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**THE MAN  
WHO MASTERED  
GRAVITY**

**A TWISTED TALE OF SPACE, TIME  
AND THE MYSTERIES IN BETWEEN**

by  
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**Part 1:**

***White***

*Every Cabbie In Catalina*

(1985)



*Linda and Townsend on Catalina Island in the 1980s.*

“Daddy, you can’t do this! You’ll kill yourself! Mother and I will have to go to San Antonio to bring back your body!”

Townsend Brown packed his overnight bag, a travel-worn satchel, the kind that doctors once took on house calls. He shuffled papers into an equally battered attaché.

“I have to do this,” Townsend said. “I have to take these papers to San Antonio.”

“Daddy, who the hell is in San Antonio? Why can’t they come here? Why can’t you just mail these papers?”

Linda Brown was nearly forty years old. Her father was eighty and in failing health. His left lung had been removed a decade earlier – damaged, physicians suspected, by the ozone and radiation his body absorbed during decades of experimenting with high voltages and intense electrical fields. Now his right lung was showing similar symptoms.

Townsend and Josephine – his wife of more than 50 years – lived with Linda, her husband George, and their daughter, the five of them sharing a weather-beaten, World War II-vintage Quonset hut on the island of Santa Catalina, off

the southern California coast. Father and daughter argued in a tiny bedroom cluttered with electronic instruments and sensors, the last vestiges of his life's work, investigating the mysterious, cosmic force he called 'sidereal radiation.'

"You can't come with me," Townsend said.

The words stung. For nearly two decades, Linda had been at her father's side in his lab, moving equipment, twisting the wires in his inventions – whatever he needed, whatever he asked of her. Now she was afraid she'd never see him alive again.

Townsend had arranged for a helicopter to fly him to Long Beach, where he would board a private jet. He needed a cab to take him to the chopper. He reached for the phone.

"Go ahead Daddy," Linda cried. "But remember, I know every cabbie on this island and not one of them is going to take you anywhere if I tell them not to."

When the cab arrived, Townsend folded his fragile frame into the rear seat. He leaned out the window and took his daughter's hand. "Don't worry, Sweetie," he said with the calming tone that had reassured her before so many similar departures. "Everything is going to be all right."

Linda let go of her father's hand and watched the cab disappear.

The helicopter touched down in Long Beach, where a limousine waited to ferry Townsend to the charter. Peering through the windshield, he was pleased to see a muscular man of military bearing behind the wheel – the protégé he had recruited twenty years earlier: Morgan.

***The Boy With The Chestnut Hair***  
(1963)



*Ashlawn, on the Philadelphia 'Main Line' – The Brown family home from 1963-64.*

Great Valley High School in the 'Main Line' Philadelphia suburb of Malvern opened in the fall of 1963. Its soaring glass-and-steel architecture, long wide corridors, bright fluorescent lighting, and shiny vinyl floors were a space-age departure from its Georgian and Colonial pre-war predecessors. The new school drew on the heritage of the area. Its varsity teams were called 'The Patriots' – their mascot a jut-jawed, musket-toting Minute Man, replete with bayonet and tri-corn cap.

Tall and powerfully built, Morgan had transferred into Great Valley for the school's foreign language program, which offered classes in Russian. Morgan wanted to learn Russian so that he could serve his country in the Cold War. He read a lot of espionage thrillers and amused himself with romantic notions of becoming a spy.

Great Valley High School greeted its first students with the smell of fresh paint and empty spaces along the hallways where the lockers had yet to be bolted in. "We had to carry all our books," Morgan recalled, "so nobody ever went to the library to get more." Except for Morgan, who encountered among the stacks a classmate with wavy, chin length brown hair and inquisitive eyes. Morgan watched as Linda Brown ran her fingertips along the spine of the books like they were old

friends. Linda thumbed the pages of a James Joyce novel; The incomprehensible Irish master was one of Morgan's favorites.

Their eyes met, Linda nodded toward Morgan with a wistful half-smile and returned to the book.

"Hmmm," Morgan thought, "this one is different."

Checking into a political science class an hour later, Morgan found himself a seat beside this girl. "Good thing the chair was empty," he recalls, "because I would have made it so if it had been occupied."

"He was a good-looking guy, with chestnut hair that he wore in a 'Princeton cut,' Linda recalled. "He was very 'Main Line' but he was also very different. He was a member of the Chess club but was also a champion wrestler. I found him fascinating." In the weeks that followed, Linda watched how the other girls at Great Valley nearly fell all over themselves to get his attention.

"I was a bit of a jerk," Morgan recalled, "but I had an interesting thing going. There was a whole assortment of girls who wanted to sleep with me, and I was carried away with the idea of how much fun sex was. I had no scruples, and that oddly seemed to make me more of an attraction."

Linda had a steady boyfriend named Howie, but that didn't stop her from engaging in intellectual food fights with her new classmate. In poly-sci, they debated national security, with Linda asserting privacy rights while Morgan defended the security needs of the state.

"She fought me when no one else would," Morgan recalled, "and ignored me when I needed to be ignored. I teased her like a brother teases a sister, but neither of us was very good at that kind of thing. I really didn't know how to do it, and she didn't really know how to respond, so we just sort of squared off. It took a while before we realized there was chemistry brewing."

Linda sensed the chemistry too but had a different reaction: "I would kick myself for being so outspoken. I was absolutely positive that I had broken all the rules on how to attract a man!"

Morgan wondered about Linda's family. "The buzz at school was that her dad, a gentle scientist, was actually a member of the mob. The kids at Great Valley would say, 'He seems a gentleman, but his sidekick has got to be a hired killer.'"

The sidekick was a lean, dour, chap named Charles Miller, who drove the limousine in which Linda, Howie and their friends often went on dates. Linda's girlfriends thought having a limo at their disposal was "just the coolest thing ever," but Charles was a mystery. One night after a movie, Charles picked the kids up at the theater and dropped them all off – without ever asking any of them where they lived.

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When the limo pulled up to his house at the end of a remote country road, Howie wondered aloud, “How did he know where I live? I certainly didn’t tell him how to get out here. In fact, none of us told him where we live, he just drove right up to everybody’s house!”

Linda looked up and caught Charles looking back in the rear-view mirror, with his cap pulled down tightly over his eyes as if to say, “Oh crap, I screwed up.” She covered for him, explaining that Charles had gotten directions when they first started dating. “After all,” Linda said, “that’s his job.” Howie was satisfied and never mentioned it again, but after that Linda realized that Charles knew more about whoever she dated than she did.

Such intrigue only piqued Morgan’s interest in his confrontational classmate. He started shadowing Linda’s movements. When she went on a date with Howie, Morgan would bump into them; when she went walking with her girlfriends, their paths would cross, a tactic that often backfired. When the other girls started flirting with Morgan, Linda just lowered her eyes and slipped away.

The Brown family lived in a stately fieldstone Colonial called Ashlawn, just a cornfield away from Great Valley High. As fall frosted into winter, Linda hosted skating parties on the pond behind the house. One cold afternoon she saw two girlfriends coming through the field; between them was the tall boy with the chestnut hair.

Morgan wasn’t all that interested in ice-skating. When the rest of the party headed outside to the pond, Morgan wandered through the big house. He looked through the door of one wood-paneled room and found Linda’s father tinkering with something on his desk. Morgan watched from the doorway.

Townsend looked up, and in a tone that suggested that he had been expecting this particular visitor, said simply, “Hello there.”

## ***No Moving Parts***

(1963)

As he entered the study, Morgan found Townsend Brown working on an invention that could move air without any moving parts. Looking much like an oversized window fan, the three-foot-square wooden frame stood perched on a triangular base. Dozens of parallel metal strips and wires stretched like Venetian blinds across the front of the box. There were no whirling blades and no electric motor, yet air poured silently and steadily through the baffles.

Morgan peered through the front panel. He felt the air on his face. He walked around the back, looking for the magician's secret. How could air be moving through if there was no fan?

Townsend explained that an electrically induced force field squeezed the air, "the way your fingers would squirt a watermelon seed."

"How cool," Morgan thought, trying to reckon with something totally foreign to his experience.

Townsend flipped a switch, and suddenly the fan became a loudspeaker. Clear, bright sound poured out, without any cone or magnetic coil to produce the vibrations. "He turned up the volume," Morgan recalled, "and some kind of bomb went off inside my head."

Townsend explained that since the machine had no moving parts, there was no distortion, so the frequency could go well beyond the range of any kind of conventional loudspeaker. And if you had a matching pair, one could transmit and the other could receive.

"So, if there's no limit to the frequency, you could use this as a communications device. You could send a signal with this, and nobody else would be able to hear it, huh?"

Townsend smiled, "Nope." He put his glasses on and went back to work.

Linda appeared at the door. "Unlike my other friends who had seen the fan in operation, Morgan was asking insightful, intelligent questions," she recalled. "I could tell that Daddy was pleased. Nobody else I knew had ever come even close to understanding the possibilities."

"Are you coming skating with us?" Linda asked.

Instead, Morgan "made up some excuse and beat it out of there after a hurried goodbye and a sincere 'thank you' to Linda's father. I just needed to be out in the

cold air, to hide in the dark a bit. I was a half-mile down the road when I realized I'd just passed a turning point in my life."

\*

Morgan was accustomed to sizing people up, ferreting out their strengths and weaknesses before he made any moves. But none of his usual seduction techniques worked with Linda Brown.

"I found myself doing strange and stupid things. I'd drive by her house in my brother's old car, and just sit in the dark, listening to the classical music that poured forth from her father's study and smelling the wood smoke rising out of the chimney. One time, I even stomped my initials in the snow that covered their lawn."

Linda didn't notice.

"I had my classes in order," Morgan recalled. I was making solid A's, ruled the roost in most of my classes. I worked hard. I was prepared and in control. I did my homework. But Linda fought with me in class and won. That's when I decided I was determined to seduce her. I devised a plan that started with calling, just to ask for a date. But rather than Linda, I found myself talking with a stiff, curt man named Charles, who assured me that 'Miss Brown will be unavailable that evening.' I was not easily intimidated, but this Charles character scared the crap out of me."

When Morgan finally managed to talk to Linda long enough to ask her for a date, she declined his invitation, informing him she was going steady with Howie.

Morgan had heard scuttlebutt around school that Howie would be leaving in the spring for basic training with the National Guard.

"Yes, Linda said, "he'll be leaving in May."

"I'll be around," Morgan offered, certain that he caught an expression of relief in Linda's slight smile.

Winter melted into spring. Howie shipped out in early May, and word got back to Morgan that Linda had given Howie back his ring. Morgan made every possible effort to make his path cross Linda's. But as much as he was thinking about Linda, he found himself thinking as well about the curious device he had seen in her father's study.

## ***A Bitter Pill***

*(Notes from The Rabbit Hole #1)*

“Have you guessed the riddle yet? The Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

“No, I give up,” Alice replied. “What’s the answer?”

“I haven’t the slightest idea,” said the Hatter.

“Nor I,” said the March Hare.

Alice sighed wearily. “I think you might do something better with the time,” she said, “than wasting it asking riddles that have no answers.”

— *Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

My correspondence with Townsend Brown’s only surviving child started in the late fall of 2002, five months after I’d first contacted Andrew Bolland through his Townsend Brown website.

Andrew explained Linda’s reluctance to tear the lid off difficult memories:

**Being part of the Townsend Brown family has made Linda pretty much a recluse. The public believes that she was killed some years ago, and she prefers that actually. Her father began NICAP<sup>8</sup> and became associated with UFOs through his research into gravitational fields. I’m sure you can get an idea of what type of people might want to look her up.**

Through Andrew, I sent Linda a copy of my now-published Farnsworth biography, *The Boy Who Invented Television*. A few weeks later, our correspondence began with a warning that I might have been well to heed:

**My inclination is to keep things as they are. Pulling myself into the past I know will be difficult and sometimes painful for me. I hope you understand I have reservations about how much help I will be to you. I was only involved in Dad’s development of what he called the “electrohydrodynamic fan/speaker.” Our family was glued to our involvement in development of ‘The Fan’ throughout my teenage years and into my early twenties. The fact that we suffered so much for what seemed later to be nothing has been a bitter pill.**

A variation of the device that blew Morgan's mind earned some notoriety in the 1990s as an infomercial staple, The Sharper Image *Ionic Breeze* air purifier. Linda's remarks seemed to affirm what that first anonymous email had said, that her father's work had become profitable, but not to the family's benefit.

**My memories are from a twenty-year-old's perspective. The fact that none of our expectations were realized formed that great bitter pill. How that dead end developed, has always raised more questions than answers.**

I wrote back,

**I'm attracted to the mysteries buried in the life of T. Townsend Brown in the same way that I have been compelled to explore the mysteries in the life of Philo T. Farnsworth. Somewhere at the heart of those mysteries are important insights into what sort of Universe we *really* live in.**

Therein lie the first steps on a quest I was cautioned early on is part of 'a multi-generational' project.