



## **A Lonely Man On A Wakeful Road**

**by Dan Ford**

**An Episodic Adventure**

**Episode #5**

### **Another Date With Gaia**

*In Episode Four, Matt had reached what he considered the mid-way point in his Belizean Vision Quest. He was treating himself to a stay at a casually luxurious tropical resort called the Blancaneaux Lodge in the Mountain Pine Ridge area of the Maya Mountains. Blancaneaux was everything he had anticipated. He was on his last evening at the resort, and he was enjoying a glass of wine in an open-sided*

*palm-thatched structure called a palapa. It was situated at the base of a beautiful waterfall and meandering watercourse called the Privassion Creek.*

*While enjoying both the location and his glass of chardonnay, a beautiful wild tropical cat called an ocelot had appeared and then left the top of the waterfall and made its way down to the palapa. Matt was surprised to see it coming up the steps and onto the palapa floor, where it laid down and then, in an amazing and brilliant transfiguration, morphed into a beautiful woman with silvery-blue hair. Matt had experienced this once before at Muckelhany Lagoon and knew what was taking place. He smiled and held out his glass of wine to her and said, "Its great to see you again, Gaia. Would you care to have a glass of wine with me?"*

*And here again, we will leave the rest of this storytelling to Matt. He begins here.*

I was so happy to see Gaia again. She had originally led me to Mucklehany Lagoon and loaned me her super-jaguar to play with and sleep with and learn from. I, of course, would not even have gone to Mucklehany if she had not lured me there with soft mental urgings, sort of like a siren's song. I offered her a glass of wine, knowing full well that she would not drink one, being a spiritual being and all.

But then, to my surprise, Gaia walked over to me and sat down in a chair. Without any comment, she raised her hand that was magically holding a glass of chardonnay. Then she shrugged and said, "I really think I would prefer a pinot noir, and suddenly the wine in her glass turned a ruby red color. She smiled at me, offered up her glass, and provided a toast. "Here's to our meeting again, Matt, and perhaps we can offer a toasting click to my brother as well. I understand you two got along fine."

"Better than fine, Gaia. He is the best guy I ever met, and the few days we spent together ended up being some of the finest and most informative in my life."

"He has that effect on people," Gaia said with a big smile. "He said the same things about you too."

"I'm sure he didn't, but thank you anyway. I'm also sure you didn't just come by to tell me about exaggerations your brother may or may not have made."

"But he actually did say he liked you, but you have to understand that you and Kareem have had a past together, and actually several pasts, so he's not very objective in the matter."

"What do you mean, Gaia? He didn't say anything about us having past relationships. I understand the concepts regarding past-life incarnations, but why wouldn't he mention anything about us to me. We spent days together in the boat and several days traveling the Spiritual Timeline together. He never said anything about previous relationships."

"Well, Matt! Kareem is a sensitive soul! He knows you are as well. And let me see. I know that you were married to each other, and you lived in some dreary farming village in Russia back in 1720. You were his wife, and you had a bunch of kids together. And then there was the time you were both men and lovers in the Congo. That was in 1875, and you had a terrible time keeping your stuff hidden. I see you didn't manage that very well as you were both beheaded for that proclivity. Oh! And there are some other relevant events that I could mention."

At that point, I interrupted Gaia and said that this was quite enough of those observations. As much as I liked Kareem, I was pretty sure that I didn't want to imagine him in those more intimate juxtapositions.

"I see where you are going, Gaia, but that still doesn't tell me why you are here. I have to believe that it is for something more important than reincarnation chitter-chatter."

"It's not chitter-chatter, Matt. Throughout these reincarnation existences, you expand your consciousness, concepts, perceptions, and values. You learn to avoid self-adopted restrictions, and you grow spiritually. You learn to step aside from limiting conceptions and dogmas. And the fact that you were leading my sainted brother astray in many of those lifetimes has relevance to me."

"And I thought that I really liked you, Gaia. But please, please get on with telling me the real reason you are here."

"Oh, all right, Matt. You don't give me any leeway to have fun, even while I'm working very hard to help you.

"What hard? You haven't done anything but drink two pinot noirs and impune my reputation since you got here.

Oh! Sorry about that! Let me have another glass of wine, and we will get to the reason I came here to ask you a favor.”

"A favor? How on earth could I do a favor for you when you are a goddess or something.”

"I told you before that I am not a goddess, even though I kinda look and act like one.”

"Are you getting drunk, Gaia? You are acting and sounding kinda funny.”

"Old habits from previous lives die-hard Matt. Perhaps I shouldn't have had that second pinot noir." She said that as another full glass appeared in her hand. Then she smiled and began to laugh. "No, I am not getting drunk, but I could if I wanted to. I'm just trying to have a little fun with you.

"Thank God!" Matt replied. "I'm not sure how I could deal with a drunken discarnate.”

They both laughed at that thought, and then Gaia continued. "As you know, Matt, the reason we have gotten together with you during this Vision Quest was to help you with your spiritual needs and ultimately with your spiritual evolution. It's what we do. And the same thing needs to apply to you as well. You have to pay it forward, so to speak. As you learn to function spiritually, so should you teach others what you have learned. Do you understand?”

"Yes! I do.”

"Kareem had introduced you to the act of Spiritual Traveling, and initially, you have used that talent to observe and analyze only. But when we were with you, we were also involved with teaching you. We want you to understand that you can and must do the same thing as well. Its time for you to multitask while you are traveling within the Timeline.”

"I don't know how much use I could be to anyone, Gaia. I am pretty new at this stuff, as you know. But I would be OK with trying to do anything that I can do. What did you have in mind?”

"I won't give you any details or instructions at the moment, Matt. But I know you will be leaving here in the morning and heading by foot to the Caracol ruins. When you arrive there, you will find out on your own, and in your own time, what your challenges will be. If you need any major assistance, you can call on Kareem or me, but it is best to handle it on your own and handle it without our help. You learn better by structuring your own solutions than you do by being told what to do by us or anyone else."

"Well, that seems like a lot more cloak and dagger than I need, Gaia, but I'm willing to let this mystery play out and see what the challenges will be. But can't you even give me a teeny hint?"

"Nope! Sorry, Matt!"

"OK! Would you like another pinot noir, Gaia? I wish I could have another glass of wine with you as well.

"I would be glad to have one more drink before I leave, and I hope you will agree to join me." And as she said that, my empty glass was magically filled to the brim, and it was chilled to perfection. Gaia was a good friend to have drinks with.

We spent the next half hour talking about stuff. Nothing earth-shattering, and then Gaia said she needed to get onto other tasks. She told me that she loved me, and I returned the sentiment. She then did her glowing gold thing and transmogrified in that beautiful ocelot and was quickly gone.

The ocelot leaped up on my lap, settled own into a ball, and sort of fell asleep as all cats seemed to like doing. I sat in my chair, petting the ocelot and gazing out at the fantastic waterfall and creek water flowing by me. As I continued sipping on my cold wine, I marveled at how wonderful the creation of this world can be if only we let it do its thing. I also began to get excited about what wonders Gaia and Kareem had in store for me in the coming days.

The next morning, after a light breakfast, I threw on my backpack and headed out for my walk to Caracol. This is a large ancient Mayan archaeological site located south of the town of San Ignacio. It rests on an elevation 1600 feet above sea level in the foothills of the Maya Mountains. Caracol was one of the most important political centers of the Maya during the Classic Period, and it covered an area much larger than present-day Belize City. It supported more than twice the modern city's population. I was very excited to see what these ruins

would be like in the restored condition. Of course, thanks to Kareem, I can now travel on the spiritual Timeline to Caracol's heyday. I could see what it is like when it was in its full glory. That is wonderful, but so is being in this present-day archaeological site.

I found my way from Blancaneaux to the Caracol Road, leading me to the ruins in the Chiquibul forest reserve. The walk there was great and full of nature's sights, sounds, and smells to absorb and enjoy. The road was extremely rough, and when you saw a car traversing it, the people inside looked as though they were being tossed around on a theme park ride. After seeing that, I was glad I was walking my way to the ruins. But there were few automobiles and even fewer people to see on this trek. I figured that it would take me nine hours more or less to walk to Caracol, and that depended on the cadence I could maintain. When I got there, I would search for a safe, elevated spot and overnight there in my sleeping bag.

Eventually, I did arrive, no worse for the wear and tear on my feet. The place was almost empty. It was the end of the day. There were Belize Defense Force military personnel stationed there to protect the tourists from possible danger. This was particularly needed because some Guatemalan bad guys had a habit of robbing or kidnapping tourists for ransom. The BDF soldiers essentially ignored me, and they were focused on leaving for the day. I stayed out of their sight because I wanted to remain within Caracol, and didn't want to deal with arguing with them about staying within the ruins all night.

The Caracol Mayan ruins were magnificent, to say the least. Its largest building was named Canna or more commonly, the Sky Palace. It is still the tallest man-made structure in Belize. I decided to climb its very steep steps to reach the top and deployed my sleeping bag on an open ledge. The view of the surrounding forest was stunning. The breeze was great and relatively cool. This appeared to be a very open, safe place to rest for the night.

The moon was nearing its fullest phase, and the sky was cloudless that night. The entire city was bathed in bright moonlight, and it was a magnificent atmosphere. Although I was almost ready to drift off to sleep because of my long and arduous walk that day, I decided to see if I could send my consciousness up into the sky to see all of Caracol from a greater height. It worked, and I was immediately out of my body and suspended several hundred feet over the Sky Palace. It was a phenomenal experience.

Then, when I looked down on the pyramid, I noticed someone climbing the stairs, heading for the top of the Sky Palace and the ledge I was lying on. This alarmed me, so I somehow retracted my astral cord and returned to my body. I sat up just as a young man arrived on the top level.

He looked to be in his mid twenties at most. He was only slightly out of breath after that strenuous climb. He had to be in excellent shape. He was a mixture of Black and Latino in appearance and exceptionally handsome. His irises were a reflective black, and he had refined but quite masculine facial features. I wondered what a model was doing climbing pyramids in Belize in the middle of the night.

I stood up and looked directly into his eyes, and asked, "What are you doing here?"

He returned the question with a slightly broken Spanish accent but still speaking quite good English. "I might ask you the same question? I don't think you own this place."

I told him that I was getting ready to go to sleep and that this archeological site is closed for the night. I also said I was trekking across Belize, and this was one of my desired stops.

He nodded his head to let me know that he understood and then said. "That sleeping bag looks comfortable. Do you have room for me in it?"

I told him that I most certainly did not, but now I remembered what Gaia had said about having a challenge while I was here in Caracol. Perhaps this could be it. So I said, "You could use my folded-up tent for a bed-base and place it several feet away, by that wall over there. Its cool but not very cold up here on top of this pyramid, so you should be comfortable enough. I can't very well tell you that you have to leave a place that I don't own."

He replied, "Thank you". Then after a slight hesitation, he said. "This is very kind of you. Do you have anything to eat?"

I was caught off guard by this quick and sort of pushy response to my act of generosity, but considered that he might be hungry enough to ask for something to eat. I told him that I had some Vienna Sausages. He told me that he loved them and that these sausages were one of his favorite things to eat. That brought a smile to

my face, and I fished two cans out of my backpack along with two small bottles of water. I handed one can of sausages and a bottle of water to him, and he thanked me. He rewarded me with a broad grin.

While we were eating, I asked my guest what his name was. He said that it was Zander and he asked me for mine. I told him. Then we continued eating while glancing at each other quite often. I found myself disconcerted as I looked into his beautiful eyes. The rest of the time we looked out over the Caracol ruins and the surrounding rain forest and made short talk about the sights and sounds in this environment.

I asked him how he happened to come to Caracol, and he said that he was unsure and couldn't actually give me a good reason. He was very much at loose ends at the present time. He had lost his mother, father, and brother in a car accident three years ago. And now he recently lost his best friend and lover two months ago and was trying to put his thinking and life back together. I could understand by listening and looking at him that this was not an easy task. He told me that he lived in San Ignacio and had been working as a journalist. He had turned in his resignation and was attempting to find out what his life would be about for the future.

I was beginning to feel very sorry for him and more comfortable being around him. I thought about Gaia's concerns and couldn't for the life of me see what kind of challenge this was, for me, if indeed this was to be a challenge. We suddenly heard some noises coming from the ground level, and it seemed as though it was originating from the center of the city square.

As I said, the moonshine was very bright, and we could see five men quite clearly that were entering the center of the square. They searched, looking upwards to see if anything or anybody was at the top of the pyramids.

Zander appeared very concerned. I looked at him and asked why he was so nervous. He looked at me and said that he was sorry that he had placed me in such a bad position. It wasn't intentional. He said he had no idea that anyone was up here at the top of Sky Palace. He stopped talking, and it was obvious that he was considering his next move.

I asked him who those men were and why he was so concerned. He answered, "They are members of a Guatemalan drug cartel, and they are searching for me. I had been exposing them in the paper, and they were seeking to stop me



and kill me. They had murdered my lover. We worked together at the paper together, and now they were after me. That is why I had resigned from the paper and was getting ready to leave for Belize City when they showed up at my home. I ran out the back before they came in, left San Ignacio on foot, and headed into the jungle. I didn't know where I was going to run, but I kept getting these urges in my mind to head for Caracol. It didn't make sense to me, but it seemed that I had no other choice. It actually made a little sense, though, as there are always BDF at Caracol to protect the tourists from Guatemalan kidnappers, and I could get some protection from them. Unfortunately, it was after quitting time that I arrived here, so I decided that I would be safer at the top of the Sky Palace, and could wait on the BDF coming to work in the morning. I was wrong, and I am so sorry to involve you in all this, Matt.

I reached over and laid my hand on Zander's forearm. I was beginning to see that a challenge was indeed upon us. And that it was apparently going to be up to me to help resolve it. I said to Zander, "Try not to worry, Zander. We have friends that might be willing to help us out here."

Zander looked at me most strangely and said. "I hoped your friends come well-armed, as those guys have AK47s among other weaponry. And we have none unless you have something stuffed in your backpack."

So here I found myself thrust into the role of a rescuing hero, and I considered myself the furthestmost thing from being a hero as anyone I ever knew. What was I to do? I could call on Gaia or Kareem, but Gaia said they wanted me to handle this challenge independently unless I couldn't. But could I?

But suddenly I thought of a good friend. Someone that I had slept with twice, and that usually makes someone a good friend. Doesn't it?

And once more, I reached over to grab Zander's forearm and asked him to stand back from the ledge so the bandolier wearing Desperados below couldn't see us. He looked strangely at me, but my instructions made sense, so he did as I said. I then told him to shut his eyes and not to open them until I told him to. Once more, I wasn't exactly making sense, but he did as I asked him to.

I heard those Desperados yelling and starting to run up the long steps towards the top. They must have seen us! Then I used my will, as Kareem had instructed me to, and asked for Gaia's jaguar to appear. Without the shimmering aura stages that I had witnessed in the past, my jaguar was now standing beside

me. He was looking even larger and more impressive than before. His beautiful golden eyes looked up at me as if to ask what I wanted. I merely thought what I wanted, and he walked over the top of the steps and looked downward at the Desperados who were heading up the stairs.

He roared, and they stopped dead in their tracks. Then two of them lifted their rifles and shot at the jaguar. He immediately launched himself down the stairs at them. I was so horrified that I ran to the top of the pyramid's steps to look down. I couldn't breathe for a few seconds and thought I surely had a heart attack.

Zander, of course, could not stay back against the wall with his eyes closed per my instructions, and he ran to stand beside me at the top of the stairs. We both saw my jaguar already near the bottom of the steps. The Desperados were flying in every direction like so many bowling pins being hit by a bowling ball. My jaguar may have been only a spiritual apparition, but he somehow was able to cause physical impacts against an enemy. Three of those Desperados had lost their AK47s, and my jaguar wasn't about to let them retrieve them. He roared and chased and mauled them whenever possible, and they scattered into the jungle-like so many Belizean agoutis.

I threw up my Vienna Sausages at this point. So much for being a hero. Zander came over to me and gave me a giant hug despite the smell. I turned towards the steps and looked down to see my jaguar heading back up to us in giant bounds taking fifteen steps at a time. He soon arrived at our ledge and rubbed his head against my legs.

"I love you too, my friend," I said to the jaguar. "Thank you for saving us." Zander walked over to the jaguar, tentatively hovered his hand above the cat's head, and looked at me. I nodded to him to go ahead, and Zander gently petted the jaguar's head and then his back. He looked at me and said, "I had no idea that you had such beautiful and awesome friends Matt. Thank you both so very much."

"You are welcome, Zander. But I think we should consider leaving here to lose your fan club. Once they get over being terrified and realize that none of them have been killed, they will resume their search for you here at Caracol. I suggest we leave immediately for Rio Frio Cave. It backtracks us a little, and it's not likely that those Desperados would think you would go there. We can talk about a more permanent solution for your problem along the way."

"I think you are right, Matt. We need to get out of here, but why are you taking me on as your responsibility? I am a target for a large group of extremely bad people, making you a target as well if we are together. I've already lost someone because of that, and even though I don't know you well, I can't take the risk that you could get harmed or worse. I already owe you and your jaguar more than I can repay."

I looked at Zander's face and could see moisture collecting in his beautiful eyes. I told him that I think I knew something that he didn't know, and that was that he had been sent to me for a reason. I also told him that it would be a fairly long and complex story and that it would be best for us to get our escape underway. I asked him to trust me a little more, and perhaps a proper plan would become clear to us. I promised that he would learn more while we were hiking to the Rio Frio Cave.

Our trip to Rio Frio would take longer than it would have if I had been traveling alone. Zander was younger and in very good shape, but I was the more experienced hiker, and I was dressed for the task. He was wearing the same street clothes he had on when he went to work every day. Except, thankfully, for the athletic shoes that he was wearing when the drug cartel invaded his apartment. He had planned on going for a walk down by the river to clear his head, so he was casually dressed, but certainly not for jungle hiking.

We took plenty of shortcuts through the rain forest that Zander knew about, and that helped us stay off the main roads where the cartel Desperados would likely be watching. My jaguar friend stayed with us on the jungle pathways only until we were well underway, and then he disappeared. I had no doubt that he would return if needed.

Along the way, I told Zander about Gaia and Kareem telling me that I was to have the challenge to deal with in Caracol. I also told him that I felt he was the challenge and that I welcomed him. I didn't tell him about the Spiritual Timeline yet. I'm sure that he figured out that I was a daft, but harmless man.

We hadn't slept that night, and at about mid-day, we were both getting very tired. We found a break in the forest where a decent size creek was heading towards the Rio Frio. It was our opportunity to break out a soap bar and bathe in the cold creek. We also found a fairly clear and open small cliff to lay out my sleeping bag and get some needed rest. I told Zander that we could try sleeping together in this single-person bag, as there would be all manner of insects on this

cliff, and the bag would be our best protection. The level part of the cliff was not large enough for me to pitch the tent, which would have given us more room. He agreed that we could try the sleeping bag and promised not to move about too much. I agreed that I would promise the same.

As we wriggled into the sleeping bag, we positioned ourselves back to back, and Zander commented that he felt he had plenty of room. He was surprised, and so was I. I was also surprised at how really nice it was to have someone else in the bag with me and was somewhat embarrassed about my thoughts.

We were both quiet for a few minutes, but then Zander turned a little and said, "Thank you so much for taking me on as a friend Matt. I know that I couldn't have made it this far without you. Goodnight and sleep well, my friend. I patted him on his shoulder and said that it was my pleasure. We then both fell into our own thoughts and quickly fell asleep.

*This episode was pretty exciting. At least I thought so. I know that I would like to take such a trek through the Mountain Pine Ridge in Belize, but lets leave out the Desperadoes on our own treks. We can also hope that Matt and Zander will have a comfortable nights sleep in that small sleeping bag, but you will have to tune in to Episode 6 to know for sure.*