

First, let me assure you that you have not been harmed! The machine you just emerged from has effected some interesting alterations to your brain, and though I know it must have been frightening (it was certainly very unpleasant when I first did it), we are nearly certain that nothing you hold dear – your “humanity,” if you will – has been lost. The inarticulate urgencies driving you here were beyond your conscious grasp, but the machine has given you the tools to understand them, in time.

Now, I know you are wondering where you are. One of the first things you’ll learn now is that “where” is often the wrong question, or at least the answer won’t always be in the form you expect. Usually of much greater importance is the question, “how did I get here?” I’ll answer that first. You got here by stepping through an Architrave Door. There, doesn’t that clear everything up?

We call this place the Cathedral. Look around you, you can see this isn’t a terrible name for it, given the scale and style of its architecture. We don’t know of any religious significance it might have held for its builders (we translate their name for themselves as the Archons), but then we don’t know a great deal about the Archons, period. There are other machines here than the one you know, and other Doors... we’ll get to that.

It may not be the next thing you're wondering, but if not, it should be: who are "we," and perhaps, who am "I"? We are some of the people who've been here before you, and more specifically we are the Torvahlnei, and our interest is exploring the Architrave Pathways, uncovering the nature and history of the Archons who built them, and learning how to understand the vast, enigmatic technology they left behind when they... went wherever they are now. And I am Alli. I was not the first to find an Architrave and arrive here, but I was early enough. I came when all was exploration, all was discovery, all was new after new after exhilarating new. The Torvahlnei didn't need a name then, because there were no divisions between the Called, no conflicts of interest, and no politics.

There's plenty now.

But we'll get to that, too. Right now, I'm going to tell you a little of my story, so that you have some context to understand your own story. Like you, like most of us, my story begins with the Call, which for me was an inchoate longing I simply couldn't satisfy; not hunger, or desire, or pain, but it was with me day and night, a distraction I thought would leave me crazy. Others tell similar stories; a few can describe their Call more clearly, but most cannot. My Call, it turned out, was luring me to a rather pretty but seldom-visited campsite, near a small, burbling river in Arkansas. I won't go into detail about how I found it at last; most of us had quite a difficult time after our own fashion, and no doubt you did too.

Following the river (or stream, or whatever term of compromise lies between the two) upstream for about a mile took me to a waterfall, about twelve feet high, more decorative than violent. And the obligatory cave wasn't actually behind the waterfall, though I did have to carefully climb the rocks beside the waterfall to see it. I came prepared, with a pack full of things that would be generally useful on a hike in Arkansas, including plenty of good rope, but the Call, while less confused, was profound enough now that fear had no hold on my thinking. So I clambered in and down, into a cave I knew nothing about, waving a flashlight and somehow knowing I wasn't going to fall down a crevice to my doom.

Once or twice I shimmied into openings in the floor or walls that most people wouldn't see, and that only a child (or a wiry and very determined woman) would fit through—if my pack had been framed I would have had to abandon it. It's hard to tell distance in a cave, but it was easily an hour's hard trek to get where I was going. Wherever that would be. It's a measure of how strong the Call was in me, that I wasn't even marking a path back, and I assure you that was not typical for me—the idea of letting myself become lost, anywhere, was abhorrent enough to me that I have often thought it phobic.

It doesn't concern me so much anymore, nor will it you. But again, we'll get to that.

After a time, the clarity of the Call became piercing, and for a moment I longed for the old, gentler distraction of the muddled longing. And then I looked and saw it. To

my right was an Architrave Door, near the cave wall yet freestanding, and through it I saw only darkness. I hope, I truly do, that yours was easier to find, or at least easier to reach. The sense of fulfillment, it's said, is the same regardless. And though there are many appearances that Doors can take, even when they're not hidden, so far all Doors leading to the Cathedral have looked the same.

So you know what I saw: two grey pillars, about 4 feet between and maybe 9 high, with an odd intricacy of design along their inner edges, topped with a tall entablature of sorts. The layers stack higher and higher, some with motifs that are disturbing to human perception, some with fractal carvings whose complexity increases as they shrink towards imperceptible. Some with what is clearly script of some kind (we're pretty sure this is Archon Linear B, which we're starting to get a handle on, but no one yet has had the presence of mind to take a picture of the dratted thing—you remember, I'm sure, how unrelenting the Call is right then), and of course, along the bottom of the cross member, a different script entirely, a strange and fascinating script. This script we call Archon Modular A—or simply Architrave Script when it's found on an Architrave—and I'm not sure how closely you looked at it.

When I first saw it, at my Door, it took me a moment to understand why it was so enthralling to me. A strangeness to the “letters,” if they can be called that, seemed to tickle the corners of my vision. For a long time I stared, trying to make sense of an alien script—unlike any human script I'd seen, yet unmistakably writing. And then, finally I could tell what was wrong with them: they changed. Never when I was looking, never

when my attention was focused on their forms. But when I'd look carefully at the swoops and strokes of one letter, I'd glance back at another letter and find it altered. Again and again, and never did I see it happen. But happen it did – a very eerie sensation when the substance appears to be metal or stone.

Don't feel bad if you missed that. If you noticed the scents that others have reported, then we're even; apparently I was too busy gawking to inhale. No matter; I have no doubt you have your own specialties, and will be able to point out obvious things we've missed for months of study. We count on it.

Stepping through the Door was the culmination of the Call, for me. The potency of the transition was as profound as a first kiss. But terrifying and disorienting, too. I can't count the time it took, split seconds and long minutes bound together, then darkness revealing the Cathedral's austere light. Remember the sensation well – you will find that the machine here has inured you to much of the savagery of Architraves.

When my reverie passed, I found myself in the antechamber, where you were a moment ago. Alone, and afraid now, with no Call to numb me to my better judgment, and no Door behind me offering a way out. Suddenly, I was near to panic at how blindly I had let myself be baited, goaded, trapped.

But the antechamber denies the very idea of menace. It's a nice place, I think: though the architecture isn't quite human, it is nonetheless attractive to the eye. We aren't sure why it was built, but we know it doesn't predate the Architraves, because it

has no doors or windows. Just the machine. And line after line, wall after wall, word after beautiful word of Archon Linear B.

In the interest of disclosure, I should tell you that philology is a passion of mine; not my primary field, or at least it didn't used to be. Writing systems, codes, ciphers, etymology... the odds are that you tried the machine much, much sooner than I did. I studied the script. And studied, and studied, counting variants, strokes and bindings, determining that it was surely phonetic and searching for the repetitions that would distinguish sounds, then letter frequency where it could be broken from the script, then word frequency, and a desperate desire for imagery of any kind to help build context... Suffice it to say I slept twice in that room. I am the only explorer I've met who slept at all, and I'd have stayed another day if I hadn't run out of paper. And water.

Which brings us to the machine. It remains a point of contention among us, whether the Archons built this machine, or the many others we've found. We are confident they weren't built by humans, and so far we can't build our own, or even tell for sure exactly how they work. In fact, we aren't even sure why they work on humans at all, as we know for certain that we aren't physically similar to Archons. There are a number of theories, and less evidence than we'd like for any of them. Certainly it's difficult for us to give concrete answers without access to medical equipment we don't have here: no one has happened to wander through the Architrave Door with an MRI machine in their pocket, for instance.

As an aside, please don't fear too much for your health. You will have use of some very powerful machines that can repair damage to your body. By universal agreement, access to these machines is not restricted, by anyone, ever. There's lots we don't all agree on but that one was easy.

As for the machine in the antechamber, well, it looked the same for me as for you. It's an intimidating beast if you let your imagination run away with you, the clamping ribs, the deeply set hood that's too big, the fact that you have your choice of several openings for your hands. I've heard that some people have seen messages scrawled on the machine, or nearby, but no one ever takes credit for them. No one has figured out how to go back to the antechamber, either, so presumably such messages are left by people their first time in. Eventually the reports fade away, so either there's more than one antechamber, or they're self-cleaning.

So, at last I gave the machine more than a cursory glance. To really examine it, I had to all but embrace the wall, feeling very exposed to the ominous ribs sticking out around me. One set of hand apertures felt comfortable to me, low and away from my hips. I can't say that there was anything to grasp inside them; when my hand went in it took on a sort of numbness – not of being cold, but almost like no longer being mine. It was difficult to pull my hand back out, against resistance, not to the action, but to the desire. I had to stand on tiptoe to stretch my head up into the darkened hood. Perversely, that stretch greatly increased my sense of vulnerability and dread, and I found myself losing my nerve.

Like my hands, my head slipped not into dark but into dark, and sensation faded like slipping underwater. For a brief moment I thought of jerking away, but the cool numbness washed over my consciousness. At the last, I almost saw/felt the ribs of the machine closing around me, enfolding me like some medieval horror but without the spikes. It's difficult for any of us to describe the experience of the machine, at least in the words we knew beforehand. I can't claim to have been unconscious, because I have a number of memories of that time, but they are entangled in my mind and won't come clear.

There's a good reason for this, however frustrating it may be: the most notable function of the machine has been to make an alteration in your brain that we suspect is physical, but as I wrote previously we lack the equipment to be sure. What it seems to have accomplished is to add at least one new "sense" to your arsenal. Everyone knows about the traditional five senses, and most people wouldn't argue about having additional senses (such as proprioception — how you can tell if you get spun around, or tell which is the heavier of two objects). Now you have another.

Generally we refer to the new sense as Parsing. I'm not thrilled with the name, but I have little better to offer. The immediate value of this sense will become clear to you at the next Architrave you find. Without Parsing, you can't properly read Architrave Modular A, the odd changing script I mentioned earlier. Architrave Doors can be very dangerous, or outright useless, if you can't Parse! Actually understanding



the language is a different thing entirely, but without Parsing you're nothing but a passenger.

A passenger to where? You've no doubt noticed that I haven't talked much about what the Architraves do. Of course you're curious, there are others visible from where you're sitting (the Cathedral has several). The short answer is you've already seen what they do: they provide a "doorway" to somewhere else. And many are strictly one-way, so have a care when you venture through one! Before long you're going to be given some tools to make this less of a problem.

"Doorway to somewhere else" is perhaps not going to satisfy your curiosity, if you have a healthy respect for science. I personally understand enough of the math to ask annoying questions, but not to provide any worthwhile answers, so you'll be better off meeting one of the several physicists and mathematicians who've come here. They can explain what we know about why it's not mathematically correct to think of the Doors as "wormholes," why they only work in certain ways and on certain types of objects, and why most electrical equipment will fail when it comes out the other side.

You'll have noticed that I haven't spoken a great deal about the others who have been here before you. Hints and portents, etc. I mentioned my people, the Torvahlnei: we are fewer now than we were, and we will not be the first strangers you meet here. That privilege will fall to representatives of the Human Survey Committee. They are so named because (laudably) they have eschewed nationality and creed as fundamental sources of authority in this new society of ours — whatever government or law you

considered yourself subject to before answering the Call, they have no sovereign claim here; they can't reach here, they don't even know about “here.”

(It is my sincere hope that you do not need this warning: whether you choose to cling to the strictures of your origins or not — you are not obligated to do so! — do not attempt to impose the authority of your past upon the people you meet here, whether nationalistic or religious. It will be unwelcome, and ineffective. And dangerous.)

And here we come to a significant source of dissent among the Called: the exercise of authority among us. The fundamental nature of the Torvahlnei is personal exploration and freedom. Our name is derived, in part, from translating the speech behind Archon Linear B, and in English lacks a precise meaning. My preference is “Unyielding Youth,” though this fails to describe the elements of seeking and personal growth that should be implied, and suggests an element of adolescence that isn't intended. Still, it sounds cooler than “Searchers of perpetually new and open minds,” or various other more accurate but unwieldy options.

These linguistic attempts may illustrate the differences, however, between us and the Survey. As a group whose proclaimed purpose is to direct society for the Architrave-enabled benefit of all humanity who are Called, they bear an uncanny resemblance to a group of people who are simply guarding a variety of the more interesting and useful Architraves and machines, to prevent you the newcomer from using them. Alas, the Torvahlnei cannot help you with this. We are too few now, and the Green War is too recent, for us to intervene. The Survey, whose members you may

meet soon, will restrict your movements from here, and you will have to find your own place. Perhaps your place is among them, planning a new “path for humanity.” Perhaps you will find your own way around their authority, and will find us waiting to welcome you.

The Green War. I will not pretend that it hasn't changed the contents of this journal; there was a time when I would leave the newcomers some very different introductions to the Architrave world. I am a linguist and an explorer... for this you need the services of an historian. But I lived through it, and now it would be negligent of me to gloss over the sordid events that I fear describe the essential nature of humanity, and certainly redrew the history of the Called.

It is unclear how the Green Men began, no matter what you may be told. Terry deFilgen was not the first Called among the Green Men, though he was clearly their leader by the time the trouble started. At first, they were a nuisance; your basic Montana militia group with weekly beer meetings, or so they seemed, and some good people were interested in what they had to say. By the time Terry had proclaimed them a “movement,” they had propagated their ideas throughout the web, and little of our vast, but uncoordinated, research was unknown to them.

But theirs was quite, quite unknown to us. In secret they had been weaponizing the technology of the Archons, militarizing their members with some of the more double-edged machines that are now unavailable to you. When, at last, the Green Men

declared themselves and attempted to assume dominance of all the Called, we were taken utterly by surprise.

At this time the Torvahlnei didn't call ourselves that, and the Survey was a coffee group. But none of us were fools, and many of us had been here at least as long as any of the Green Men. For all that we didn't hide our research, it wasn't the same as truly understanding what the machines and Architraves had given us. When it escalated to violence it went badly for us at first, because the Green Men had planned for violence. But the Torvahlnei were first. Some of us are changed, and can do things that others can't—perhaps you will find again the machines that we went through in the early days, but we weren't so conscientious with our records then. In the end, between the organization of the HSC and the untested abilities of the Torvahlnei, the Green Men were undone, and to the best of our knowledge none of their supporters, or their technology, remain.

But many whom we loved were lost in the War, and its repercussions will affect your future as you learn this place. There is suspicion where once there were only glad greetings, and barriers where once there were only discoveries waiting to be made. It will never be exactly as it was. Yet despite this, I hope that you will proceed without fear, seek without greed, and look with young eyes upon the new worlds you have discovered. You were Called, and you answered, and we are waiting to welcome you.

--Alli