog so badly that it acts like it has been abused for years.

Near the intersection that is just about the only thing that marks Lyman's Corners as a town, Mike is getting some groceries when a bullet punches through the side mirror of a truck near his elbow. A combat veteran, Mike hits dirt and slips under the vehicle almost before he understands what has happened. Furious about nearly everything that has gone on in the last few days, this is the last straw. He rolls out from the gutter and sprints up the street, using cars and doorways as cover. Another bullet ricochets off the sidewalk. Up ahead of him a car accelerates down a side street. Cutting over a block, Mike leaps a fence, sprints across someone's yard and, as the escaping car slows for the corner, hurls a brick he has snatched up. The side window shatters and as the car lurches to a stop. Mike hauls the driver out from behind the wheel and steps back in shock ... it is a frail old man. There is a hunting rifle on the seat beside him. With a few people gathering from the homes and businesses nearby, the man shakes the glass off and advances on Mike shouting, "You clear out! All of you! We kept your secrets!"

Around sundown, Tak-shan 'aa parks her car just off the highway near a small roadside death shrine. She re-laces her running shoes, it is fifteen miles across the desert to Eric's house but there is no other way to go in secretly. She starts out at a pace that would exhaust all but the most serious athletes. It is full dark when she arrives. Slipping past the Sheriff's Dept. SUV on watch and the crime scene tape, she takes a strange device from her pocket, it is a small cube that glows on one side as she turns it.



Following it's indications she makes her way to the kiva. As the cube gets closer, the invisible barrier that is the portal reacts ... not opening but the edge of it becomes visible. She tosses the cube and when it hits the barrier it disappears with a pop and a flash of light. An active portal has been verified. Wondering what caused the flash and the slight sound the deputy investigates. As he does, Tak-shan 'aa coolly breaks into Eric's house, picking the lock, stealing some clothing and shoes and then disappearing into the night.



Outline Episode Three

Everyone is at each other's throats in Lyman's Corners. Mike Raglan, Amandine and Gene are demanding to know what is going on, who is covering up what and what the progress is in Eric's case. The shooter seems to have made bail and gone home pending a hearing. In a living room across town, another discussion is raising the citizen's blood pressure ... all the signs of Moqui County's old troubles are back, strange creatures prowling the night, people going missing in the desert, and the possibility of Government agents already in their midst. They know what they are supposed to do in these circumstances ... call the Army for help. However, they also know that, in the past, the "help" has been almost as destructive to people's lives as the problem it was supposed to correct.

Southeastern Utah has been invaded by the soldiers of Xibalba on many occasions. In the distant past, Native Americans banded together to fight off slaving raids from the other side. In fact the clan inhabiting the Anasazi pueblo on Eric's land was given the responsibility of raising the alarm for many years ... not only was there a small portal inside their village but from their location the larger portal, now under Lake Powell, could be seen as well. By the mid 19th century, the U.S. army was fighting a war that ended with a bloody slaughter on both sides. The less and less frequent opening of the portals brought an end to the conflict with neither combatant the victor. Brief skirmishes continued for many years. At times all of the citizens of Moqui County were rounded up and placed in camps. They were allowed to go free when the hostilities ended and everyone had signed secrecy oaths. The last time this happened was in the 1930s, just before both portals were sealed by the Army Corps of Engineers during WWII. The only people older locals welcome less than the U.S. government are the Xibalbans. Usually progressive, Marsha Black remains with the senior citizens on this subject. Like everyone of a certain age in Lyman's Corners, she was raised on horror stories of demons from the desert. She can remember her father talking of defending the family

ranch against raiders ... and of his growing up in a concentration camp on the Navajo reservation.

In Mexico, Natalia and Jorge Baquero dive into the realm of Mexico's occult. She's investigating The Army of Cibola and the legend of Xibalba on her own time. The only pieces of hard evidence she is able to find are the unique substances sold by The AOC. Hallucinogens and uppers that combine the effects of LSD, steroids and methamphetamines in one addictive and deadly package. Government labs have been studying these drugs since they first showed up in police evidence, the result has been a great number of deeply puzzled scientists. As co-workers Albarran and Baquero are old school and new school, but they are both motivated by the fact that their peers have ignored or ridiculed them. The ex-cop works as a security guard in a night club and is driven by a desperate need to regain his pride and reputation ... though she doesn't say so, Natalia thinks this is a lost cause.

A lean and fit but lonely fifty-five year old gas field worker meets a woman in a bar on the outskirts of Farmington, New Mexico. She is strangely, exotically, beautiful and incredibly seductive. In a cheap motel room they have sex and while she makes a telephone call, he dies, spasming from some sort of horrible poison. Tak-shan 'aa says good night to Cabrakan in a manner indicating that this has been some bizarre form of phone sex, and hauls the body out to her car, tossing it into the trunk with the ease of a good sized man.

Amandine pulls strings in Salt Lake City and Washington and soon they are able to take over Eric's house as a headquarters of sorts. Mike is able to show Gene the strange landscape on Eric's device. The three of them spend hours exploring the ruined city or viewing vast herds of buffalo and the sleepy behavior of giant sloths. Yet all the time they are searching for Eric in one world or the other. Mike hires the dope smoking pilot to run search grids above the desert, dragging him out of bed before he can get too high to fly. From the air they notice that there is something odd about the way the locals are searching yet they are not sure what it means.

Ben Gallagher meets with Mike and fills him in on what has been discovered (not much) in the search for Eric. Although he is a relative newcomer and knows little of the myths of what has gone on in the area, he comes down on the side of full disclosure. He tells Mike as much as he knows and even takes him along to question a couple of old people who live so far out of town he doubts Sheriff Black will hear about it. Ben and Mike listen to strange tales of a war in the desert and see old photos of military bases that are not supposed to have existed and a huge stone arch they are told marked an invisible gateway. That arch is now on the bottom of Lake Powell. They hear stories of the town of Hite being destroyed in a battle ... Hite is also on the bottom of Lake Powell.

Tearing into Eric's device, Gene goes through the surveillance logs trying to recreate what Eric was looking at in the days just before his disappearance. One of the spots that the "collection node" returned to over and over is a spring where tiny effigies of animals seem to have been tied from plant fibers and attached to twigs set in the mud

... the work of some primitive man. Watching the spot over many hours gives Mike and Gene their first view of a Saqua. They watch in wonder as the man-like creatures gather briefly to plant new offerings at the spring. The animals are fast and graceful, not at all ape-like. It is Gene's careful eye that notes something out of place in the corner of the frame ... a zip-lock bag wedged into a fork in the tree branches. Inside the zip-lock is another artifact from our world ... Eric's smart phone!

This is the first evidence that Eric somehow made it into the other world. He must have hoped that someone would investigate the locations he indexed at and see it with his device. There are many other places he might have left it, like the ruined city ... Mike and Gene can only guess that, for some reason, he could not go back. It is a fact that does not bode well.

Mike looks up Albert and Ros, the archeology students who were working on the site near Eric's house. The two of them put forward their theory on The Guardians (literally "those who watch" in Hopi), a Pueblo clan with a very special history. Albert has traced a network of ruins, each part of a system intended to communicate over a area using signal fires. This one ruin was inhabited for a much greater period of time than the average Anasazi village. In fact it is his theory that long after they exhausted the soil and firewood, other tribes actually brought in supplies. Ros, the more cautious of the two, reminds him that there is not much evidence for this.

Late one afternoon Gene heads for town to pick up supplies and to bring out Amandine who has been coordinating the sale of Quantum Concepts from her motel room. Mike is exploring the other world with Eric's device. As he does so, a blinking icon appears on the screen. Clicking on it, Mike finds an automatic update of raw data from SOHO, the Solar & Heliospheric Observatory satellite. A count down timer appears, ticking down from one hour thirty-eight minutes. Puzzled, Mike wanders outside and looks at the sun. There is nothing but a strange noise, a rippling hiss of static coming from the area of the Anasazi ruin. Peering into the kiva, Mike sees a bluish haze hanging across a large alcove in he wall. Stranger still, a gust of cold wind is blowing through it. He climbs in to have a closer look.

The ruin is perched right on the edge of the mesa and the kiva is even closer, it's upper edge at ground level and within five feet of the cliff. The alcove certainly hadn't been five feet deep but now it seems to penetrate clear through the rock. Mike sticks his hand into the haze and draws it back quickly, the experience makes it prickly and numb.



Mike considers for a moment then runs for his truck, grabbing his Colt automatic from the glove box. He leaps back into the kiva and, taking a deep breath, crawls into the alcove and through the veil. Where the hole emerges from the cliff there is the remains of some sort of shrine, a wooden platform and then steps, both rickety wood and

crumbling rock, leading down to a spot where a more conventional trail leads toward the bottom of the mesa.

Mike heads down the trail into the outskirts of the city, walks the empty streets and across a huge plaza. At the base of a ziggurat is a large panel with an aging design in inlaid ceramics. A maze. And in the center of that maze, the image of a woman with Nefertiti-like beauty and elegance. Darkness is falling, the streets of the ruined city are silent except for the sound of crows ... looking to where the birds are gathered, Mike finds a body laying in a sand choked alley. It is human, dressed in a strange uniform and carrying an odd weapon. There is nothing odd about the cause of death, a bullet wound is centered in the man's chest. Mike discovers a shell casing on the ground, .375 H&H ... the same caliber as the big game rifles in Eric's house!

Something moves in the shadows, too fast for Raglan to register. Alarmed, and suddenly worried about that timer on the computer, he starts back to the portal. As he hits the slope he sees something coming furtively up the trail behind him, an animal? Gun out, he moves faster. Where the trail ends Mike comes to a stop. The blue glow of the portal flickers, then goes out ... the back of the shrine is just solid rock. Then it's back but shifting like a badly tuned TV. Mike dives through. Just as he does so the energy field collapses clipping his boot heel, shearing a piece of it off. There is a resounding *crack* as the material in the field is converted to energy and Mike is hurled up against the wall of the kiva. As he regains his senses he sees, over the stone rim on the kiva, a strange face ... one of the odd creatures from the other side, the hairy men. He shakes his head and looks again but the apparition is gone.

When the caravan stops at a remote outpost, Kawasi trades a piece of her jewelry for a whip-sword, the standard side arm of Xibalban soldiers. The men have been treating she and her sister more and more strangely and Kawasi worries about what will happen to them when they leave this last vestige of civilization behind.

As Gene combs through all of the SOHO records looking for information on what happened to open the portal. If Gene can figure out the next time the portal will open Mike intends to go through, to find Eric or at least to retrieve Eric's phone and, with a fresh battery, see what is on it. Amandine has opened Eric's accounts, so money is available. Gene has ordered up additional equipment and broken out Eric's humvee. Mike places some phone calls to men he served with over the years. He wants a team, a combat surgeon, a tracker and another language specialist besides himself. He, obviously, has a hard time describing exactly what the operation really is.

Other than to stare at the alcove that was once an opening to another world it has been hard to get Mike away from Eric's machine. He crisscrosses all of the territory that can be viewed, quickly from a great height and then closer to ground level. In doing so he comes across the first live humans they have seen, a slowly moving caravan drawn by buffalo. Some twenty people in strange looking garb and five or six carts. Among them is Kawasi. Mike is immediately drawn to her, watching closely as she walks beside the cart and sometimes as she sleeps at night. She is very beautiful but he also likes the

way she takes care for her sister and the kindness that she shows everyone around her. He worries as he sees the men of the caravan become more and more domineering, behaving almost as if they own the two young women. He finds it interesting that the caravan is cutting across country and obviously avoiding the only Xibalban check point in the area. Mike is especially interested in these troops who are dressed just like the dead man he discovered in the ruined city.

One evening while Kawasi's sister and one of the men are hobbling their draft animals, they are approached by three Short Faced bears. As big or bigger than a Kodiak Grizzly, this trio is a mother and two adolescent cubs. They seem ready to attack and the girl and the teamster are unarmed. Kawasi rushes to their aid, pulling the whip-sword from under her robes. She plants herself between the mother bear and her sister, swirling, the sparking lash in a figure eight. Other men, similarly armed, hang back ... clearly these creatures are greatly feared. "King of the forests, go away ... I do not wish to kill you," the girl murmurs. Mike, watching the scene from the silence of Eric's machine, knows what her hesitation means, "Kill it, don't warn it!" he growls. The bears attack. Mike is helpless, he can't even move the node. This delicate little woman, her eyes swimming with tears of fear and some other mix of emotions, stands there, a barrier in front of her two cowering companions. Then, as the mother bear charges, she snaps the blade straight and thrusts, skewering the bear through the chest. She releases the tension, making the blade whip-like, as the giant animal begins to thrash around. Lashing sideways the arcing, sparking whip curls around the foremost cub's neck and, with a twist of the handle, she forces the blade straight, severing the cub's head. A crack of the lash and the second cub runs off, bellowing into the darkness.

Suddenly she is a hero. The caravan teamsters, who might have enslaved her, might have raped her and her sister, are now her brothers, her father and uncles. They carry her on their shoulders and give her choice pieces of food as they gather around the fire. "Horrible creatures!" one of the men proclaims. "No. Beautiful," She says and weeps. Watching from the silence of another world Mike Raglan is entranced. She is an arrow, a bolt of lightning. Something so pure he doesn't even know how to feel about it. It is obvious that the people around her agree. It is only in this moment that he realizes how much she looks like the mosaic from the wall of the temple, the beautiful woman in the maze.

Ben Gallagher drives out to the desert house with the bad news. A search and rescue team, following a tip they got from a pilot, has found the remains of Eric Hokart. Eric seems to have died from exposure in the desert. Sheriff Black would like to declare the search ended. There will, of course, be an autopsy and an inquiry. She is hoping that they will all go home or at least follow the remains up to Salt Lake while the Medical Examiner does his job ... she is hoping she can be rid of these troublesome outsiders.

Mike has a hard time believing it. The corpse is unidentifiable, animals have feasted on it, it has spent days in the elements. But the clothes are wrong, they are Eric's, just not his choice for hiking. Mike drives back out to Eric's house, intending to spend the night

there rather than in town with the others. As he pulls up, he sees the barest edge of a chrome bumper sticking out from behind Eric's Quonset hut. His gaze snaps to the rear view mirror. Men are closing in around the vehicle! He slams into reverse. The old Toyota throws dirt, backing until the burst from an assault rifle shreds the rear tires, bullets punching through metal, blowing out seat cushions. Mike bales out of the vehicle. Someone tackles him, he gets on top, breaks the man's arm, rolls into the shadows. Men come looking with flashlights, Mike takes one down, can't get his gun but pulls a knife from the man's scabbard, stabs the man in the neck. He leaps out of the light as another man shoots at him. Then he is backed against the wall of the house and pinned in the flashlight beams. Out of the night walks a tall, pale skinned, man with dark tattoos on either cheek. Mike has never seen Cabrakan but he is familiar with the weapon he carries, a Xibalban whip-sword, dripping sparks.

Though it seems like the battle is over, suddenly a man screams in the darkness. Flashlights turn. One of Cabrakan's gangster lackeys is trapped in what looks like a blender of hairy skin and flashing teeth. A Saqua, the animal Mike thought he saw on the edge of the kiva, drops the man and vanishes from the light. Cabrakan and the two remaining men move back to back, one of them gibbering with fear. The whip-sword swirls, the beast attacks, a man screams and the Saqua howls, the burning wire tearing the flesh on its back. A shotgun fires, the sword slashes but the creature is gone again, a moving shadow. Cabrakan and his last accomplice jump into their truck and pull away, a burst of gunfire aimed at Mike's last position. Mike scrambles for the Land Cruiser, for the .45 still in the glove box but the Saqua rises up before him, jaws open, ready to kill ... until it see who it is attacking. Not the hated Xibalban or the men with him but the man they had fought, tried to capture. It stares at him for a moment, then vanishes into the darkness of the desert.



Mike leans back against the Toyota in shock and crashing adrenaline. He stays there trying to catch his breath in the moonlit, stary night.



Season One Continued ...

Mike Raglan's arrival at Eric's house has temporarily foiled the Xibalban's plan. Cabrakan had intended to remove all of Eric's notes and equipment, everything indicating that Eric had found a way to the world of Xibalba, then fill in the kiva containing the portal and assassinate anyone who pushed the investigation too close to the truth. A contingent of soldiers on the Xibalban side should solve any further security issues. Cabrakan will then accelerate his plans to consolidate power in the U.S. as he did in Mexico. With luck the situation can be controlled and the Xibalbans will eventually be able to buy the property and use the portal as a conduit to import drugs just as he has done in Mexico ... after all, America is where the customers are. Cabrakan will have to try again, and soon ...

Mike looks through the boxes of Eric's personal belongings, computers, data storage and classified equipment, everything the thieves have left strewn around the house and driveway. Little had been loaded in the truck when it tore off into the night. Mike looks at the dead men ... a vastly bigger problem. He calls Ben Gallagher and asks him to come out and to bring his boss and a forensics unit. Then Mike calls Amandine and tells her that he is going to need a lawyer. He has killed one man and there are a couple of other corpses that will require a great deal of explanation. Mike is going to demand some explanations himself about what is going on in Moqui County. He will get some answers or he'll do the one thing everybody in Moqui county seems to fear ... he will place calls to every government agency in the phone book.

What Mike Raglan doesn't know is that the alert has already gone out. The number of odd news stories emanating from southeast Utah, plus Eric's value to US intelligence agencies, plus a CIA assessment of activity within Mexico has awakened a one hundred and forty year old protocol at the Pentagon. An antique military district, the Department of the San Juan's Internal Border Command, (INBOCOM) is automatically reactivated.

It's first job will be to take over the affected part of Moqui County and secretly contain any Xibalban incursion.

Every element seems to explode at once. Cabrakan lays a trap for those who know about Xibalba. According to Gene Wasserman, the portal is about to reopen and the team that Mike has hired to help search for Eric is about to arrive. To top it all off an entire U.S. Army battalion is brought in under cover of darkness to sequester everyone and quarantine the area. Chaos and violence surround Eric's compound. In the turmoil, Mike, Sheriff Black, Albert, Ros, and Sgt. Tyrone Jacks (one of the INBOCOM soldiers) are forced to retreat through the portal into the other world where Xibalban troops are waiting to reinforce Cabrakan's squad of thugs.

Escaping across the top of the mesa in the other world, Mike's group must avoid the Xibalbans and lose themselves in the landscape. This is only possible because of Marsha Black's in depth knowledge of the terrain ... the topography on the Xibalban side is nearly identical to our earth. Pursued through an alien world, trapped until the portal opens again, Mike must try keep himself and his party alive and to discover what has happened to Eric.

There are two places Mike's group can go for help. Eric's cell phone is still in the tree and Albert was sharp enough to grab the spare battery during the fighting at the house. They discover that the phone chronicles the first eight days of Eric's adventure in video and notes and proves to Mike's satisfaction that the body that was found was not Eric. The other place they can seek help is Kawasi's caravan. Mike would love to meet her. But the caravan party is also a group that seems invested in avoiding the Xibalban soldiers, therefore they may be potential allies.

Mike succeeds in connecting with the caravan which is heading north to supply the community of people called The Guardians, the descendants of the Ancestral Pueblo tribe who lived near Eric's house. Over the years some had moved to the other world and they were eventually joined by deserters from the old U.S. army forts on the Xibalban side and some renegade Xibalbans. There are people among them, who speak English and can help the newcomers communicate. The Guardians live in an idyllic canyon lined with cliff dwellings, the canyon floor carpeted with farms. So far, it has been safe from Xibalban soldiers and will serve as a base of operations from which Mike can search for Eric.



In our world, the US army takes over Eric's property at gunpoint, clamping down a lid of high security. The leader is General Alistair Chatwin, the army's only remaining expert

on Xibalba ... and a bit of a fish out of water. Any conflict with Xibalba automatically elevates the ranking officer of the Internal Border Command to General and allows complete access to both the head of the Joint Chiefs and the Asst. Secretary of Defense. A week ago Chatwin was just an aging Lt. Colonel stuck in a dusty file room with a single assistant. The only expert on the Top Secret subject of Xibalba, he suddenly has rank, power and influence beyond anything he could imagine. Merely commenting that he'd like to speak with the people in Lyman's Corners, causes those poor citizens to be forced from their homes and onto busses by soldiers in full battle gear. For Chatwin, being taken that seriously takes some getting used to. For others, in the military, the entire subject of Xibalba is an amusing myth, a sort of Jackalope patrol or snipe hunt, and seeing it suddenly taken seriously is a threat to their authority.

Making Eric's home his headquarters, Chatwin slowly gains the confidence of Gene and Amandine. However, he finds himself in an immediate turf war with Homeland Security and the CIA. Gene directs a military crew to reconfigure Eric's base stations to follow Mike's progress in the other world. Intelligence is vital; the first time (1872) the U.S., Mexico and the southwest tribes fought a war with Xibalba they were definitely out matched. The Xibalban military still seems to be pretty 19th century, on the other hand, some classified reports from Mexico are chilling. Bio weapons, drugs for amazing strength, poison gas ... a whole area of chemical and genetic knowledge that we can barely guess at. As terrorists the Xibalbans could be everybody's worst nightmare.

Using carefully set traps at a number of water holes, the army captures the Saqua that has been on the loose. Anything they can learn about the other side is useful. A contingent of Delta Force has been tasked with going through the next time the portal opens to extract Mike whether he has Eric with him or not. The information Mike has gathered just through experience is worth a great deal, and he is also a civilian messing around in a highly classified situation. If he won't come willingly they'll place him under arrest.

Trouble is brewing amongst The Guardians. Mike's group of newcomers may have unwittingly brought the seeds of disruption to their wilderness paradise. Though the community has a reputation amongst Xibalbans as one of rebels and renegades, they have actually survived by causing as little trouble as possible. They have learned to stay off the Xibalban radar and hope for the best. But Kawasi is discovered to have been a candidate for The Voice and some Guardians feel that she might lead a movement to overturn the rule of the Xibalban lords. Though she doesn't like being volunteered for a process that has meant the death of many, curiosity about her destiny and what would happen if she did try the procedure plagues her. The leader of The Guardians, Qaletaq, is not pleased to be harboring Mike's people who Xibalba considers a high priority fugitives. He also doesn't like that Kawasi might offer something other than the manipulation that he passes off as leadership.

Following testimony gleaned from the trials of Indian heretics in the 1500's, Natalia Albarran heads for Tahtzibichen on the Yucatan peninsula. She is deep in the Mayan heartland and closing in on the historic gateway to Xibalba. What she finds is a New

Age tourist industry exploiting both the Indians and their mythology. Walking tours of the most accessible cenotes (sink holes that supposedly lead to the underworld) are offered for a few Pesos, cave diving expeditions are quite a bit more. It is a Club Med Xibalbaland complete with bad disco and flickering neon.

But hidden behind the kitschy “doorway to hell” salesmanship is something darker. The actual Xibalbans are using it as a front to run drugs one way and slaves in the other. The local authorities know something is going on right under their noses but are either too frightened or incapable of believing that Xibalba is an actual place. Ultimately, she can only see what passed for Xibalba in this world, the Mayan ruins in the caves ... but wandering away from a tour, for a moment she is able to spy a group of men carrying materials in strange looking back packs and a blue glow from somewhere beyond. That is as far as she gets before being spirited away by some Indians attempting to protect her.



Kawasi is rapidly gaining a string of followers. This is not only because she might be The Voice, it is because she is a brave and compassionate personality. A traveler brings her some information about a man in the hospital of a nearby town who has seen Eric. Mike and some of the others go there to check out the story. The wounded man has been blinded in battle and was a soldier searching for Eric. He found the American but he and the patrol he was with were jumped by a pack of Saqua, an attack that was much better planned than normal. As he talks to Mike’s Guardian interpreter the soldier realizes something isn’t right and raises the alarm. Mike and the others barely make it out of town.

They escape only to discover that villages of The Guardians have been wiped out by soldiers looking for Mike and his friends. Pursued again, Mike’s group heads back toward the only place they can hope for help, the portal at the ruined city. One night they walk into what seems like an ambush. Suddenly surrounded by Saqua, fighting isn’t even an option. None of them are harmed and the beasts quietly stand aside as *Eric Hokart walks out of the darkness.*

Eric doesn’t speak their language, they don’t have much language, but they seem to understand him and visa versa. They are remarkable that way, Eric tells Mike. It’s not mind reading ... you just have to try it. Eric has learned a great deal about the Saqua and there is much more to know. They are not just intelligent animals, they know things about Xibalban technology but they can’t or don’t use it, there are complex formulas hidden in their simple seeming rituals, they are familiar with stars the human eye can not even see. It’s all very mysterious. They are being hunted to extinction. The Varanel guards, the Xibalban soldiers with the teeth tattooed on their cheeks, have to

kill a Saqua before they can enter the order. Saqua are killed for sport, sacrificed to the gods ... Xibalban society has a vendetta against them.

The chase continues until finally Cabrakan, Eric and Mike's group and a detachment of Delta Force that has shot their way past the Xibalbans now guarding the portal, all collide at the ruined city. The Saqua know the streets and tunnels very well and try to help the humans get away but Eric and Kawasi are separated in the fighting and forced to escape into the wilds. Mike is wounded and he and his people are arrested by Delta Force and returned through the portal to our world.

As the solar flare passes the portal closes and it is heavily guarded by troops on both sides. General Chatwin leaves Utah to brief the president and reminds his humorless aid to be sure complete secrecy is maintained ... it's another comment that is obeyed in the most literal sense.

Mike wakes up with the sounds of the sea in his ears, another balmy day at camp X-Ray. In the next pen Gene plays computer games and, farther down, Ros is working on her tan. There is an unhappy roar from the member of the group most confused by recent events, the captured Saqua is locked up beside the irritable and fastidious Sgt. Jacks and neither of them is happy. Everyone who was involved with the world beyond the portal has been interred at Guantanamo Bay until the powers that be can decide what to do or General Chatwin remembers to ask what happened to them.



Season Two and Beyond

Natalia Albarran is surfacing through swirling bubbles and dark water ... rising from the depths of the Mayan underworld. Something real? A dream? Her memories are fragmentary, a place of fear, a cave of knives, a river of scorpions ... the Mayan death gods in a dim chamber, then cities, amazing, golden, horrible places filled with death. She is back in the hospital and, again, she has barely survived.

With the Utah portal heavily guarded and rarely open, a stalemate has set in. But the covert war Xibalba is fighting in Mexico is still in full swing. The story picks up again with Natalia's return to Mexico City. Prepared for a journey to Xibalba by Mayan Indians, she has been to hell and back but now she knows the way.

Eric must still be found and intelligence must be gathered on the situation in Xibalba. Mike and his cohorts are freed from Guantanamo Bay and offered another mission ... this time into the heart of Xibalba with Natalia as their guide. Mike and Kawasi will get together but Kawasi will also try to become The Voice, the next best thing to a living god, and lead her people to a better life.

DeNault Industries, the company that is buying Quantum Concepts and starting to mine the mineral wealth of Afghanistan, will realize that there is also an entire planet on the other side of the portals that they could exploit. Of course, no one has determined the political ramifications of claiming territory in the other world. It is also possible that the Mayan calendar, which the Xibalbans developed to track the Solar Cycles controlling the gates, indicates the ending of one era and the beginning of another at the end of 2012. If that shift was one where our civilization, based on an endless number of electromagnetic devices, was damaged by a series of solar flares ... and those solar flares opened any number of portals ... well, who would do what to whom might be a very open question.



Characters

Eric Hokart - 55

Eric grew up in a small town in Oregon. As a child he excelled in scientific subjects but was also very handy with tools and machines. Scholarships allowed him to go to Princeton to study physics. Always more interested in practical applications rather than theory, he started his own company, Quantum Concepts, to develop technologies that push the boundaries of what many thought possible. Eric married early and his wife died young. He has been a solitary widower for many years and has also survived a bout with kidney cancer. That brush with death has changed his outlook on many things.

Both a science fiction fan and an outdoorsman, he is a scientist from the Robert Oppenheimer school, as comfortable on horseback or fly fishing as he is in a lab or classroom. In a quiet way, Eric is a larger than life character. His compound outside of Kandahar is done up like something from the Arabian Nights and he races vintage cars and climbs mountains with vintage gear. He has developed some of the most advanced telecommunications and military surveillance hardware yet hates the aspects of those industries that make the world smaller and invade people's privacy. His latest brainchild is a surveillance technology that needs no hardware at the point of collection and where walls or even many feet of rock are no impediment to its function. Quantum Concepts is also developing lower power, civilian versions that can be used for medical imaging or mining exploration. Eric can be at ease as a multinational business executive and a celebrated physicist or living out boyhood dreams straight from the pages of Edgar Rice Burroughs or Talbot Mundy.

Discovering that his surveillance device can not only see into another world but can also be used to detect the "thin spots" where a human can naturally cross over, he calls on Mike Raglan, the man he considers most qualified to join him in an initial exploration of

this world. When Mike doesn't immediately respond, Eric takes off on a short reconnaissance by himself.

Once on the other side, Eric happens across a pair of Xibalban soldiers who are torturing a wounded Saqua. Eric defends the beast, killing one of the soldiers and is surprised when, given a moment to recover, the animal kills the other soldier. Pursued by the rest of the Xibalban patrol and cut off from the portal, Eric flees further and further into the desert west of the ruined city. He tries to keep a record of his experiences on his phone but the battery cannot last forever. He locates the tree where he parked the node of his surveillance device and places the phone in a spot where he thinks someone from our world might see it. Eventually, strung out, starving and on his last legs he wakes to find himself surrounded, captured, by Saqua ... and begins the next phase of his journey.

Though a great deal of energy will be spent trying to find Eric and bring him back to our world, he may not want to leave. He has found a place where everything seems like a mystery waiting to be solved, a place where he can be completely free.

Mike Raglan - 36

An army captain with a masters in history, Special Forces, Defense Language Institute, a surfer from Orange County. A man looking for challenges both intellectual and physical. The closest he has come to the life he was born to live was been working with the tribes in Afghanistan. At the same time the corruption on both sides frustrated him to the limit.

When an Afghan journalist who has angered both the Karzai administration and its American supporters is captured by the Taliban, Mike uses Eric's machine to free him and neutralize his captors ... even though it was suggested he look the other way. An inquiry is held and Mike tells the story with a bluntness that embarrasses politicians and military officers in both countries. Fed up with the bullshit Mike chooses to leave the military at the end of his enlistment.

Since then, he has tried to make a living teaching language and culture skills to people he hates, military contractors. Ultimately, the moment comes when Mike's PTSD fueled temper flares again, calling the people he works for 'a bunch of pumped up misfits who'll open fire on anything.' So he gets to leave that job too. Tact, at least in the face of hypocrisy, is not something that he excels at.

Mike Raglan realizes he must be very careful about switching on his "warrior personality," not only is he physically a fierce fighter but Sun-Tzu lurks in his bones. He is an expert at strategy as well as tactics. Mike is also principled and driven but the two are often in conflict with one and other, achieving his goals as a military man and in private life occasionally runs afoul of his innate and often abrasive honesty. To get away, Mike finds solace surfing the most remote spots he can find, whether in Indonesia, Australia or South America. Mike is trapped in a mundane world and it's making him crazy.

In the case of the disappearance of Eric Hokart, Raglan is motivated by an additional sense of responsibility and guilt. Eric reached out but Mike temporarily ignored him ... now Eric is lost. When Mike meets Kawasi, he finds her to be as fascinating as any woman he has ever met. The fact that she is brave and fierce and heartbreakingly vulnerable and that she will choose to lead her people at the supreme cost to herself will seal her bond with Mike forever. For the meantime, however, his duty is to bring those who came with him into this alien world back to safety ... and he must find Eric.

Kawasi – 28

Part of an aristocratic family in the Empire of Xibalba, she has always felt different from the society around her. As a child she was identified as a possible successor to the oracle known to the Xibalban people as The Voice. But the last time the Voice actually prophesied was five hundred years ago. Since then the few candidates have either died from the regimen of hallucinatory drugs used to prepare the initiate or been secretly assassinated by The Hand, the chief administrator of the Lords of Xibalba, the empire's ruling body.

The day will come when, independent from the agendas of others, Kawasi will find a way to experiment with the drugs and training that have supposedly killed so many in order to see if she truly has the potential to be The Voice. Once her candidacy as The Voice is known she might be the only person who could unite the highly suspicious Xibalbans. Becoming the Joan of Arc of her world, the next best thing to a living god, will stress her relationship with Mike and her old friends to the breaking point.

Cabrakan – 40

Like most Xibalbans he is tall, fair skinned, with long black hair and blue eyes. An officer in Xibalba's Varanel Guard he has killed a deadly Saqua in arena combat and earned the tattoos of snarling teeth on either side of his mouth.

Once a candidate to become a scientific oracle, Cabrakan reached his limit of the mind expanding potions needed to attain that post before he was ready for full initiation. Failure left him few options but the partial course of the drugs has provided him with an advantage in insight and intelligence over most soldiers.

Assigned the mission to infiltrate and discover how to dominate our world, Cabrakan has given long and serious consideration as to how to achieve that goal with the very few resources Xibalba has given him. Passing through the southern Portal into Mexico he lived there for some time and traveled as a migrant laborer to the U.S. Now he has created El Ejército de Cibola, an intelligence organization and guerilla army masquerading as an imperialistically aggressive drug cartel. Using the gangsters his operation has absorbed, entire Mexican states could soon fall under his influence and the time has come to move north of the border. He knows that direct domination of our world is a pipe dream, but infiltration, subversion and manipulation are possible.

Fleeting moments of intellectual brilliance still haunt him, hinting at who he might have been. The freedom he has found in our world taunts him and the knowledge that though loyalty is demanded by his superiors ... they are unlikely to return the favor. Where does the line between loyal soldier and autonomous gangster lie?

As a failed oracle initiate, Cabrakan will have immense respect for Kawasi, once she goes through the process of drugs and training to become The Voice. The fact that she does it without the help of the priesthood will impress him even more. What she becomes will challenge both his independence from the established powers and his loyalty to Xibalba. To make matters more complicated, Cabrakan also has fallen in love with one of the most effective weapons the Lords of Xibalba ever created and it's a love that is returned but can never be consummated ...

Tak-shan 'aa – 30

A Poison Woman. A highly trained Xibalban assassin. Versed in weapons, martial arts, seduction ... and fed and injected with toxins since childhood. She is a walking disease culture, a living stew of deadly chemistry. Her prolonged touch can sicken a man, a kiss can hospitalize, sex will kill within hours. She is the Lords of Xibalba ultimate stealth weapon.

There are very few Poison Women in existence and while their preparation takes a minimum of twenty years, not many survive to middle age. Eventually, their immune systems give out and the deadly materials they carry turn on them. Tak-shan 'aa is a time bomb in more ways than one, for she wants to see Cabrakan's mission fulfilled before she dies. Because of the price she has paid, Tak-shan 'aa is much more invested in her loyalty to Xibalba than Cabrakan ... and that price is also making her more and more unstable

Natalia Albarran – 34

An agent with Mexico's General Directorate of Investigations and National Security (DGISN) and assigned to the Presidential Command Staff's Narcotics Intelligence Section. Natalia comes from a well placed political family and is one of a new generation in law enforcement circles, highly educated, driven, incorruptible. Proud and temperamental, Natalia can be too high strung for her superiors, even herself.

When she is raped and her partner killed by soldiers of The Army of Cibola cartel, she makes vengeance her private mission ... more secretly, she was terrified to the point of insanity (a barrier her coworkers may believe she crossed) but now she is going to strike back at that fear, even if it takes her to hell itself.

Sheriff Marsha Black - 45

Lean and fit, Marsha is a hunter and seasoned outdoorswoman. Widow of Moqui County's long time Sheriff, Martin Black, and thirty years his junior, she has followed in his footsteps, getting elected Sheriff and becoming a respected law enforcement officer on her own. She has taken on the responsibility of protecting the secrets of her

community and as our story goes on and events push her to the limit she'll come to appreciate her husband's calm and simple judgment.

Her jurisdiction has been disastrously invaded not only by soldiers and animals of an alien world but also by the U.S. army. People have been killed and taken slave by a foreign power but they have also been imprisoned and terrorized by their own government. Sheriff Black sees it as her job to defend her constituents from all threats foreign and domestic. At one level she is a good church-going woman, she is also a bit of a bad-ass and could definitely go down fighting Cabrakan's men at the end of season one.

Marsha will go from being Mike Raglan's nemesis in our world to becoming his strong right arm in the world of Xibalba ... it will not be an easy transition for either of them.

Amandine Dufayel - 42

French. Eric's lawyer and the CFO of his Seattle based company, Quantum Concepts. Very elegant and business like. A haughty and intimidating presence though deeply loyal to Eric and anything he may believe in. Amandine has endless reserves of cool and she is hard as nails. If she has your back you never need to look behind you ... if she wants your hide, you'll never know what happened. Amandine is secretly in love with Eric

Gene Wasserman - 38

Tall, Fat ... addicted to Mountain Dew and '70s rock and roll. Eric's right arm, the guy who turns theory into reality. A techie, computer whiz, a gifted engineer who is not afraid to get his hands dirty. He knows as much as anyone about what Eric is working on. He has a wife and children he rarely sees but he tries to remain the remotely connected dad in the midst of a failing marriage. While he seems the type who never gets his head out of the computer, he has been with Eric in many exotic situations, some of them quite dangerous.

Albert Tsosie - 25

A Navajo graduate student in Anthropology at the University of New Mexico. He's not your traditional Native American. A brilliant, punkish, smart-alec, from Los Angeles who is at odds with many of the tenets of his culture but not quite at home with white culture either, his discomfort is hidden underneath protective layers of sarcasm. A big city Indian who has compensated by learning everything possible about native Americans, both the science and tribal lore.

Albert is hired by Eric to excavate the Anasazi ruin near Eric's home based on a paper he wrote with his classmate Ros on a system of Anasazi signal towers and a Native American group called The Guardians or "those who watch" when translated from Hopi.

In the days before the white man came to the "Four Corners" region the local tribes banded together to create an organization to help defend themselves from Xibalban slaving raids. When the conflict with the forces of Xibalba became more intense, forcing

their neighbors to move to the more hidden and protected Cliff Dwellings in the huge, wind hollowed, caves of the southwest, the Guardians remained the first line of defense and their enemies, the more warlike Utes, Navajos, and Apaches, stood with them.

Ros Pickering - 24

An Australian archeology student, Albert's classmate and co-author. Also hired by Eric to excavate the ruin. The two are a great team despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that they argue about nearly every detail. Ros is tall, spare, and never one to draw undue attention to herself. As a child she was dragged all over the world by film maker parents who were working on a series about New Age mysteries. She has heard enough about ancient astronauts in her young life to turn her into a very cautious and conservative scholar.

Ben Gallagher - 62

Born in Kansas, Ben went to Vietnam as a US Marine then into Law Enforcement. He served as an undercover narcotics officer before he moved to Utah with his wife and three children. Gallagher has a good understanding of the Native American communities that surround him and, is also a collector of the many local tales of the supernatural.

Gallagher is only real detective on the Moqui County Sheriff's Department, a tough outsider in a department full of Boy Scout locals. He liked his original boss, the aging Sheriff Martin Black and even liked his much younger wife Marsha. However, since the old Sheriff has died and Marsha has been elected in his place Marsha and Ben have ended up at odds on many occasions.

Qaletqa (Guardian of the People) – 50

Leader of The Guardians on the other side. A descendant of the clan that lived in Eric's Anasazi ruin, he knows the history of The Guardians backwards and forwards. In Qaletqa's life, however, Xibalba has always been a distant threat. Deeply narcissistic he believes that he has led their loose organization by careful manipulation. In reality, The Guardians are simply pretty good at cooperating. Now, with both Mike's group and Kawasi having arrived in their community, he sees more and more threats to the old order. Some are legitimate, like the fact that Mike has been pursued by Xibalban soldiers, others are less so ... he fears Kawasi's quietly charismatic leadership. Not only does she distract his people from what he wants but, amongst the run away Xibalbans, she is seen as the possible savior for all of Xibalban society. Qaletqa is not only jealous, he rightly fears their spreading militancy.

Lt. Colonel Alistair Chatwin – 65

Head of The Department of the San Juan's Internal Border Command (INBOCOM). The Department of the San Juan is an archaic designation left over from the Indian Wars of the 19th century. Initially, the only thing the "Command" commands is a dusty office full of Top Secret archives and a staff of two archivists. The department has been nearly forgotten. It's existence has always been "need to know" but for the last seventy years, fewer and fewer have "needed to know."

Soon after the United States took over New Mexico territory, army officers began to write detailed accounts of actual battles with an enemy who used strange tactics and wielded superior weapons. Eventually, the army set up the Department of the San Juan's Internal Border Command. They formed a united front with many of the local tribes and the Mexican government and in 1872 fought a huge battle on the Xibalban side. Eventually the war ended, not so much from a decisive victory but from the natural cycling closed of the portals.

Besides the suspected portals in Mexico, two are known to exist in south east Utah. One is in the kiva of The Guardians near where Eric with build his house, the other is much larger and situated in the bottom of Glen Canyon. Over the years the US Army established small bases in the other world and filled in the kiva . As World War Two came on, the Army Corps of Engineers poured the large Glen Canyon portal full of concrete, sealing the area on both sides. At the height of the Cold War the creation of Lake Powell covered the concrete plug.

Should a threat from Xibalba is detected, INBOCOM is automatically elevated in it's power and authority. Lt. Colonel Chatwin, the oldest Lt. Colonel in the US Army, will soon find himself promoted to General and, by default, made the leader of the entire US response to threats from Xibalba. A man unused to leadership, he will be the unwilling and somewhat unwitting commander of the Xibalban conflict and his every suggestion will be taken as an order from the most extreme military authority. He must discover a practical response to the intelligence that a neighboring country, Mexico, is being infiltrated by agents of a hostile power, Xibalba. And he must defend his department's jurisdiction from the CIA and powers (like DeNault Industries, the multinational corporation that is purchasing Eric's company) that dream of conquering the world of Xibalba for their own corrupt reasons. The situation eventually transforms an aging and mild mannered file clerk into a leader to be reckoned with.

Sgt. Tyrone Jacks – 27

One of the men from the INBOCOM force that takes over Eric's compound. Circumstances force Sgt. Jacks through the portal with Mike and the others into the world of Xibalba. Buttoned up, meticulously organized and structured, Sgt. Jacks has a hard time believing the others about where he is and can't entirely decide whether he should try to arrest and detain Mike and the others. Following orders is something he excels at but a parallel universe is about as far as you can get from a structured command system. He is the complete opposite from Mike Raglan's improvisational style of soldiering.



The Universe of Xibalba

There are an infinity of parallel universes. However, through an accident of physics, this one distinctly different alternate world is easily accessible from a few specific locations on earth. Eric Hokart's device has not only allowed him to look into this other world but to discover the places and times when portals between worlds may open.

Geographically, the other side is almost identical to ours. However, it is still in the waning years of an ice age. This has significantly altered both the weather and the historical environment. The Great Plains have a climate much like Canada. Sea level is lower, the air is drier and for all practical purposes, European culture never developed. These conditions have kept the human population of the planet vastly lower than ours and ice age mega fauna, giant sloths, bison, cave bears, mammoths and saber tooth cats have yet to be hunted into extinction.

The end of an Ice Age is marked by rapidly changing weather, glaciers advance and retreat, creating freezes, floods and occasionally earthquakes. The Xibalbans relationship with their gods reflects this uncertain world like that of a child's with an abusive parent. Their religion worships dueling and hostile deities. Human sacrifice to maintain the blessings of those gods is an accepted part of life and the mechanism for choosing who is to be offered is both complex and cynically administrated. They live in a dark age of religious fundamentalism and totalitarian government where suspicion is rife.

The current population under Xibalban control may be around three million people and is spread across an area that, in our world, would reach from north of the US/Mexican border to Guatemala. Originally a larger and considerably more enlightened society, Xibalba was founded in a golden age at a time before the glaciers. Cities that flourished in the past now lie abandoned in the jungle or desert. The first citizens are claimed to have split into two groups with competing ideas of how to survive the change in climate. One group disappeared, a continuing source of legend. The other is the modern Xibalbans, preserved, so they think, by their harsh and untrustworthy gods.

The creatures known as the Saqua are related to this story. In reality they were once the group that split off from Xibalba in ancient times. Their form is a compromise achieved through genetic science, one that let them live in a world that looked like it would be devoid of the possibility of civilization. Vastly wise, yet with a thought process completely different from a modern human they are trapped in their current form and are being hunted to extinction by the Xibalbans. The Saqua hold valuable knowledge about the benefits and the cost of living so close to nature ... and are painfully aware of the next phase in the future of their world.

Six great cities and many villages pay tribute to the capital, Xibalba. That tribute comes in the way of crops, raw materials, and slaves. The empire is ruled by a group of mysterious elites, the Lords of Xibalba. Day to day operations are carried out by their representative known as The Hand. The Lords and The Hand are advised by a cadre of oracles, men and women initiated into a sect of intellectuals and seers.

Traditionally, The Lords and The Hand have accepted the guidance of the one great oracle, The Voice. From her station at the center of a huge maze in mountains outside the capital city, The Voice once provided spiritual and intellectual leadership to all of the empire. However, for the last five hundred years the initiation, a process of drugs and mental exercise, has led to the death of all who were found to be potential candidates ... or perhaps The Hand and The Lords simply don't relish taking advice from an enlightened being. No one knows.

While the conservatism of the Lords of Xibalba is such that they have neither noticed nor care ... their society is changing. The cities that pay tribute to them are restless. The long dark winter of their world is ending. Already their people have more grain in their storehouses and more money in their pockets. Attitudes about religion are evolving. All that is needed is something to lift the crushing suspicion under which they have lived, a leader or a religion to inspire hope.

The current level of Xibalban science and technology is adequate but, has been at a standstill for many years. Suspicious through and through, different power blocs keep technology as secret and as separate as they can from one and other, even different neighborhoods in the same city may have incompatible forms of electric power. Transportation technology has been held back by a leadership concerned with insurrection but there are a few rail lines and battery powered land vehicles. The Xibalban military has electric airships using chemical batteries that give them a huge

edge over any restive citizenry but aren't so fast or so numerous that one Lord begins to fear another. Day and night communications are through a telegraph system (no messages are private unless they are in code) that uses flashing light reflected from one station to the next.

The one area where Xibalban science has not lost its edge is the development of medical chemistry, herbs and a science similar to homeopathy. This has not ushered in an age of great health or general quality of life because the elites do not share its results with the masses (nor do they share certain discoveries with each other) but it has led to truly mind expanding drugs and those that can enhance strength and agility to a slight extent. The dark side is that Xibalbans have the potential for a vast and deadly chemical and genetic weapons industry.

The Varanel Guards are the elite of the Xibalban military. They are very tough, very well trained and viewed with great fear by Xibalban society. Each officer must kill a Saqua in the ring before he can enter the ranks of Varanel ... the human is armed, but it is still a fearsome challenge. Once they have graduated they are given a tattoo on each cheek that symbolically stands for the Saqua's snarling teeth. They function as an elite military unit and as the personal guard of the Lords of Xibalba.

From our perspective, Xibalban weapons technology is both advanced and primitive at the same time. No projectile weapon that was designed for the use of an individual, not even a bow, is permitted to either the Xibalban civilians or the military. Yet, heavier, crew served weapons, like extraordinarily high velocity and long range electric rail guns (a more advanced technology than we have), and rocket launchers, are common. An electrically edged weapon that combines aspects of a sword and a whip is the common sidearm.

For many centuries there was a good deal of trade and cultural diffusion through the portals into our world. Though the Xibalbans are racially different from the natives of our north and south America, some of their culture is similar. That similarity is not because our side has taken on their culture or visa versa, it is a complex mixture and the greatest historians would be hard pressed to sort out what came from where. In Mayan myth Xibalba is known as a sort of "underworld" or place of evil and the legendary Mayan Hero Twins once vanquished its rulers. Whether they actually did this or not is an open question. It is obvious, however, that the Mayans had little love for ancient Xibalba.

The Xibalbans understand a great deal about the behavior of the portals. Having a civilization that has been extremely stable for thousands of years has been an advantage to their observations. The so called Mayan calendar owes much of its complexity and accuracy to its having been originally designed by the Xibalbans for the purpose of correlating the interaction of sun spot activity with the opening or closing of the portals between worlds.

Through the major portals in Mexico and the two smaller ones in Utah, Xibalba has a more than one thousand year history of interaction with our world. The differences in weather, culture and technological development have lead to colonization and warfare. Yet the tendency of the portals to naturally cycle open and closed has often made the connection between worlds intermittent, much like that of Europe with a far flung colonial outpost in the age of sail.

Regardless of the fact that many of the Xibalbans are in conflict with our main characters it should be noted that besides the mysterious and tragic there should be many beautiful and magical things about their society. If at all possible there should be balance in how we look at them, we might not want to be them ... but we can look at the complexity of who they are with compassion.

