

ABSTRACT

On November 1, 1898, a large earthquake struck the mountainous hinterland of Vancouver Island. Deep Gorge, a glacial lake that provided the town of Pyrite Ridge with fresh water, dropped an astonishing 150 metres in two weeks following the earthquake. Alfred Selwyn, an eminent Canadian geologist, investigated the phenomenon and theorized that the seismic event had led to the creation of an underground conduit to the Pacific Ocean sixty kilometres to the west. The subterranean passageway was described as “a segue by which the inland glacial waters can pass uninterrupted to the open ocean.”¹ Left perched on a precipice high above the lake, Pyrite Ridge was abandoned a month after the earthquake.

The town was forgotten until 1947, when hikers came across the abandoned buildings of Pyrite Ridge and reported that Deep Gorge had risen back to its original level. With the re-emergence of the lake, people returned to the region. The town became known as *The Segue*, which took on the phonetic spelling of *The Segway*, not to be confused with the two-wheeled conveyance. Unlike the gold seekers of the late nineteenth century, many of the new residents were attracted by stories that the area possessed mystical properties. On July 27, 1959, another earthquake struck the area, killing sixteen people and setting off two landslides that effectively isolated the town from the rest of the world. Additionally, the lake waters began to recede once again, although more slowly than in 1898. Over the next thirty years, the lake level dropped approximately five metres per annum, until equalizing at 150 metres below the town in

1 Selwyn, A., 1899. A Subterranean Anomaly in Central Vancouver Island, *Geological Survey of Canada*, Report 14-A2, 12 pp.

1989. Most of the inhabitants moved during the descent of the lake, but a few remained, while newcomers were drawn by the alleged mysteries of The Segway. The town is currently home to an eclectic group of thirty people, although provincial records indicate that no one has lived there since 1960.

The region has generated numerous accounts of various phenomena, ranging from fantastical land mammals to unusual scientific observations. Other reports include the discovery of alien fossils in a nearby impact crater; a crashed, unmarked aircraft; submarine activity in the segue; and the appearance of a sea creature on the surface of the lake. Investigative research was carried out from July 20 to July 28, 2003, to determine the validity of unusual activity in The Segway region. Interviews were conducted with the inhabitants, while relics pertaining to the area's history were examined. The study was carried out in a scientific and unbiased manner. The remarkable conclusions, which cannot be satisfactorily condensed in an executive summary, are contained in the following pages.

CHAPTER 1 – SUNDAY JULY 20, 2003

1.1 TRIP PREPARATION

Highway 19 runs northwest along the Strait of Georgia on Vancouver Island. Once past the town of Campbell River, about forty kilometres north of Canadian Forces Base Comox, the terrain becomes desolate. The road winds through heavy forests and rugged mountains. Except for a few small towns, such as Sayward, Woss, and Port MacNeil, the area is bereft of human habitation for a stretch of 160 kilometres. The wilderness is pristine, virtually untouched by humankind. At Port Hardy, near the northern tip of Vancouver Island, the highway ends. Follow the gravel road to Cape Scott Provincial Park, and the island ends. At this point, the North Pacific stretches endlessly to a horizon of slate skies and white-capped ocean. High winds, rain, and stormy conditions prevail throughout the year at Cape Scott. No one lives there. Although the weather becomes more agreeable inland and to the south, the rugged terrain is hostile to humans. Somewhere amidst the highest peaks that make up the backbone of Vancouver Island exists a tiny community at the edge of a precipice.

The Segway does not appear on any map. In the minds of many, it is a legend spawned from exaggeration and is regarded in much the same way as Cadborosaurus² and Sasquatch: fantastical and elusive. For weeks, I had been frustrated in my attempt to find any information that could lead to more than

2 Cadborosaurus is a sea serpent that is purported to inhabit regions of the Pacific coast of North America. It has allegedly been sighted in Cadboro Bay near Victoria, British Columbia on Vancouver Island.

a vague description of the town's location. Overcoming a deep-rooted anxiety in showing my face at the base in Comox, I paid an early morning visit to 442 Squadron operations. The Buffalo Squadron, which holds primary responsibility for airborne search and rescue operations on Canada's west coast, fly six fixed-wing CC-115 Buffalos and five CH-149 Cormorant helicopters. I knew they had an impressive map collection of Vancouver Island, possibly one showing The Segway. The 442 Squadron Duty Operations Officer was a Buffalo pilot who had amassed six thousand hours flying search and rescue missions. I didn't know him personally, but he had a solid reputation as an aviator. The name tag over the right breast pocket of his flight suit read "Bones McCrae." He recognized me instantly—I was famous in Comox for all the wrong reasons—and seemed happy to let me look through their map room.

After an hour of searching through an archive of old charts, I found a 1942 map that showed Pyrite Ridge, which I knew to be the former name of The Segway. A dashed gray line, branching off from White River Road, indicated a route originating near the town of Sayward on the eastern shore of Vancouver Island. Curiously, the name Pyrite Ridge was barely readable, almost an afterthought or a ghost image, and there did not appear to be a lake.

I had the map spread on the table when Bones came in. "Any luck?"

"Found it. Pyrite Ridge."

"What's in Pyrite Ridge?" he asked, peering at the map.

"It's not called Pyrite Ridge anymore," I replied. "They renamed it The Segway. Apparently, there's a lake that comes and goes."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, the lake rises and falls because of seismic activity." I began rolling up the chart. "It's rumoured that some kind of sea creature lives in it."

"Sea creature? Like the Loch Ness monster?"

"Something like that."

"You can have the map," he said. "It's too old to be of any use."

"Thanks." I slipped an elastic band over one end. "Have you ever flown around that area?"

"Oh, sure. That's near Victoria Peak. Lots of wind shear there. Not a pleasant place to fly low level."

"Do you remember seeing a town?"

His brow furrowed in thought. "It's all wilderness in that region, so I'd be surprised if anybody lived there. Are you sure there's a town?"

"I'm not sure of anything," I replied, suddenly feeling an urge to leave. It was the longest I had been on base in months. I was on *sick leave*. "Thanks for the map. I appreciate your help."

"Let me know if you find The Segway."

"Sure will."

As I was about to depart, Bones called my name. His voice was tentative, as though unsure of himself, which seemed out of character. I turned and looked at him questioningly.

"I'm pretty good friends with Ron . . . Ron Franklin."

"Me too," I said. I was a tactical navigator and crew commander on the CP-140 Aurora, a long-range maritime patrol aircraft that searched for submarines, among other things. CP-140 crews were often called upon for maritime search and rescue missions far from land, beyond the reach of the Buffalo. Ron Franklin was a pilot on my crew: the Crew Six Terminators. All the crews at 407 Maritime Patrol Squadron had nicknames and colourful patches worn on the shoulder of their flight suits. Our logo consisted of a sledgehammer breaking a submarine in two. I took a deep breath. Exhaled. It seemed like such a long time since I had flown with my crew.

"Ron told me what happened on the *Northward Bound* mission." Bones paused, searching for the right words to say. "I've flown search and rescue my entire career and . . . well, what happened to you is the strangest thing I've ever heard. Seriously."

I could feel my anxiety welling, threatening to wash over me. For a moment, I found myself back in the aircraft as a rogue wave of remembrance cascaded over me.

The back of the aircraft was dark. The atmosphere dense. A smell of sweat and exhaust. The hum of engines filled my ears, my stomach queasy from the incessant bouncing as we danced with the whitecaps. It seemed like we had been there forever. Looking. Searching. The pilot, a distant voice over the headset, begged for my attention. "Are we dropping it here?" My head pounded. "Ten seconds back." I looked up. All eyes were on me. "What's it going to be, Travis? I need an answer now."

“Strange,” I agreed, struggling back to the surface.

“For what it’s worth,” Bones continued, “you did the right thing, Travis. What happened wasn’t your fault.”

I felt the corners of my mouth twitch. A voice whispered from deep within. *But you didn’t do the right thing . . . and it was your fault.* I pushed the thought to the catacombs of my mind. “See you around, Bones. I’m off to hunt monsters.”

1.2 APPROACHING THE SEGWAY

Approximately seventy kilometres north of Comox on Highway 19 there is a junction that takes a traveller to Sayward, which is not to be confused with The Segway. The town of Sayward is situated on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island where the Strait of Georgia narrows to a few kilometres and becomes the Johnstone Strait. Sayward has a population of about 350 people and is near the world’s largest yellow cedar. This is Sayward’s claim to fame. The tree is sixty metres high, thirteen metres in circumference, and is estimated to be two thousand years old.

I had not planned to venture into Sayward, but White River Road was not apparent from the main highway, nor was the White River itself. Several Sayward residents were equally mystified by my intended route and destination.

“The Segway? Never heard of such a thing. Don’t you mean Sayward?”

“There aren’t any roads west of here. Except one, and it goes to the yellow cedar. Biggest in the world, you know. It even has viewing platforms if you’re interested.”

“White River? There’s a White River? I’ve heard of a Black Creek down the road near Comox. I’ve also heard of Silver Lake, Red Sea, Yellow River, Green Sargasso, and Blue Lagoon . . . but no White River. That sounds crazy to me.”

Unsure what to do next, I went back to the main highway and stopped at a small gas station to fill up.

“White River’s just over there.”

This comment came from a middle-aged gas station attendant in a tie-dyed shirt, bell-bottom jeans, and a bandana. I turned to look but saw no river. “Where?”

“About a half a kilometre that-a-way. Take my word for it.”

“Is there a road that follows it?”

“More or less. White River Road if you can dig it. Head down Dyer here, then take a left on the first crappy little road you see. That’ll be fifteen bucks for the gas, man.”

I gave him a ten and a five, plus a toonie for his troubles. “Nobody in town seemed to know of a White River.”

“Most people think it’s called the Sayward River or Salmon River. But they’re out of touch. As a rule, folks around here aren’t fully on the spectrum, if you know what I’m saying.”

I didn’t, but nodded as though I did.

“I just know that it leads to White River Provincial Park,” he continued. “If you follow the road, it’ll take you there every time.”

This was promising. I knew that the park was about twelve kilometers northeast of The Segway, and that the dashed road on the map veered off White River Road at that point. “Have you ever been there?”

“Yeah, about ten years ago. They were filming *The Scarlet Letter* right in the middle of the park. I went there with a bunch of friends to smoke some rope and maybe rub shoulders with the rich and the famed, but we didn’t see Demi Moore or anyone like that. It was kind of boring, really. I never went back. Nowadays, I don’t think anyone goes there. It’s the outback, for sure.”

“Where does the road go after the park?”

“After the park? Nowhere, man. It’s the end of the road—end of the universe, really—unless you’re going to drive through a mountain. There’s no ‘after the park.’”

“Ever heard of The Segway?”

“Yeah, I heard of it. Bigfoot lives there with Elvis. One of my buddies saw them both together.” A bell dinged. Another customer had pulled up to the pumps. “Gotta go, dude. Ding, ding. Right? Ding, ding.”

“Thanks for the info.”

“If you see Demi Moore, tell her Bigfoot says to call Elvis.”

I grinned. It struck me as an oddly clever thing to say.

Once on White River Road, the driving was relatively easy. Though rutted and washed out in places, my four-wheel drive Jeep Wrangler had little trouble negotiating the path. The deeper I went into the forest, the older and denser it became. The river—rambling along on the left in the opposite direction to my travel—was clear and unspoiled. At that point in the summer, the river was significantly smaller than the streambed. Typically, on the eastern part of Vancouver Island, the summers are temperate and dry. Conversely, the winter storms that swoop in from the Pacific between November and March drench the lowlands with rain and the higher altitudes with snow.

After twenty-five kilometres, I came upon a sign that indicated I must be in White River Provincial Park:

This is a protected area for Roosevelt elk and black bear.
Hunting is strictly prohibited. Violators will be prosecuted to
the full extent of the law.

On a less severe note, another sign read:

Welcome to the Cathedral Grove of the North Island. Giant
Douglas fir and western red cedars make up the old growth of
this ancient forest.

Across the length of this second sign, someone had scrawled *Bite Me* in large letters. In town, I would have thought nothing of it, but amidst the wilderness, the graffiti struck me as grotesque and troublesome.

As I travelled through the park, I came upon an odd sight: wide, well-constructed boardwalks that went nowhere. I puzzled over this for some time until it occurred to me that these were probably the remnants of the movie set for *The Scarlet Letter*.

It was noon, so I stopped and dived into my supply of bottled water, trail mix, and peanut-butter sandwiches. It was quiet and still. The sun shone brightly, but the thick forest canopy made it seem like dusk. Nearby, I knew there were incredible vistas of dazzling blue sky and jagged peaks of snow, but within the Cathedral Grove of the North Island, all was sombre.

Contrary to the opinion of the gas station attendant, the universe did not end at the park. A steep slope stretched upward to a sharp peak, but fortunately, the road took a route more amenable to vehicular travel. A few kilometres later, I came upon a fork in the road. I took the one to the left, which I reasoned was the dashed line on the map that led to The Segway. Within a kilometre, the road truly became dashed as it degraded into a trail and then a path. There were signs that something with large tires had come through recently, but overall, the way was overgrown with underbrush and littered with boulders. In another five kilometers, the road became impassable due to fallen trees and debris. To my left was a dry streambed. Judging from the scrub vegetation, it had not contained water for some time. I surmised this to be the remnant of a tributary that had once connected to Segway Lake and would, therefore, lead me to my destination. As I steered the Jeep into the stony streambed, I caught a glimpse of Victoria Peak through the trees, which were becoming somewhat sparser and shorter on the rocky terrain.

At that point, only the most rugged of vehicles would have been able to make headway. After several torturous kilometres in the streambed, during which I nearly tipped the Jeep several times as I inched over boulders and glacial detritus, I came to a complete stop. A huge tree had fallen across the river. Remarkably, the roots and the trunk had come to rest between sheer rock faces on either side. There was absolutely no way to get the Jeep around, under, or over the fallen giant.

According to the map, The Segway was only a few kilometres away. I was too close to turn back. Undaunted, I grabbed my backpack—which contained a tent, sleeping bag, laptop computer, camera, tape recorder, and provisions to last several days—and started along the streambed toward the tree. Climbing over the trunk seemed treacherous, if not impossible, but luckily there was a spot between the tree and the ground that allowed me to first slide the backpack through and then myself. Once on the other side, I gathered my belongings and assessed the situation. In the distance, the streambed became narrower as steep cliffs pinched it in. The area looked like an alien landscape, as large boulders—deposited by the most recent glaciers—were propped haphazardly in configurations that appeared contrary to good physics. In some areas, there were large piles of rubble that had descended from the mountain slopes on either side. It didn't seem possible that anyone could live here. I trudged on for

half an hour, the straps of the heavy backpack digging into my shoulders. With every step, I felt as though I should turn back . . . that there was nothing to see.

And then I did see something. The streambed ended abruptly against a mass of rubble. But there was something else. Something totally unexpected.

1.3 THE UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE OF MR. JUB TOLLERSON

Approximately thirty metres in front of me, a man was reading a newspaper in an overstuffed reclining chair. He seemed quite comfortable with his feet in the air and his elbows resting on the bolstered arms. As I neared, I heard him laugh boisterously on several occasions. He was so enthralled by the newspaper that my approach went unnoticed.

“Excuse me, sir,” I said, stumbling to a halt in front of him.

Still chuckling, he lowered the paper and looked me in the eye. “That gentleman cartoonist who does *Family Circus* is pure genius. He really makes you think. I’d like to know where he conjures his ideas. Bil Keane is his name. Apropos, don’t you think, considering the keenness of his wit?”

I was at a loss for words. Not so much because of his views on *Family Circus* but because he was not the least bit startled to see me. Even more surprising was his attire, which consisted of a tuxedo and top hat. Both items were a little worse for wear, and the rugged hiking boots did not go well with the ensemble, but his attire still impressively outclassed the surroundings.

Lowering the recliner so his feet touched the ground, he offered his hand. “My name is Jub Tollerson. I’m five foot eight and one hundred and fifty-one pounds. I was born in Thunder Bay, Ontario, in 1953. I have blue eyes, no hair, and I like to read newspapers.”

I shook his hand. “Travis Sivart,” I replied, shrugging off the backpack.

“Now, Mr. Sivart—”

“Travis.”

“Now, Travis, I know you probably have a question or two for me. I realize that my garments are not in keeping with this rugged wilderness, and that

the location of my reclining chair is a trifle unanticipated. However, before I respond to your questions, there's something I must first confess."

There was a strange eloquence about the man. Although his voice was gruff, and he seemed rough around the edges, his manner of speaking exuded intelligence.

"Please proceed," I said.

"Do you notice anything unusual about my newspaper?"

I looked closely. It was the *Globe and Mail*. I didn't discern anything particularly odd about it.

"Look at the date," he prodded.

"July 20, 2002. Mmm . . . it's a year behind."

"Exactly. You see, I enjoy reading newspapers. *The New York Times*, *National Post*, *Times Colonist*, *Toronto Star*, *The Province*, plus a few others you have probably never heard tell of. I have subscriptions to all of them, and I read them front to back, line for line, word for word. Do you follow me?"

"I think I do, Mr. Tollerson—"

"Jub."

"Jub . . . but I find it difficult to believe that anyone would deliver papers to this abandoned streambed."

Jub's face broke into a smile that featured less than a full set of teeth. "Ha! My boy, you have pinpointed the folly of my obsession. To combat this quandary, as it were, I have the papers delivered to my brother, Jib, who is both a writer and scholar, living in Victoria. Jib brings them as far as Comox, where they are picked up every four months or so by associates of mine. I stockpile them and read one set per day. I have tailored my habit such that I peruse these treasures of information precisely one year after publication. In this way, I always know the date. Granted, I might be off on the year, but around here, that is unimportant."

I nodded. "That is an excellent solution to an awkward problem."

"Mind you," Jub continued, "I like my news fresh. I worked eight years for *The Province*, and I prefer my stories 'hot off the press,' if I may use that hackneyed expression. I can't abide old news, and quite frankly, I will not tolerate it."

The conversation was surreal, but I had little choice but to pursue it to some conclusion. "News that is a year late can hardly be considered 'hot off the press,' as you put it."

“That is a logical thought process, Travis, but one that is confined by thinking within the proverbial box. Consider this: I am an individual with no access to radio or television. In fact, radio and television frequencies will not penetrate this area. Ergo, all my news originates from the papers I receive from my sibling, Jib. For all intents and purposes, this is July 20, 2002. At least, for me, it is. So, listen carefully, Travis, for this is where you must take heed. Do not, under any circumstance, divulge any newsworthy event that has transpired in the past year. I mean absolutely nothing. I don’t care if there’s been a nuclear holocaust, and you’ve come here to escape the radiation. I’ll read about it next year and take the appropriate action. I must be brutally upfront about this, or you could conceivably ruin my life. No man should know the future even if it is the past. Do you understand?”

“Completely.”

Jub slapped his knee, as if to punctuate the conclusion of his plight, and pulled himself to his feet. In his thick-heeled boots and top hat, he seemed half a foot taller than his five-foot-eight-inch frame. “Now, Travis, I’m sure you have a few questions for me.”

I had many. The first question seemed the least important in the grand scheme of things, but curiosity got the better of me. “Why are you wearing a tuxedo?”

“We get very few visitors in this region, and I have rare occasion to don this formal wear. As such, I have deemed the arrival of travellers to be a precipitous event, worthy of this apparel. In fact, it is one of my sworn duties to greet all those who come to this fair domain.”

“How did you even know I was coming? I’m assuming you don’t spend your days waiting for visitors.”

“There’s a tripwire down by the Douglas Fern tree.”

“I think you mean Douglas fir.”

“Yes, of course, you may be correct.” He said this with a smile and wink, which seemed to imply that one of us was in error, and probably not him.

“So, you put a tripwire device by the tree.”

“It’s an electronic beam strategically positioned at the one place a person can wriggle under the trunk. Of course, I can’t take credit for the brilliance of this scheme. That belongs to Albet Ironstein, inventor *extraordinaire*.”

“Albet Ironstein? That can’t be his real name.”

“You’ll discover, Travis, that a real name in these parts is what you choose to call yourself. At any rate, I was alerted that the alarm had been tripped,

and then relayed this information to Clay Potter, who lives in a nest. From his vantage point, and with the aid of his optical devices, Mr. Potter can determine if someone is approaching The Segway.”

I looked upward, expecting to see a man in a tree, but saw nothing. “This Clay Potter lives in a tree house?”

“No, a nest. It is of his own construction, built in much the same way that a bird assembles its domicile.”

It was time to get to the heart of the matter. “This is so he can observe The Segway Lake creature,” I said with a smile. “Or ‘Seggie,’ as he calls it.”

Jub gave me a wary look, and then folded his arms in front of his chest. “How did you obtain this knowledge, Travis?”

“I read a story in a newspaper, *The Segway News*—”

“*The The Segway News*,” Jub interjected.

“I stand corrected.” Originally, I had thought this to be a printing error in the main title, which seemed almost as bizarre as a one-page, single-sided newspaper, but I came to realize that this was no ordinary document, and that *The The Segway News* was grammatically correct. “I read an article,” I continued, “that talked about a recent sighting by Mr. Clay Potter of a creature that lives in Segway Lake. At the time, I had never heard of The Segway; however, the idea of a sea monster intrigued me, and I conducted some independent research into the area. My findings further spurred my curiosity since I have a background in geophysics, and the concept of a segue³ fascinated me. Of course, it was difficult to separate truth from folklore, and I even wondered if the place really existed. So, I decided to see for myself. And that, Mr. Jub Tollerson, is how I came to enter your fair domain, as you so eloquently put it.”

Jub took off his top hat and set it on the recliner. He was indeed bald, as advertised, and beads of sweat trickled in a radial pattern from the apex of his skull. Taking a handkerchief from his breast pocket, he wiped his face and head. It was midafternoon, and although clouds were beginning to gather, the sun shone intensely into the streambed. I felt comfortable in shorts and a T-shirt, but Jub was beginning to suffer in his tuxedo. “How did you come

3 In this document, the term *segue* is used to denote the underground passage from Segway Lake to the Pacific Ocean, while *The Segway* refers to the town.

into possession of the newspaper?” he asked, stuffing the handkerchief into his pants pocket.

“I found it on the streets of Comox. I thought it was trash and intended to throw it in the garbage.”

“But you discovered that it was in a sealed plastic bag.”

“Yes.”

“With a string attached.”

“Yes.”

“And there was a copy of *The The Segway News* contained within.”

“Yes.”

“Excellent,” Jub beamed with pride. “I am the sole reporter for the newspaper. It is the one exception I make with respect to my one-year lag of news events. Of course, I do not print or distribute the newspaper by myself. That is the purview of the editor, Mr. Gus Parsons.”

“With respect to distribution, I am curious as to how the newspaper found its way to Comox.” I paused to reach into the backpack. The paper, still encased in the plastic bag, was placed carefully in a side pocket. “As you can see,” I said, motioning to the top of the bag, “there is a deflated red balloon attached to the string.”

Jub shook his head in wonderment. “It never ceases to amaze me.”

“What?”

“The red balloon. You see, Gus prints eighty newspapers per week. One goes to each resident, of which there are thirty, and the rest, he puts in bags and attaches them to red balloons that have been inflated with helium. He sets them aloft every Sunday, and they scatter with a vengeance. There are some fierce winds near the mountains, and I find it incredible that any of his balloons survive. But people do find them. A significant portion of the town’s population has made a pilgrimage to The Segway because of those red balloons. That’s how Gus came here himself. But the funny thing is, nobody ever published a paper or launched them with balloons before he showed up. So, Gus decided it was a good idea and started the ritual himself.”

“That’s impossible,” I pointed out.

Gus raised a finger. “Impossible . . . yet accurate. It’s one of the many peculiar occurrences at The Segway.”

I made a sweeping motion with my free hand. “Where is The Segway? The streambed ends at this mass of rubble.”

Jub looked over his shoulder. “Ah yes, talus from the mountain. It blocked the way after an earthquake on July 27, 1959. Two landslides were triggered that day, one on each end of the lake, which isolated the town from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, The Segway does exist beyond that jumble of rock. You simply need a guide to get through.”

“And you are that guide?”

“You have a red balloon in your possession, so I am required by town ordinance to bring you to our mayor, Doctor Joy. She’s an MD and has but one name.”

Replacing the newspaper into its pocket, I hefted the backpack onto my shoulders. “Lead the way.”

“Before we go any further, I must advise you of a few bylaws that demand your compliance.”

“Certainly.”

“First, this is a dry town. If you have any spirits or alcoholic beverages, they must be disposed of right now.”

“I have no liquor in my possession, sir.”

Jub licked his lips. “You’re sure, now?” he asked in a disappointed tone. “I mean, the bylaw does not specify how the offending beverage is to be discarded. I have been known to dispose of contraband in a non-wasteful fashion.”

“Sorry, Jub.”

“Right then. Number two: Smoking is strictly prohibited.”

“I don’t smoke.”

Jub frowned as if he had a non-wasteful method of disposing of tobacco-based items as well. “Number three: Cameras are not permitted.”

It was my turn to be disappointed. “Why not?”

“Back in the eighties, a scoundrel who went by the name of Harmon Rook took some pictures of the lake and airbrushed an outlandish monster into the scene as a means to get famous. A few years later, he built a wooden monster and tried to pass it off as the real Seggie. Of course, he was exposed as a charlatan, but The Segway fell into ridicule. Cameras have been banned ever since.”

“Fair enough.” I turned my back to him. “There’s a digital camera in the front pocket of my backpack.”

Jub retrieved it from my backpack, and then examined it with admiration. “My goodness, this is a small apparatus. You take pictures with this?”

“And short movies.”

“My word, that is fabulous. Anyway, I’ll lock it in a metal box for safekeeping.” He went behind the recliner, and I heard him unlock a container and place my camera within. “Never fear! It will be well-protected, and you shall have it returned upon your departure.” Coming back to face me, he grabbed his discarded top hat and replaced it on his head. “Now, where were we? Number four: You will not divulge newsworthy events that have occurred in the past year to Jub Tollerson. Well, we’ve already covered that one. And finally, profanity or delinquent behaviour will not be tolerated on any account and is punishable with banishment. Is that understood?”

“Completely.”

“Well, then, I’ll take you to see the mayor. The town council will be there to greet you as well.”

Much to my surprise, Jub began marching toward the rubble directly behind his chair. Passage through did not seem to be an option. I followed despite my misgivings. Stopping at a large boulder, Jub gave it a push to the right, and it slid easily on two hidden rails. I looked down to see that the boulder was resting on a platform with wheels that resembled those of a train. Beyond the boulder, a tunnel about four metres wide had been cut through the rubble. Steel mesh and support beams held the rocks at bay, while bare bulbs hung from the ceiling to illuminate the way. Extending about sixty metres, the passageway ended in a sunlit arc.

Once inside, Jub grabbed a handle that had been affixed to the boulder and shut the entrance. “After the 1959 earthquake The Segway became inaccessible due to tons of rubble that came down from the mountains.” I knew of the earthquake. My research had uncovered some of the details, although the resulting tragic death of sixteen people was shrouded in mystery. “This tunnel,” Jub continued, “was begun by Jedediah Slocam, a prospector who became convinced that the rubble contained gold. Unfortunately, there wasn’t anything of value in these rocks, and Jedediah eventually became surly and unresponsive because of his failure. Of course, the passageway has been reinforced and updated since then to prevent a cave-in.” Jub’s voice echoed dully as we made our way through the dark thoroughfare. It was cold, damp, and spooky . . . and then we emerged into brilliance.