

Excerpts from "Journey to a Living House:"

We drove for at least an hour. Half of the time we drove on dirt, washed-out back roads. Susan was very skilled at getting over and around the washed out areas and keeping the truck from falling off the cliff as the gravel rolled down. The views of the distant mountains were breathtaking. So was the view looking down, off the side of the road. I held on to the door tight. I was prepared to jump as soon as necessary. I figured the front wheel would go off first and we would start sliding down the cliff frontward. That would give me just enough time to bail out. Susan would be on her own. I told her so. She laughed.

We talked very little but were very comfortable together. Finally, after a very steep climb, she announced we were there. I didn't see a house anywhere. I had no idea where I was. I had not seen another car for sometime. It was a good thing, too. One of us would have had to go off the cliff to get around the other. *A house? Was this all a joke? Was it a cave?* "Come on" she said. "You'll see." I walked the last few hundred feet up the hill with Susan holding my hand and leading the way. I had no idea that I was about to experience what would change my life forever.

Chapter Twelve

..... I was walking on a stone trail when I first noticed I was under a stone overhang. I was so concerned about my stepping, I was not looking up. But there I was under this stone overhang with a stone column on my left and a stone wall on my right. I noticed a small solar lamp between the two stone columns. The left side was completely open. As we approached the next column a wall began to rise on the left side until the solar lamps disappeared and it was a solid wall on each side. I also began to go up steps. The steps were about five feet wide and on each side of the steps was water running down. They were like little waterfalls skipping one step and then falling two steps. I saw something glimmer in the little falls. When I looked closer I discovered tiny little waterwheels spinning. More amazing was the coolness. When I first entered this cover path, it was close to 85 degrees. Now, it could not be more than 70 degrees. All the light I needed was provided by small holes above in the stone. The stone walls sparkled with mica. It was a warm and comfortable feeling. There was no feeling of wetness. I asked Susan how you could see at night since I saw no other lighting. "Not meaning to play on words," she said, "but you'll see."

The entire time I walked I felt the movement of air. It seemed to be coming from below and behind me. When we reached what I assumed was the front door, the air movement had stopped. If I stepped back just a few feet, I could feel it again. The stone ceiling had been very gradually slopping upward. Over the 50 feet or so of walkway, the ceiling was now at 10 feet or so. I reached up as high as I could, about 8', and felt the air moving briskly. It was being funneled out and above. *Why?* Then it hit me. I was in a wind turbine of some kind. The air was creating energy just as the little waterwheels were

doing. There was just the slightest sound. But I felt the energy. *How was the moving air being used?*

At first the front door did not seem any different. It was a heavy wood door with a normal door knob. Susan entered and I followed. The door closed the second I was past its swing angle. I did nothing. It had closed on its own. We now stood in a vestibule of some type. Again, I saw no lighting. The lighting that was there was provided by the dome skylights from above and a large window to my left. The ceiling height was 8' or so. "Watch", Susan said. "Mister Magoo, close windows." In less than a few seconds, we were in total darkness. Some kind of shutter had covered the window and skylights. Then, "Mister Magoo, lights!" A moment later soft ceiling lights came on. They were not enough to read by, but they were fine to walk by. She opened a closed door built into the stone wall and another light came on. This was a closet. As we walked away from the front door the lights behind me went off. They were not any type of bulb light I had ever seen before. They were small, but bright and soft with a very warm or reddish hue.

Susan explained; "All the lighting is related to your presence and motion. If it isn't needed, it will go off. Windows will automatically be covered by shutters if the light in the room isn't needed to keep heat and cool air in. As you come in, the shutters will open. The room will use natural light before it uses artificial light unless you command otherwise. Mister Magoo is the name Richard gave to the voice command.....

I began to explore.

Once I left the vestibule or foyer, I was in a great room with no interior walls. A large round fireplace was in the center. One side of the house was built into the stone side of the mountain, but had windows. The other side beyond the fireplace was glass and stone. Each of these windows was separated by about two feet of stone. Nothing was straight. All the outside walls had a slight curve to them. There was one glass door leading to the outside. The outside deck appeared to be a giant slab of stone reaching out with no railing to obstruct the expansive mountain vista beyond. It was breathtaking.

I walked around the massive circular fireplace and followed the stone work to the ceiling. There were three columns holding up the stone above the fireplace hearth. The entire ceiling sloped upward from the outside walls to the center of this part of the house. I could feel the same movement of air I had felt outside. I knew the air was being funneled to something for some reason. *Richard*, I thought, *what have you done?*

For fun, as I stood in the middle of this great room, I commanded "Mister Magoo, close windows." Just as Susan had done. I expected to hear "screw you" but to my astonishment, the double hung windows shut and the room grew dark as the shutters closed on the windows. I asked Mister Magoo for lights and a moment later the lights came on, but only where I was standing. There was no shutter over the glass door to the outside. I could see my way to the door and no other lights came on to lead the way. *Very good Richard*, I thought. *Very good!* I could see, so why would I need a light. This was wild.

Now, how to get the windows open? The opposite must work. "Mister Magoo, open windows!" *Damn! It worked.* The shutters opened and light poured in. The double hung windows wrapped in stained, wood trim opened about six inches at the bottom. I had no idea at the time what this was about. I opened the glass door to the outside and stepped onto the giant stone deck. The door immediately shut behind me. The stone was a dark grey color.

I saw no rail and knew the fall must be 20 feet over the edge of the stone. I carefully started to walk toward the edge. As I moved outward, a glass railing began to rise out of the stone near the edge. It was angled slightly inward. I stopped and it stopped. I walked back and it disappeared back into the stone. I walked outward and it rose again. I continued walking and it rose to about three feet. It was almost invisible except for the white post every six feet or so. I wondered why it was at a slight inward angle.

I opened the door to go inside and realized I had missed something. This time I took my shoes and socks off and stepped on the stone. It was cool. It should be very warm with the sun beating down on it. *Ok Richard, what is up with this? What was taking the heat away? From now on, no shoes!* I needed to feel this place with all my senses. I went back inside to do the same. The floor was stone and seemed neither warm nor cold on my bare feet. The air around me and the floor were just perfect. I was mad at myself for missing this in the first place. *Pay attention John, I thought. Pay very careful attention.* Then I looked at the windows across from the outside wall. They had to be buried in the side of the mountain, but I could see the trees and light through the windows. This made no sense. I was getting that Richard had thought out every possible detail. This house was alive with soul.

I stopped exploring and went back out to the deck. I breathed deeply and listened to the wind through the trees nearby. I listened to the different birds sing. I sat on the stone and crossed my legs. I once was told that when you see the "empty space" then you begin to see what is really there. It happened to me that afternoon. I "saw" for the first time in my life. I saw what was there by seeing what was *not there*. By seeing the *no space*, I saw everything. I imagined Richard sitting here doing the same thing. I imagined him smiling at me now.

Chapter Thirteen

...I must have sat there in some kind of bliss for at least an hour. I did not know how long it had been and then it struck me. There were no clocks in the house. Nothing to tell the time of day. Everything just functioned on sun time. I went back into the house as the sun was nearing the mountain tops. I wanted to explore more before it became dark.

The windows on the other side of the house, buried into the mountain side, were between the kitchen wall cabinets and countertop and also above the wall cabinets. The top of the wall cabinets were at seven feet. The windows above the cabinets were very narrow.

The windows between the wall and base cabinets filled most of the space. None of these opened. Their purpose was to let light in, *but how could I see outside*. I had read that an engineering college had built an underground building and created the illusion of views by using mirrors. This is exactly what Richard Youngblood had done. Even though these windows were many feet in the ground, you saw out as if you were standing above the ground. Maybe more important, these windows let the light in. I would have to explore outside to discover how he did this.

On my way over to the kitchen I stopped to examine the circular fireplace. The diameter was six feet and the hearth was sixteen inches off the floor. The three stone columns holding the stone above sat on the very edge of the hearth. I looked up under the stone and examined how this was constructed. A curved piece of stone went from column to column. I had expected steel. There was no damper! *How stupid*, I thought. *Heat from the house was just shooting up the flue and going outside*. I caught myself. Richard Youngblood did this deliberately. *Why?* I knew he was using air flow, *but how?* Tomorrow I would delve into his notes on the counter. Tomorrow I would discover the secrets. Now I needed something to eat and drink. Before dark, I wanted to know where I would be sleeping. It was already starting to get dark and I had no idea what this house would do when that happened.

The first thing I did when I walked over to the kitchen was open the refrigerator to see what possibly might be in there. I struck gold. A six pack of beer was sitting right there. There was no organic bread or farm fresh salad on those shelves. There was not even a bottle of water, just a beautiful, untouched six pack of beer. Tears started to form in my eyes. I loved Richard. How could it be any better? I grabbed a beer, thanked Richard and opened the freezer door above. It got even better. Behold all that a man could ask for; an assortment of frozen dinners from Momma somebody. This was true love. Nothing to mix. Nothing fancy to do. Just pop these babies in the microwave and enjoy a very fine dinner. Richard had missed nothing. He was a man of honor. As I ate the dinner and drank one two many beers (two in this case), I continuously toasted him. I believe I even sang a song in his honor. He had won my heart and respect forever. But as I sang away and toasted my new hero, night came. The windows had shut and the shutters had closed. A light had turned on where I sat at the kitchen island. A few under-cabinet lights had also come on. I had no idea where the bedroom or bedrooms were. It was me and Mister Magoo. I hoped Mister Magoo was not up to any tricks tonight.

"Mister Magoo," I commanded, "light the way to the bedroom." Nothing happened. *Stupid Mister Magoo. Stupid name too*. I started to walk. As I walked a few steps the kitchen lights turned off and where I was walking was now lit. I headed to an area set off a bit with a desk and bookshelves. My way was lit as I walked. When I reached the desk and sat down it was too dark to read. Again, "Mister Magoo, I need to read." Bingo! A brighter light came on. *Cool! Key words were the answer*. I got up and walked to the left side of the main area to a door I had seen earlier. The reading light went off. As I opened the door lights came on. I could see a bed on the far wall. It was made and looked wonderfully comfortable and inviting. As I explored the room, I found a closet and bathroom. The bathroom looked normal with a full size shower, but the toilet looked

a little odd. It was higher than normal and there was no device to flush it. There was a pedestal sink, mirror and.....

As I was lying on the bed an idea occurred. "Mister Magoo, how about some music." *Nothing! Dork! Ok!* "Mister Magoo, stars!" *Holly crap!* The ceiling opened above and through a pyramid shaped glass the night sky beamed down on me and into the dark room. *Wow!* I just laid on my back and stared into the heavens above. *Freaking awesome!*

I got up and raced back into the kitchen. Not to get another beer but to see what the view was from windows in the kitchen. Just as I had guessed, the mirrors had readjusted and you could see the stars above. *Damn cool Richard.* This house was beyond anything I could imagine. Back to the bedroom I went with every step lit and every unneeded light turned off. I just wanted to run around the house to see how fast the lights would change.

I had a hard time sleeping, at least for the first 30 seconds or so. I do remember smiling. Everything was beautiful again. I was excited to see tomorrow. I knew the way to the bathroom would be lit unless Mister Magoo slept too. All would be well tonight. All would be well forever. I wondered how that bear was doing. *I love hot showers and warm beds with big pillows. Good job, Richard. Great job. Thanks.* I thought about....

Chapter Fourteen

I had no idea what time it was when I awoke. There were no clocks. My cell phone was my only clock. It was turned off and hooked to my belt in the closet. The windows were still closed up and the skylight had also closed. It was dark, but the air flowed freely and comfortably. "Mister Magoo" hoping he was awake, "open windows!" The shutters opened. The windows did not. It was cloudy and raining. A good day to stay inside and read.

The shower was great. The water was hot and the water pressure excellent. I had no idea how the toilet worked, but I trusted Richard and the toilet got used. I heard no water. There was nothing to flush. I looked down into the thing and only saw darkness below. There was no odor. Fascinating! Well, at least to me. *Where, oh where did that poopy go?* But onward to more important things – breakfast. I was hungry.

I scoured the kitchen for food. There was no milk or orange juice, only four bottles of beer. *Beer for breakfast? Interesting thought.* I found cans of soup in the pantry cabinet, instant coffee and a brand new box of Honey Nut Cheerios. I breathed relief. A man's survival was now possible. All the cabinets and appliances were just like any other I had seen. The cabinets were a natural wood finish to match the windows and doors. They followed the slight curve of the outside wall so they must have been custom made. I wondered if Richard made them. It was not a large kitchen, but I found the cabinets had many pull out features and utilized every inch. The appliances were stainless steel. The refrigerator was a standard size. The stove, cooktop and microwave were a one piece,

slide-in unit and operated by gas. The double bowl sink was in the island and mounted under the brownish granite top. There was no garbage disposal.

Again, I sat down at the counter to enjoy my freshly made cup of instant coffee and Honey Nut Cheerios right out of the box. I avoided the beer temptation. All the window covers were opened and I could see easily. I peered under the island overhang and there was some type of wood counter. I pulled and it easily swung out. There were sections attached to sections with legs that dropped down. When I had finished pulling, swinging, arranging and dropping all the legs down, I had a table that could easily seat eight people. I looked around for the chairs, but did not see any. All that were there were the four stool chairs and they were too high for the table. Richard never had a chance to use this table I thought/felt. That was sad.

Next to the refrigerator on the granite top sat the notes Susan had told me about. I was tempted to start reading these, but thought it would be more interesting to try to figure things out on my own. The same concept I had learned from my father and him from his father for driving directions. It was clearly the right way to approach the unknown – unknowingly. It was time to explore again.

The next room I entered was adjacent to the other bedroom. It was much the same except it had a bath/shower combination and a full vanity, not a pedestal sink and the same strange type of toilet. The two bathrooms were back-to-back and each room had walk-in closets. The walls of the bedrooms, baths and closet were a plaster like finish that was glass smooth. It was a finish I had seen in Europe that was created by using a grounded lime stone applied over a plaster board or cement board. The paint color was integrated into the lime stone before it was applied by a smooth trowel. Nothing was done with a paint brush. The finish was polished to a light glaze and sealed. I was almost certain this was the finish on all the walls and ceilings in these rooms. I could imagine Richard doing this.

This room had one of the mirror windows since it was against the mountain side, but it also had full functional windows. I tested the Mister Magoo “star” command and it worked in this room as well. The center of the ceiling opened to a pyramid shaped skylight. It too had a desk in the corner and when the “read” command was given, a brighter light came on. Cleverly, the intensity of the light was less as it compensated for the natural light in the room. The ceilings in both bedrooms sloped toward the main area and all the outside walls were at a slight curve. Besides the walls being a smooth surface and not stone, the other main difference was the floors. The floors in the bedroom were hardwood, not stone. The floors felt just as warm and comfortable as the stone floors.

The rain continued and it was hard at times. You could not hear a drop. I went out on the back stone porch, walked out as far as I could and looked at the roof. It was almost flat and a dark grey color, much like the stone I was standing on. I imagined if you were in an airplane looking down, it would appear as a large rock outcropping. Maybe that is what Richard wanted. I thought I would find solar panels, but there were none. The water did not run off the roof as I expected. It was absorbed into it. The last four feet of

the roof overhung the rear of the house and was a different material than the rest of the roof. It looked like the same stone I was standing on. There were no gutters but very little rain fell from the rounded, stone edge of the roof and onto the stone porch where I was standing. *Where did the water go? Why was the stone porch cool when the sun's heat should have warmed it? Why was all the air being directed to openings? Why was I standing outside in the rain and getting soaked thinking about all this when it was dry and warm inside?* Must be time for a beer. *Thank you Richard.*

"Mister Magoo, bring me a beer" *Nothing!* I would have to get my own. Mister Magoo had a few shortcomings and not much of a sense of humor. It was all business with that guy. I got my beer out of the refrigerator, sat down at the island and twisted open the top. I was looking over at the notes Richard had left behind when I noticed I had somehow cut the tip of my finger on the bottle cap. I stared at it. A little blood came out of a little capillary. *A capillary! Hell! That was it!* It all hit me. *Now I got it!* The whole house came together in a flash.

I went back out on the stone porch and laid down on it under the overhang. I put my ear tight against the floor and listened. There it was; the sound of something moving. It was a liquid. I tapped the stone. It had a hollow sound. This was not real stone. Richard had built this out of some kind of synthetic material. It was intended not only as a beautiful overlook to walk out on, but as a heat sink for the liquids running inside. I knew there were thousands of little capillary tubes running just below the surface collecting the heat from the stone and then joining with larger tubes. These larger tubes would then join with others taking the water to some unknown location. It was much like your heart pumping blood through your body. The same had to be true for the air.

I went back inside and looked up at the stone from the fireplace going through the ceiling. It did not fit tight to the opening. There was about six inches of space all the way around. The ceiling in the main part of the house all sloped up to this opening. I needed to see what was up there. I climbed up the stone and shined my cell phone light up into the opening. I could feel the air quickly moving up from the house into this opening. I could see hundreds of little glimmering things in there. They were spinning. They were tiny windmills; micro windmills. I climbed down and looked up the flue and about half way up was the same micro windmills. I got the picture.

There must be a million of these little windmills. Each was smaller than a dime. I imagined that each one was producing an electric current and feeding the current through a small wire that, just like the blood vessel thing, directed the current to a larger wire and so on until it reached wherever it all went. It reminded me of the nerves running through my body. Now the window opening automatically at the bottom made sense. Mister Magoo was not just adjusting the window openings for temperature, but for air flow. I estimated there was over 15,000 cubic feet of air being channeled continuously through the restricted opening in the roof. That was a significant velocity change and the micro windmills spun happily along. Nature was providing all the energy Richard needed. He just needed to figure out how to capture it. *But what about the water on the roof?*

I went outside again and in the rain I watched. The water was being absorbed. It looked like it was going into some sort of fine mesh material on the roof. My guess was that the mesh was filtering out any debris and the clean water was being allowed to enter the circulatory system. Again, I imagined, by some capillary system. More blood vessels. The four foot stone overhang was acting as a shade for the main glass area of the house from the intense, southern sun but was collecting heat just as the lower stone deck was.

This house was alive with electricity and water flowing continuously through it. Temperatures and air flow were being monitored every second of every day and the house was changing to allow for it. All seemed effortless. All provided me with such comfort and beauty. I was standing in the middle of a living house. Actually I wasn't. I was still standing in the middle of the stone deck holding a bottle of beer and getting soaked by more rain. I stripped to my boxers (again something you might not need to know) and enjoyed the rain (and my beer). This was amazing and I was a part of it. Richard Youngblood had created a living house. He had created "bioenergetic architecture."

Chapter Fifteen

I sat cross legged on the stone porch for nearly an hour enjoying the rain. It was not cold out and the rain felt refreshing. The glass rail was up and I watched the rain run down it. I guessed that the rail must come up in the rain and at night. It was at a slight angle so the rain hit on it and washed it off. I had a hunch it would be at the opposite angle next time it rained so the other side would get washed off. I was wrong. The rail slowly changed angles as it rained. *How nice*, I thought, *God is washing the rail*. I thought about bathing in the river just a few days ago. I felt the rain washing me now.

"Richard, you have a guest approaching." What in the world was that? Mister Magoo spoke!.....

This time we talked about the house. Susan gathered up Richard's notes and drawings and we started going through them.

I was right about the little windmills. They were working from the controlled air flow through natural convection. Richard had also built a double wall around the foundation and allowed the warmer air to enter from under the basement slab between the two walls and rise. The main floor also was a double wall so the air continued to flow upward but was now being restricted between the areas of the windows. The restricted air gained velocity and the micro windmills spun inside the wall. Some of the electricity was stored below in batteries. Some went directly as needed to pumps and lights. All the lights, pumps and other possible electrical appliances had been converted to a DC current. I am not sure why, but apparently it was more efficient than AC current. Even the little waterwheels provided electricity.

Water was being used in many ways. Warmed water was directed over the entrance of the foundation air to keep the entry air warm and assure air flow upward. Other warm

water ran through the floors to provide radiant heat. Water was stored in a holding tank for use by a gas-fired instant hot water tank. This water was constantly replaced based upon the temperature. Richard had dug a well as a source for clean water and that was used for drinking. The water coming through the roof was filtered many times over and used for the other needs of the house. The water continuously moved through the house for multiple needs and uses. It was like your body circulating blood.

Just below the surface filter of the roof was a sponge like substance. This substance absorbed not only the rain water but also any moisture touching it. The moisture was then absorbed by the capillaries that ran through it and so on. Richard had gotten the idea, he wrote, from the redwood trees in California. Though they look like pine needles, they are really thin leaves on the tree. They absorb the fog, up to 500 gallons per day, to meet their water needs.

The toilets used a dry system. Richard had hoped to produce methane gas to power the hot water heater, cooktop and dryer. The system allowed for the addition of all types of compost material. The gas was collected and stored in a holding tank. The solids would be removed over time periods and used as fertilizers. There was also a backup LP tank. I do not think the methane reached the quantity Richard had hoped for with the limited use the system had. "Grey" water, or water from the sinks, shower and laundry were not reclaimed but entered an exterior drainfield. Richard had notes about reusing the water but never got that far.

At the heart of all this was a complex monitoring and computer system. There were sensors for lighting, airflow, temperature, window openings, sun angles, humidity, sun index and everything else you could think of. The data flowed into the computer and the computer then instructed the pump to pump, the window to close or open, the shutters to close or open and on and on. The complexity of it all was mind boggling. It was like your brain getting all the information from the outside world and then knowing how to react to it.

... First of all, I did not smell the coffee in the house when I woke up. This was because of the air currents moving to the center portion of the house and then out somewhere. The air never moved from the kitchen to the outer rooms or walls. I did hear the sound of Susan in the kitchen, but it was very muted. This was a clue that the interior walls might also be double walls and, like the exterior walls, were moving air through them. It was tricky to tell the thickness of the walls because of the stone work. I had no way to know if the stone was 5 inches thick or a cut stone only 1 to 2 inches thick. Next I realized how much fog or moisture was in the air at night and in the early morning and knew why the "sponge" roof was so important. It must have absorbed a ton of water over the night as I slept. The water was being transferred to other parts of the house as it was needed.

Most interesting to me was the stone deck I was sitting on. Even Susan did not notice it, but it was completely dry even though it felt cool this time of the morning. The other thing was that there was no moss or anything else growing on it. This stone deck also was absorbing the moisture. It had to work different then the "sponge" roof. My guess

was that the air moisture condensed on the stone deck and passed through little micro holes to the little capillaries running below the surface. I looked at the trees around me and knew that Richard must have been inspired by how effectively they absorbed moisture and used the sunlight. And trees were also round.

Of course they were. I started to think about this and realized I could not think of a single straight wall created in nature. Everything was rounded. It had to be. If it wasn't, the wind and rain and the pounding of nature would make it that way. Richard's house was curved. *Of course it was.* I stood and looked at the roof again. It was sloped upward very gradually, but from all directions. It was a dome shape but with a low pitch. I thought about snow loads and how well this would work in the north, but I guessed Eskimos had figured this one out already.

... It was time for the unexplored lower level. *But how do you get down there?* I had not seen a door anywhere with stairs going down. "Mister Magoo," I called upon my all knowing friend. "Show me the way to the lower level." Once again, not a word was said or a light lighten to show me the way. *Way to help a guy when he needs it, Magoo.* I tried every door. I tried all different commands to Magoo-head. I found nothing. Magoo did nothing. There had to be a lower level and there had to be a way to it. I went out the entry door. Just to my left was a recess area into the stone wall. I had never noticed it when I first came in. It curved slightly. I stepped into the area and lights came on showing me the way down stone, winding steps. "Thanks Mister Magoo," I remarked. *A little late,* I thought. "You're welcome, Richard," came the reply. *Smart ass.*

The steps were at least five feet wide and also had water running down them with the same little waterwheels in the waterfalls. The sound of the water was louder here than in the walkway above, but there was no feel of dampness or moisture. I doubted much of this stone was real. I imagined Richard had made much of the stone with capillaries soaking up any moisture. I could only guess. Just before the last few steps, the waterfalls disappeared and the steps flared open to about eight feet to meet the lower landing. In front of me was a stone wall. I stood and stared at it. There was no handle. No door.

"Mister Magoo, open the door." It worked. The stone slid apart in the middle and I entered. Mister Magoo was ok again. I knew it would be an off and on relationship with Magoo.

I was amazed as I entered. I had never seen anything like this before. The room was filled with natural light from the windows that must have lined up with the windows above. The round fireplace above was matched with a circular stone wall below but the entire wall was a waterfall. The water trickled down the stone into a pond flush with the floor and extending out two feet beyond the stone. As I approached, lights come on in the ceiling and in the water. There were small colorful fish swimming in the pond. There was also a pond that followed the glass, outside wall and it came into the room about two feet. Plants were everywhere. They were very green and looked very healthy. They did not strike me as being very edible, but I had no clue.

The large stone patio above was supported about midway by three stone columns on the lower level. The stone patio at this level ended with the columns. It was entirely in the shade. *These plants must not love direct light* I thought. I had to cross a little foot bridge to get to the door that led outside and under the stone patio above. It was very cool outside and I found an old wood rocking chair off to the right. I went over and sat in it. I closed my eyes and breathed again. I breathed slowly and tried to feel Richard rocking in this same chair. I opened my eyes and enjoyed the view from there. It was amazingly different from above. It felt entirely different. The sun was not beaming down. The trees were higher. You could not see the sky. I sat for some time feeling this view. I was not in a hurry anymore. I had all the time in the world to discover this house. Then the phone rang.....

She turned back to her piano without missing a note. I headed to the lower level to start where I had left off nearly two months ago.

Chapter Twenty-One

With the help of Magoo, my way was lit and doors unlocked. I entered the waterfall and plant room. The plants were just as green and fresh as I remembered them. I wondered if Susan had been taking care of them or it was some type of self-sufficient system Richard had created. I wandered amongst the plants and realized all of them were growing in water. There was no soil. I saw more fish this time and other little creatures in the water. But I had to be very still for them to come by. Any shadow in the water seemed to scare them away. As I watched the fish, they disappeared under the stone floor I was walking on. I went over to the outside wall where I could see the water and where most of the plants were and, after a bit, the fish would appear. I knew I was walking above the water. There was water all below me.

I put my hand in the water. It felt warm, but barely. It was definitely warmer than the air above me. *How were the fish and plants fed?* I wondered. I had a strong hunch this was a closed eco-system. In other words, it was self-contained and self-sufficient. I also knew that plants can filter air. So I must be standing in a natural air filtering system that never needed a new filter. I could also feel the air moving upward, but here the ceiling was flat. I stared at the ceiling. It was that same dark grey color as the deck outside but it had black spots all over it. It was about three or four feet above me and it was hard to see well. I wanted to touch it. I needed a ladder.

I walked to the rear of the house, or the side of the house that was against the mountain side and found a door. It was a weather tight, fiberglass, insulated door. This was odd for an interior space. I opened the door and immediately a room light came on. It was a very bright light and I saw why. I just entered the "brain" room. A zillion wires came in from all directions. All were neatly labeled and fed into different grey and white metal boxes mounted on the walls. Little red, green and yellow lights blinked everywhere. I could hear the whirl sound of a computer. It was a cramped space and way too complicated for me. I found a step ladder hanging on the wall behind the door. I was now in business.

I placed the ladder on the stone floor in the main area and climbed up to the ceiling. The air was cooler and was moving upward. I reached up to feel the surface of the ceiling and discovered it was not black paint but holes in the ceiling. I could barely get my little finger into the hole. I felt around in the little hole and I could feel a type of metal plate shaped round like the hole. It easily moved across the hole when I forced it. The holes were designed to adjust in size based on the amount of air needed. *Everything in this house moved or flowed. I wonder if the whole house was turning.* The plant-filtered and moistened air was being drawn up into the rooms above. It could not be warming the floor above as it traveled through, otherwise the moisture in the warmer air would condense and water would be dripping down. This air had to be getting into the room above without contacting a cooler surface. To understand this, I needed Richard's notes and drawings.

I put the ladder back and went upstairs to see if I could discover where the fresh air was coming out.....