

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/4

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Flying Aztecs

It was Sunday, the time it happened, the sun had just started going down, and the heat was dissipating. I figured that it would work better during dusk with the heat and humidity lower than during the day. I tried many times before, different times during the day and the week. I guessed this was my last shot, the last time slot.

Some time ago I was on an archeological dig deep in the jungles of Mexico. Did I forget to mention that I was a Professor of Archeology at a small but well funded university up in New England? Well I am. In the middle of the dig my team and I made this discovery that was truly unbelievable. We found a hidden room in a temple that had writings on the wall. We spent the next few days trying to decipher them.

The first part of the translation was easy. It was the standard curses that you find on all ancient temples and tombs. The ones that threaten evil disgusting things happening to your family jewels, your insides turning to oatmeal, your brain turning to mush, and then a horrible and painful death that will last many days. I might sound cavalier about it all, and to some degree, I guess I am. Don't get me wrong I have a healthy respect for ancient curses because I have seen things that just cannot be explained by the modern world. But these engravings, when we finished the translations, WOW, we did it 3 times just to make sure. Even then, some of it could still be open to interpretation.

Now I'm just going to say it and let you be the judge. The Aztecs knew how to fly. They made their own wings and they soared high in the skies over their cities. I know it sounds impossible, but it is true. We found writings showing in great detail the intimate joy they felt at soaring over the jungles of their lands. The freedom they knew as they leapt off the highest temple, caught the updraft of the thermals, and took off like an eagle was amazing to read about.

So here I am, standing on the edge of the cliffs overlooking my university at dusk on Sunday with my homemade wings. I had made them as closely as I could remember from writings in the hidden room of the Aztec temple. Did I forget to mention that it was destroyed by an earthquake that nearly took my life and the life of my entire party? No? We were all very lucky to get out with our lives but we lost everything, the temple, the writings, everything. So from memory, I reproduced the wings and tried to fly. I thought it had something to do with the time of day the Aztecs tried to fly but I was not sure. After 3 years and many broken bones and assorted other injuries, I was giving it one last try. This either worked or I was going to be a teacher of no consequence for the rest of my career.

So here I am, the wind feels just right, the wings are perfect and my nerves are still here, so it is now or never. I breathe in, hold it for a moment, close my eyes and run for the edge. I jump, far over the ledge of rocks and....