



**Screen Treatment**

***Mystery in the Bowels of the Earth***

by  
Yossi Soika

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**Registration Details:**

**WGAW Screen Treatment Registration #: XXX**

**Genre:** Fantasy, Historical Fiction

**Logline:** How much do you know that's true?

**Summary:**

During the spring of 1968, Dan and Sue, two American high-school students embark on a trip to Israel accompanying Dan's father, a solar power expert, who is attending a conference at the Weizmann Institute.

Soon after arriving in Jerusalem a young street peddler harasses our adventures until they relent, finally buying an old book. The old book turns out to be a mysterious hand-written diary with magical powers. They take the diary to a professor at the Hebrew University to see if he can translate it. The professor seems to think the diary is very old and might even contain maps of ancient Jerusalem.

Dan and Sue are soon introduced to a Spaniard, Arthur D'Acosta, who had originally discovered the

diary, and together they discover the secrets of a bewitched monastery in the Karakoram Mountains of Afghanistan and an enormous cave, illuminated by an enchanted light. The diary seems to hold a secret that dates back over two thousand years to the disappearance of the ten 'lost' tribes of Israel. Mr. D'Acosta exposes the plight of the ten lost tribes and the current location of their descendants living in advanced communities beneath the surface of the earth and his current search for the Tables of the Law.

### **Reviewer Comments:**

“Unique, interesting, and fascinating! That is how I would describe Yossi's "Mystery In The Bowels of The Earth". Moreover, Yossi tells a sweet yet adventure-filled story about a young couple exploring Israel.” — Kimberly Edwards

“Mystery in the Bowels of the Earth for me is a story of perseverance, hope, and what could almost be deemed a miracle is so moving and so inspiring you will feel like cheering at the end. Truly cathartic.” — Terrance Castillo

“Is it a real documented story or a daydream? Was the author telling us about his version of reality or is this just merely for entertainment? Those are some of the things I thought about while I was reading this book! The book is quite imaginative and some points are actually recorded facts in History too!” — Barbara Hernandez

“Filled with adventure, mystery, and humor! I really like the dynamics of this piece by Yossi! I am also greatly impressed by his ideas and concepts. What's more is that, apart from being entertained and immersed, you will become highly knowledgeable! You will learn about Judaism, Jewish culture, and tradition. Furthermore, you will also be able to test your own theories about God and the human mind. It is indeed a POWERFUL BOOK!” — Marsha James

“If you ever wanted to use the words Epic and Brilliant in a book review, Mystery in the Bowels of the Earth is a book that upholds that accolade. It is a fabulous masterpiece of historical fiction, based in Israel hundreds of years ago. The sense of time and place are vividly drawn and the fragility of life shadow each of the characters.” — Elijah Adams

### **Protagonists:**

**Dan:** Caucasian and 16 years old, is the main character and protagonist of the book. He is a high-school student from a small town, Larchmont, in southern New York State. He is quite intellectual with interests in the sciences.

**Sue:** Caucasian and 16 years old, is the constant companion of Dan throughout the adventure. Pale skinned with curly black hair. Also very intelligent, she is somewhat more worldly than Dan and has a touch more common sense. She and Dan share an innocent, rather 'proper' boyfriend-girlfriend relationship. She possesses a sense of style in terms of her clothing and manners.

**Dan's Father:** Caucasian, in his early 40s. A scientist - solar power researcher – intelligent, skeptical but trusting of his son. Smartly attired in the slim suits and ties common in the late 1960s.

**Professor Meir Alon:** Middle Eastern with olive skin, high forehead with greying dark short but unkempt hair. Wears white linen jackets and trousers with pastel blue and pink shirts with loose collars.

### Antagonists:

**Arthur (Arturo) D'Acosta:** a Spanish citizen of Jewish descent, aged 25. Good looking, light tanned skin, dark-haired, and dark eyes. dignified-looking man., six feet tall, his black hair neatly combed back.

**The Young Peddler:** Middle eastern with olive skin, about 12 years of age and about 5' 2". Armenian-speaking. His English is basic and somewhat stuttered.

**Mr. Jacobian:** The peddler's Uncle, also Armenian-speaking. Wears normal Arab-style clothing.

**Bernhard Boan:** The crazy Hotel Manager. Dark-haired with a thin mustache. Light-skinned. An explosive character in his mid-40s.

**The Chief of Thieves:** A huge burly man who wore an incredible mustache. Loud, boisterous, and dominating. Has an air of untouchability about him. He is well-known in the Old City but does not seem to be concerned about the authorities, police, etc.

**Katolipus son of Eucalyptus:** A slender man who wears a silk robe and wearing strange slippers, the type that curls up at the front. Speaks good English. Greek Orthodox.

### Other Characters:

**Zvi Ben Yosef:** A Scribe of the ten lost tribes, in his late-40s. A calm traditional Jewish man, smartly dressed in the clothes of the period of the exile.

**The Son of the Planets / The Hovering Being:** A highly advanced human being. Whose white almost appearance has a certain radiance, definitely other-worldly. Dressed in a silvery metallic Star-Trek style uniform.

**The Hostel owner in Srinagar:** A short, thin, dark-skinned man, with black, shiny eyes, and who ran diligently and quickly all the tasks of the riverboat/floating hostel.

**Raja:** A tall Kashmiri man, fluent in English yet obviously poor. The head porter for the trip into the mountains.

**The Sacred Man:** He was dressed in a white robe tall and as thin as a stick. His skin was dry as wood, his big, brown eyes were sunken in their sockets. His English was fluent

### Locations/Settings:

**Larchmont, NY, USA** – Dan's home where he discusses the trip to Israel with his father and then calls Sue. As Dan and his father drive to the neighboring town of Mamaroneck.

**New York City, NY, USA** – on the plane to Israel with the Statue of Liberty in the background.

**Lod Airport - Now Ben Gurion International Airport, Israel** – Alighting from the plane in warm sunshine, followed by meeting the crazy Taxi driver. The final scene returns to this location, specifically a coffee shop across for the exit of the arrivals area.

**Plane Interior:** For the lift-off from JFK, the approach/landing at Ben Gurion, and the return lift-off from Ben Gurion.

**Hotel 1** – Initial hotel upon arrival, where the explosion happens. Managed by Bernhard Boan.

**Old City** – The setting of several scenes. Markets, alleyways, cafes, the houses of :

- 1) The peddler's uncle's house.
- 2) The Den of the Respectful Thieves
- 3) The house of Katolipus, son of Eucalyptus
- 4) The house with the well.

**Hebrew University, Jerusalem** – Front steps, reception, a lecture hall with Prof. Alon's office.

**Hotel 2** – The much more luxurious and more modern hotel that Dan's father moves them into.

**Hotel 3** – Where Mr. D'Acosta is staying. A three-star, establishment a little older and more cramped.

**The Dead Sea** – Where Dan and Sue swim.

**Masada** – The fortress, especially the water cisterns, summit, and cable-cars. The nearby restaurant and hostel. Also, the secret room under the water cistern.

**The D'Acosta Home in Spain** – His 13<sup>th</sup> birthday and later discussions with his father. An ancient building with an enclosed courtyard, three stories tall.

**Floating Hostel** – A converted riverboat that D'Acosta stays at in Srinagar.

**Ronda** – which was a tiny town situated in the middle of the Karakoram Range, or the Black Mountains on the Indus River, which flows next to the city's main road that leads to the neighboring country of Afghanistan.

**The Hut of the Sacred Man** – A simple hut up in the mountains, with doors made of vertical rough-hewn thick tree branches that open outwards to expose a rectangular room slightly deeper than it is wide with a wooden simple throne.

**The Mountains** – a stream that flows out of the side of the mountain through a tunnel they have to walk through, ending in a pool on the other side. A deep gorge crossed by a rope bridge.

**The Bewitched Monastery** – There is an abandoned stone building outside the monastery itself. A complex of rooms, tunnels, libraries, catacombs, etc. inside the mountain.

**The land of the Ten Lost Tribes** – A beautiful, lush land with strange fauna and the white building with the auditorium.

## Act 1 – The Setup

Dan's father is invited to attend a conference on solar power in Israel and convinces his father to honor an earlier promise to be allowed to accompany him on a trip abroad if his school grades were high. Some further persuasion sees Dan's friend Sue joining them on the trip. They fly out of JFK International Airport on an El Al plane headed to Ben Gurion Airport.

Upon arrival, they are greeted by fine, sunny weather and an overenthusiastic taxi driver who in broken English extols the many tourist sites they should allow him to take them to. These descriptions fall on increasingly deaf ears as they head directly to Jerusalem. They arrive safely at their hotel and settle in.

A short while later, after a short nap, Dan and Sue take their first trip into the Old City. They find themselves walking through the narrow alleyways and enjoying the sights, smells, and sample local food. Soon they become the objects of attention for a group of young peddlers whom they proceed to elude, escaping to a small coffee shop. When they go back out into the alley another young peddler approaches them and they end up buying a small well-worn book which Dan hands to Sue and asks her to throw it in the first trashcan she sees. Walking around some more they decide to return to the hotel.

Back at the hotel, Dan discovers that Sue had not disposed of the worthless book as he had requested. Dan proceeds to examine the book discovering that it is either a handwritten diary or notebook. Unable to remove pages from the diary he tries to burn it, eventually causing an explosion that hurls him into the hallway and earns him a trip to the hospital accompanied by Sue. His father arrives at the hospital but believes Dan is in shock.

The next morning Dan's father and Sue collect him from the hospital and take Dan back to the hotel. His father does not understand what happened and the room seems to have been totally repaired, there are no signs of damage. Later Dan is collected by a hotel worker and visits the hostel security officer and then the hotel manager to explain what happened. The hotel manager is enraged and demands that they vacate the hotel. That evening they transfer to a new hotel in the western portion of Jerusalem.

The following morning Sue suggests that they take the diary to a professor at the Hebrew University in the hope he will translate it. Given a photocopy of the book, Professor Alon confirms that it is a diary written in ancient Hebrew and that he will contact them in three days' time.

The following day Dan and Sue spent more time in Jerusalem. When they to the hotel at lunchtime, there is a message to call the professor. That afternoon they return to the University to see the professor where he asks them more about and examines the original. He then asks them to find the peddler and discover where he got it from. He then swears them to secrecy.

The next morning Dan and Sue go back to the Old City to search for the peddler. After walking for two hours they decide to call it a day and return to the hotel to find a note from Dan's father that we would be staying in the city of Rehovot for a couple of days.

The following morning they call and update the professor before continuing the search for the peddler. This time riding donkeys they locate the peddler and his uncle and are taken to their house. There, the boy tells his story in Armenian with the uncle translating it into English. He tells of a stranger being robbed by a local gang of thieves, whom he followed to their lair. When he opened the stolen briefcase

the Chief of Thieves was bitten by a small snake and died, scaring away the other thieves who ran out past the boy. The boy entered the liar and recovered the diary and fled home. Confiding in his uncle he agreed to remain hidden for three days during which the uncle buried the diary. The boy recovered it and tried to sell it without success until Dan and Sue bought it. Dan asks if the boy might accompany them to see the professor, which is agreed for the following day.

Awaking early, they call and update the professor before heading to the peddler's home to collect him. Instead, he takes them to the neighboring home of Katolipus who bores them with details of his family history. They are asked to wait as there is about to be a meeting with 'the stranger', who is Arthur D'Acosta. Once the opportunity presents Dan talks to D'Acosta and arranges for them and the professor to meet at his hotel the following morning.

Back at the hotel, they call the professor who suggests that D'Acosta is a Marrano, which is a Spaniard who outwardly Christian is secretly Jewish.

When they arrive at D'Acosta's hotel and whilst waiting, the professor tells Dan and Sue about the contents of the diary, which includes a story of the visitor from space. D'Acosta arrives and retrieves the diary and abruptly leaves with a promise that he will be in touch to explain more once an important task is completed. This upsets the professor. After arriving back at Dan and Sue's hotel they agree to confront D'Acosta at this hotel at 5 a.m. the next day. Dan and Sue spend the rest of the day exploring the area around the hotel.

## **Act 2-The Conflict**

When they arrive to confront D'Acosta the following morning he is nowhere to be found. The professor becomes frustrated and angry, declining to continue involvement in the quest. He gives a copy of his translation of the diary to Dan and Sue.

Back at their hotel, Dan and Sue start to read the translation of the diary. They learn that it was written by Zvi Ben Yosef a Scribe and member of the ten lost tribes of Israel that were taken captive by the Assyrians. The diary tells of a visit from a Hovering Being after the tribes had arrived at the Great Cave located under the mountains of Afghanistan. The being tells the scribe that it is older than the planet Earth and comes from a faraway region of space. Due to its own overenthusiasm, the being and its spacecraft suffered an accident that left them stranded in our solar system. During the being's later appearance on Earth, it became an object of veneration, and religions formed to worship it, much to its disdain. It tells the scribe of many advanced technologies and the life cycles of planets and of his own people and their homeworld, which was devastated by war and had to be moved to a new location in space that it might recover. Reading the translation has left Dan and Sue with more questions than they had previously.

Another day of sightseeing ends and they have dinner with Dan's father who informs them that he needs to extend their trip by an additional week. He encourages them to undertake some trips further afield whilst he is busy with his work.

Two days later sees Dan and Sue joining a minibus tour to the Judean Desert, the Dead Sea, and Masada. They bathe in the Dead Sea and soon reach the fortress of Masada. Soon after they reach the summit platform of the fortress Dan notices D'Acosta on the plain below. The couple descends to the plain and follows D'Acosta and his group of acquaintances to a nearby restaurant where he ignores

them. They then follow him to an adjacent hostel where they lose track of him. They return to the top of Masada and end up exploring the fortresses' water cisterns based on a sighting of D'Acosta entering them. The pair end up falling down a distance in the darkness and wake up in a hospital, where a nurse tells Dan that they were found at the base of the Snake Path by D'Acosta who alerted the medics, enraging Dan. They remain in the hospital for 3 days.

Arriving back at the hotel in Jerusalem, Dan called the professor to update him but he shows little interest. Annoyed Dan and Sue acquire some climbing equipment and head back to Masada and the cistern. This time they have flashlights and do not find any holes in the floor. Not finding any way to leave the cistern they climb back out and rest at the nearby hostel overnight.

The early next morning they return to the cistern and continue to look for clues. This time Dan hammers the floor and walls until on the verge of giving up D'Acosta appears and leads them blindfolded to a subterranean house.

### **Act 3-The Resolution**

It is now that D'Acosta starts to reveal his story and secrets. But before he does he gives Dan and Sue each an identical black ring that will kill them if they share his secrets with anyone. He describes his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday – his bar mitzvah – even though he had thought his family was Catholic Christians. His discovery that his family were Marranos, Jews who had been in hiding in plain sight for nearly 600 years.

He tells of his intense study of all things Jewish especially of a book containing the locations of people who claimed Jewish descent in the Caucasus Mountains and Afghanistan. He describes how he traveled to India and then ventured north into Jammu and Kashmir before traveling to a small town at the base of the Karakorum Range where he put together a trekking team and met a strange holy man. His guide told him the story of his grandfather, a local herdsman, driving his flock into the mountains and coming across a great cave, and about the legend of a large tribe who had arrived millennia before and disappeared into the mountains.

D'Acosta then recants the story of his trip into the mountains, including a trip through a flooded mountain tunnel to a deep gorge crossed by a rope bridge, where he left his guide and team behind, as he went on alone to find the Bewitched Monastery. Finding no entrance to the Monastery, which is built into the near-vertical mountainside, he slept nearby. After a day of trying to find an entrance into the mountain, he slept outside again. During that night he was disturbed by the approach of a gorilla-like being. How on the following morning he was found by an old man in a white cloak who led him through the solid rock and into the monastery. Soon after, he was introduced to three elders one of whom speaking in fluent Spanish knew a lot about him and his quest and welcomed him as part of their family.

With so many questions, D'Acosta accepted a new communal routine and utilized a large library. After a few weeks, he began looking for answers to his questions. How he found a maze of tunnels that eventually led to other rooms that he spent months mapping but still did not find what he was looking for. Frustrated he met with the three masters again and asked to leave. They convinced him to stay and search some more. Eventually, he found a hidden opening to a tunnel that led him to some catacombs where he found a leather bag containing scrolls in ancient Hebrew. Translating them, he found that they contain the names of the lost tribes. All the time he wondered if he was being watched by the other people in the monastery and was about to be ejected from the monastery and left to die in the mountains.

D'Acosta was then approached by the man who helped him enter the monastery, who led him to an even larger library and a meeting with another master who asked him about the motivations for his quest. He was then given access to the larger library to continue his research. A few days later he was shown a cave with a menorah mosaic floor that was a repository of scrolls. The scrolls told of the early days of the Israelites in the Great Cave. Further wanderings in nearby tunnels led to the discovery of the sarcophagus of the scribe, Zvi Ben Yosef, and the diary that Dan and Sue bought from the peddler. Most importantly, he realized that the diary holds the secret to the location of the Tables of the Law.

Once he had completed the translation of the diary and had decoded the images, he was taken on a journey to a place below the monastery that included riding with his companion on a section of floor that descended a long way down to a new land, beautiful and green. This journey ended at a magical building where he was introduced to the Board of the Ten Tribes in an auditorium full of people all in white robes. Having found the Land of the Ten Lost Tribes, he was sworn to secrecy and given his own black ring. The Masters then recanted the history of the Jewish people, the Assyrian exile, the journey into the mountains, and their development therein. They also told him that they have been watching developments in the outside world with concern and therefore chose to remain hidden.

He proceeds to tell Dan and Sue about an episode where the scientists of the lost tribes captured the Son of the Planets around a thousand years ago and the revelations related to them. In closing, he tells Dan and Sue that he does not have much time left to complete his task.

The three then return to Jerusalem in a taxi and begin tracing a path using the directions in the diary. Along the way, they find a large, buried stone engraved with an arrow that guides them until they come to a stone wall. They awake the homeowners and say that they seek an ancient well. They are invited in and entertained before being shown the well. Left alone D'Acosta, Dan and Sue stand at the well and discuss the situation. D'Acosta tells of the tunnel system built by the Jews during the conflict with the Romans. D'Acosta then enters the well without opening it; he simply passes down through the stone lid. No alone, Dan and Sue make their way back to the hotel.

The following morning sees Dan and Sue reunited with Dan's father as they prepare to head to the airport. At the airport, they are having coffee when they see D'Acosta greeting a young woman coming out of the arrivals area and quickly leaving the airport with her. Dan and Sue board their flight and watch the airport shrinking below them, their heads still filled with questions.

### **Author Bio/Head Shot – Yossi Soika**



Yossi Soika lives in Israel where he is an author, wood-carver, sculptor, and former gymnast. As a young man, Yossi spent a year in the United States of America and studied electrical engineering. Beginning his career as an electrical engineering consultant, he was involved in and managed the construction of multiple factory complexes across Israel.

He was born a year after the end of World War II when his parents made their way from Russia to an immigrant camp in Germany. Two and a half years later their journey led them to Israel. From the age of four, he has carried with him the first memories of the neighborhood of small huts in Afula. That



desolated hut neighborhood amidst the fields nourished him with the entire materials for the dreams that attend him to this day.

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