

## Interlude I1

### October 24, 1984 AD, Grandview Nursing Home

Mr. Hoo Nun studied the nurse's expression as he finished his narration. She stood alone with him in the room. It was well past her shift end and the other nurse had long since left. Mr. Hoo Nun said the last few words of the story slowly, waiting, watching, "The ruins, like a silent witness to all that had transpired, fell asleep once more." Then he saw it: the glint in her eye and the slight tug of a smile on the corners of her mouth. "Since you seem so patient to listen to an old man's babbling, I'll let you in on a secret." He nodded towards seven spiral notebooks at his bedside. "There's more, if you want to read them. I have very good penmanship. It should be easy to read."

"Sure. I'd love to." With a curt nod and a, "Thank you," she picked up two notebooks titled "Chapter 2: The Salmonil" and "Chapter 3: The Way of the Erdi Desert." She flipped through the first notebook and slipped them under her arm with another book she grabbed from the cart, her anthropology book. She had finished her nursing degree but wanted to take some *fun* courses. She and her husband had signed up for a *dig* in the summer and she wanted to be ready for it. Stories of origins fascinated her. "Oh no," she said looking at her watch. "I didn't realize how late it was. My husband will be wondering where I am. Thanks again for the stories, the first one was ... interesting." She smiled and headed for the door.

"By the way," he added, making her pause and turn, "I didn't catch your name."

She lifted up her nametag. "Yoder, Carol Yoder."

"Thank you, Mrs. Yoder."

"You're welcome, good night." She turned and walked to the door.

"I might need some help with grammar," he added leaning forward. "English is not my first language."

She stopped in the doorway turning her head halfway back. "No? What is, Chinese?"

“No,” he chuckled.

She turned and walked out the door.

He leaned back and smiled to himself. “Salmi is.”

\* \* \* \*

### **The Yoders' Home**

Nurse Carol Yoder curled upon the couch up with the first of Mr. Hoo Nun's stories. Her husband, an electrical engineer, was pre-occupied with the computer in their bedroom. He was trying to interface an alarm system to the serial port of his IBM PC – not that they needed additional security in their apartment. They had no children to interrupt them and with her husband busy with his own project; it would make for a deliciously long evening. The rain pattered on the window behind her and her favorite tape was playing on the stereo as she began to read....

